

Prof. N.G.Ranga

THE KISAN SPEAKS

~~MDUBROLU - 522123~~

KARSHAKA SAHITYA PARISHAT

4th Line, Chandramowli Nagar, GUNTUR -7
Andhra Pradesh, INDIA

P-110 Najar is a tax levied on a tenant if his neighbour
run away without paying rent or revenue.

P-94
P-95- farmers fleeing away

Dedication

To

BHARATI DEVI

VEERA GUNNAMMA

ALL FREEDOM FIGHTERS

KISAN MAZDOOR SATYAGRAHIES

for

K.M.P.DEMOCRACY

First Published in 1938
Revised Edition 1989

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PREFACE

GENESIS OF THE IDEA OF "SELF - EMPLOYMENT"

In the course of his prolonged discussions with Prof. G.D.H. Cole, the famous exponent of guild socialism, Prof. Ranga realised that peasants through their work on their small holdings, weavers on their looms, potters on their wheels and kilns, carpenters with their chisels, masons with their tiny hammers and spades whom he had observed enjoying freedom while at work since his rural childhood, were enjoying freedom for which the factory workers have been yearning but in vain. He began to feel that the medieval guilds of artisans and craftsmen of Europe afforded such freedom. When he suggested to Prof. Cole and his senior socialist, H.N.Brailsford that if such guilds can come to be organised again, guild socialism can provide a better alternative to capitalist organisation of workers. Prof. Cole appreciated this trend of thought. Then Mr. Brailsford suggested to him to go to Italy, Denmark, Holland, South of

* Harken to Rajajee:- "The *Mantra* of self-employment given by Acharya Ranga is what the Indian word *swatantra* Expresses. Self employment is the nearest English rendering of the goal of *swatantra*. *Swatantra* life is a self-employed life free from the interference of ignorant officialdom", Pg.440 Satyameva Jayate, 1961. [We may add "free from ignorant, power-hungry presumptuous and uncontrolled officialdom. Ed.]

* Read his Autobiography, "Fight for Freedom".

* Also read Mr. Alvin Toffler's previews and premises".

France and Germany and study the working of peasants' cooperatives which provide the same organisational support for peasants as the guilds. After his study of those peasant cooperatives through his tours on European Continent in 1922 and onwards Rangajee developed his faith in both self-employment as well as cooperative organisations as the two essential arms and props needed to strengthen the present day peasants and artisans in their enjoyment of economic freedom

Since then he toured extensively in Tamilnadu, Andhra, Karnataka and Orissa centres of handloom weavers, cotton growers and rice (paddy) producers and studied their socio-economic conditions. The results of those studies strengthened his faith in the socio-political potentialities of self - employment and the need for co-operatives for the supply of inputs, credit, sale of their products. He continued to exchange his thoughts and findings with those two famous socialists and his friends, Prof. H.J. Laski and Dina Stock

On the Indian front he gained the appreciation of Mahatma Gandhi for his efforts in organising peasants on one side and handloom and cottage industrial workers on the other. Srimannarayan Agarwal (who is the author of Gandhian Plan) sponsored the publication of Rangajee's book, " Why four crores of artisans hail Gandhian Plan ?" Eventually Gandhijee himself hailed the ideal of democratic Kisan-Mazdoor-Budhijeevi-Kalakari Raj as propounded by Rangajee in juxtaposition to the ideal of dictatorship of the proletariat of the communists . By now all political parties in India have come to realise the political significance of self-employed masses of peasants and artisans. They compete

with each other in offering their support for the unemployed and unorganised masses. They promise to give a fair deal for them and parity with all other toilers in all other occupations and services.

This abridged edition of the famous book "KISAN SPEAKS" first published in 1938, is being issued specially for the benefit of the growing ranks of Kisan organisers, social workers and intellectuals and research workers who are interested in knowing how and in what directions the founders of the modern kisan movement worked and shaped the Kisan movement.

Several chapters had already been separately printed and published in English, Hindi and Telugu on many occasions by Kisan organisers and distributed among the students of Kisan schools and kisan organisers to help them in their efforts to develop Kisan agitations. Only now this big effort is being made to publish in a consolidated manner these abridged editions of the writings of prof. Ranga and his colleagues notably Swami Sahajanand Saraswathi.

The Editors have made such selections of the chapters and tables from out of the original volumes as they considered to be of special interest to the public and Kisan organizers in these times, when the principal political parties are trying to do even justice between rural and urban people, kisans and industrialists etc. That all principal political parties have, of late, been vieing with each other to bring about even justice between rural and urban areas, kisans and industrialists, urban professionals and that a national consensus is being developed to bring about the parity between agriculture and industry, indeed, is a tribute to the incessant and valient work of Rangajee in and outside Parliament during the last six decades.

As is well known, Prof. N.G.Ranga is the father of the modern kisan movement of India. He is still busy working for the protection of peasants and agricultural workers/handloom weavers from the exploitation by Banks, Sahukars, industrial and commercial interests. He demands parity between agricultural and industrial and commercial interests and protection from all non-agricultural service interests. He stands for remunerative prices for agricultural produce and minimum wages for rural workers, protection for tenants, and cattle, crop, and fire, flood and famine, unemployment insurances and also for workmen's compensation against accidents on par with industrial workers; he demands national rural housing programme for all rural workers, and small farmers.

How to finance all these welfare measures ? Sensing that a national consensus has been reached and that all the political parties are now pleading for the reduction or minimisation of disparities in the society, Rangajee has struck a welfare-oriented and humanitarian note and advocated the creation of a national fund out of the special taxes and cesses to be levied on middle and upper classes so that we can surely and steadily march towards social justice and minimum of disparities.

He is the biggest champion of self-employment. As a result of his deep study and observance of systems of human organisations, Rangajee has come to the conclusion that the self-employed peasants and artisans owning their land holdings and units of production, that is, small holdings, implements and other units of production, are the bulwark against totalitarian dictatorship and dependable granite foundation for democracy. He is therefore opposed to any move by any government or party to whittle down the opportunities for self-employment and ownership of the peasants over their holdings and artisans over their implements and activities of

production and distribution. At the same time he is in favour of the state shouldering the responsibility of assuring them all minimum earnings and / or wages and employment to sustain the basic economic democracy.

This new abridged edition would indicate how far Indian Kisan movement has progressed on the lines outlined and hopes entertained by this grand old champion of Kisans and his colleagues.

Rangajee has obtained the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi for the ideal of Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj in which there would be equal and democratic opportunities for kisans, mazdoors, Kalakars and Budhijeevis. He laid special emphasis upon self employed peasants and artisans among the constituents of the K.M.P.Raj. He has made many experiments in political and organisational spheres to help our rural folk to achieve greater and surer foothold in the political life and parliamentary arena of our Swaraj India.

Advocates of all kinds of dictatorships including that of the totalitarian anti-peasant and anti-self employment approaches are found to be veering round, at long last, to the philosophy of democracy, based on self-governance in industry, agriculture and social life, for which Rangajee has stood so steadfastly during these six decades.

Peasants were pained very much by the multi-pointed coercion imposed on them by the war-time Food controls of British Government, and the consequent uncontrollable corruption. Rangajee was horror struck by Jawaharlaljee's readiness to continue those hated food controls and organised nation-wide De-control day against Swaraj Government's submission to that hateful control regime. So many kisan satyagrahis including his brother G.L.Narayhana, M.A.B.L. went to jail. It needed Gandhijee's threat to go on fast to

persuade Nehrujee to withdraw from those controls. It was a prolonged struggle during 1939 to 1954 against food controls and their coercion of peasants. This struggle was, indeed, uncomfortable in the sense that he had to differ with and fight against Nehru, his long time comrade and colleague in the national movement. But it was remarkable of Rangajee that he had come out of it with his robust peasantism and Gandhian commitment and approach undimmed and his abiding faith in self employed free peasantry's productive potentiality unshaken. It was that bitter experience of control regime which reconciled Rangajee to Rajajee's later campaign against statism.

He was responsible for developing India-wide movement against Zamindari Pratha, thanks to the dynamic support from Swami Sahajanand and N.V. Rama Nayudu and had the satisfaction of getting it abolished by congress ministries. During 1959-1970 he stood outside the national congress, which he had joined in 1917, organised Swatantra party with the blessings of Rajajee, K.M. Munshi and Masani and braved electoral defeats and faced opposition from so-called leftists to protect peasants from unbridled statism of licence permit quota raj.

The Green revolution and growing network of Agricultural Universities, chain of Krishi Vignan Kendras (KVK) and lab to land campaigns, the foodgrains corporation with its lengthening chain of warehouses, agricultural refinancing corporation to supplement the widening co-operative credit structure and the NABARD and the Agricultural Costs and Prices Commission to assure minimum levels of prices for at least staple foodgrains, cane, jute, and NREP, NRDP Rural Housing Banks and Crop Insurance schemes and other programmes have all come to buttress our kisans, thanks to the

Kisan and congress movements and continuous prodding by ever-vigilant Rangajee and the responsive congress ministries. Indian peasants, self-employed as they are, have made India more than self-sufficient in foodgrains and fibres, whereas communist-dominated and collectivised Russian and Chinese Agricultural Economies failed to produce enough to feed and clothe their peoples.

He made great sacrifices, remained outside National Congress for more than a decade, faced many electoral defeats and was obliged to return to parliament through many bye-elections and suffer other setbacks in his decades-long campaigns against undemocratic plans and parliamentary and constitutional efforts made by Swaraj Governments to subvert free peasantry and deny peasants of their ownership over and self-employment in, their holdings. Finally he obliged Jawaharlaljee to exempt peasants' holdings below the ceilings from the mischief of seventeenth - nineteenth constitution amendments during 1963-64.

The latest soviet phase of perestroika inaugurated by their communist Secretary General, Gorbachev, allowing their peasants freedom to choose to work on farms, leased out to them by the collectives and co-operatives and market their produce is, indeed, a vindication and triumph of Rangajee's stand for self-employed peasantry, within the democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj and Welfare economy of Democratic world.

We are happy to add a second section containing portions of the latest speeches made by Rangajee in parliament during 1989 Budget session on certain aspects of Indian kisan and khet Mazdoor problems and Rural Economy, relevant to his hopes entertained and suggestion made in his books, "Labour in South India" 1930, "Modern Indian Peasant" 1936 and "Kisan Speaks" 1937.

These speeches indicate how he has been loyally and persistently trying to persuade parliament to protect and promote the cause of the myriad rural masses especially the peasants and workers.

In view of the continuity of thought and its consistent advocacy, and its recognition, appreciation and acceptance by the governments and its leaders and various friends and colleagues in public life, we have entitled this section as "Kisan Speaks Again".

We may add that Sri. T. Anjaiah *, the central Labour Minister appreciated Rangajee's suggestion and initiated steps for the appointment of honorary Rural Labour Organisers by state Governments.

Rangajee hastened to welcome the special interest in the welfare of these long neglected toilers, displayed by Indiraji and Rajivji, the Prime Ministers and exhorted parliamentarians of all parties to offer their co-operation in the new national drive being initiated by them.

Just as N.M. Joshi, the good veteran of "Servants of India Society" laboured so loyally in the interest of growing ranks of industrial labour in the first half of this century, Rangajee has been working in and outside parliament from 1930 uptill today (1989 May day) for the promotion of the causes of the self-employed rural masses.

We are soon reprinting two other books namely, "Modern Indian Peasant" and "History of Kisan Movement".

We are thankful to the generous assistance proffered by the famous Sri Rama Rural Gurukul College of Chilumuru Village, Tenali Taluka, Guntur District and its principal Sri Madhu Sudhana Rao, M.A.

* It was Sri. T. Anjaiah's Government in Andhra Pradesh that declared Rangajee's birthday, the seventh November, be observed as "Kisans Day".

We are thankful to the enterprising Kisan son *Sri. M.Raghava Rao*, an American trained computer scientist and his associates of M/s. International Graphics, Himayatnagar, Hyderabad, for their unstinted and generous cooperation, thanks to their faith in the K.M.P.Raj ideal.

Our thanks are due to *Mr. T.Srinivasa Rao* and *Ms.P.Ramana Kumari*, the computer operators in the company who have done excellent job of this book.

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SUPPLY OF CREDIT FOR CURRENT NEEDS

It may be possible that if the flow of capital from the debtors to the creditors is stopped for the next three years, a large portion of the ordinary needs of the ryots for current capital can be satisfied by many ryots themselves. But it is still nevertheless necessary that the State should supply additional capital without any delay with a view to finance the cultivation operations. To achieve this purpose, Government must offer to grant at least two crores of rupees at 4% at the rate of ten lakhs per District as taccavi loans. Though I appreciate the recent decision of the Madras Government to grant taccavi loans on a liberal scale, I am anxious that the two crores of rupees, offered as 'taccavi' should be distributed among the needy ryots only through the Co-operative Banks or Village Panchayats, wherever such exist, in order to expedite the distribution of such capital, and to avoid the usual delay and wastage of effort involved in the official taccavi loan distributive methods *.

This is the part of the address delivered at the Andhra Peasants' conference held on the 5th June, 1931, specially to discuss this problem. This analysis goes to the very fundamentals and deals with the basic elements of the problem as to be highly applicable and instructive even to our present times.

In all the Western democracies adequate representation is provided for peasant organisations on all the important and relevant committees and councils of State, so far no complaint has been made or heard in any of these countries against the non-utility of these peasant organisations, and the State's contact with them. Indeed, the U.S.A. has given a new fillip to the Kisan movement by dealing with the Kisan Sabhas just as dignifiedly as with all other sabhas.

8. This Conference requests the Government to grant a loan of at least a crore of rupees at only 6 per cent to the Madras Co-operative Urban Banks with a view to enable it and the District Central Banks to allow the Primary Banks to grant extension of time to all the deserving member-debtors.

9. This Conference requests the Madras Co-operative Urban Bank and the Central Banks to appoint special inspection staff to expedite the enquiry into the assets of the debtors of the Primary Societies, in order to facilitate the grant of extension of time.

10. This Conference requests the Government to distribute at least a crore of rupees as 'taccavi' loans, as far as possible only through the Co-operative Banks or Village Panchayats or Forest Panchayats, wherever such exist, with a view to afford ryots some supply of credit for their current agricultural needs.

11. This Conference resolves that the Zamindari system of land settlement should be abolished; the existing Zamindars and their families should only be given allowances for maintenance and that no more Zamindaries should be made impartible.

12. This Conference appoints the Peasants' Protection Committee, with Prof. N.G. Ranga as its President, to agitate for the necessary relief measures helpful to the much oppressed ryots*.

* Rangajee circulated these resolutions among all the Judicial officers and met most of them and pleaded for protection from them for the harassed peasants and quite a large number of judges afforded such protection to the peasant from the coercive process of civil procedure code (Ed).

THE PROBLEM OF AGRICULTURAL INDEBTEDNESS - 2

It is a dismal tale to tell how from 1931 till to-day both our Provincial Governments and the Central Government have failed to rush to the rescue of our peasantry and effectively free them from the clutches of the money-lenders and the cruel Civil Procedure Code. The appendix to this chapter gives an outline of the Legislative enactments made by some of our Provincial Governments. A careful perusal will convince one that barring the C.P. and U.P. Governments, no effective action was sought to be taken by the other Governments of the Pre-Autonomy days. Even the C.P. Government pleaded want of funds for appointing an adequate number of Conciliation Boards to settle the agrarian debts. Everything depends, for the proper enforcement of these laws, upon the character and the personnel of the Debt Settlement Committees and the capacity and quick-wittedness of our peasants to make use of them. So far the Punjab and Bengal Governments have not given any evidence of constituting either sufficient number of Conciliation Boards or choosing the right personnel, and unfortunately, the local peasants have also failed to insist upon the effective enforcement of the Acts that already exist. The only result of this legislation has so far been the curtailment of credit-supply to our peasants. The Madras Act is practically a dead letter. Therefore the Pre-Autonomy Provincial Debt Relief Legislation was on the whole ineffective to afford adequate relief to our peasants.

The Central Government has a more ghastly story to tell about its own part in this septennial suffering of our peasants. Contrary to the recommendations of the Central

APPENDIX

RESOLUTIONS - 1

The following are the Resolutions passed at special Ryots' Conference held in Tenali on the 5th June 1931, on the basis of similar motions agreed upon in Madakasira, Avani-gadda and Ongole Taluk Conferences and the Guntur, Krishna, Godavari, Nellore District Panchayats Conferences:

1. This Conference protests against the present apathetic attitude of the Government regarding the sufferings of the Ryots during the present world wide economic depression and warns it that unless suitable and immediate remedial measures are adopted, there are bound to be dangerous developments in the countryside.

2. This Conference requests Government to declare a state of "Moratorium" for at least six years as far as the agricultural indebtedness is concerned, in view of the present exceptional and ruinous pressure brought to bear upon the peasants by the money-lenders and the general state of insolvency being forced upon the peasants.

3. This Conference requests Government and the Members of the Legislative Assembly to take necessary steps to penalise a rate of interest higher than a prescribed rate in view of the fact that the rate charged for "Taccavi" loans is only 6 per cent and that charged by the Cooperative Banks only 9 per cent, whereas the Sowcars usually charge more than 15 per cent, thereby exploiting the ryots most mercilessly.

4. This Conference strongly protests against the unlawful and unusual action taken by the Imperial Bank and other Banks in trying to proceed against the other properties of their debtor-peasants for the balances due to them after selling away the paddy taken as go-down security for the money advanced, because the original security alone ought to be considered as full security.

5. This Conference requests Government and the Legislative Assembly to amend the Usurious Loans Act in such manner as to fix only annas Five and one third per month per cent as the only rate of interest to be charged by the Civil Courts upon all the sums that are brought to their notice ever since the complaints for the payment of such sums are made to the Courts.

6. This Conference suggests that there should be established for every District Statutory Debt Settlement Committees, having power to adjudicate disputes arising between the creditors and debtors, with a view to help debtors to get humane treatment from the creditors and that the decisions of such committees should be enforced, except under exceptional circumstances, by the Civil Courts.

7. This Conference warns the money-lenders including the Banks that it is suicidal for them to continue to press the ryots so urgently for the repayment of loans and requests them to agree as far as it is possible to collect the sums due to them in easy and convenient instalments and to charge on such sums only 6 per cent and to refrain from collecting any instalments till after the next three years.

We certainly do not wish for Moratorium for all debts and liabilities. For instance, we are opposed to its extension to the liabilities of people contracted in non-agricultural avocations. We also do not want it to be exploited by big Zamindars and merchants merely because they happen to possess land or they derive their incomes from lands and cultivation. Nor do we want it to cover the liabilities during these three years for purchasing other' lands cheaply and for venturing in quasi-agricultural pursuits since 1935.

This of course pre-supposes affording of protection not only to poor peasants who may be expected to have up to 15 acres but also the middle peasants who can have up to 30 acres of wet land. We plead for the extension of Moratorium for the middle-peasants also because many of them have already been reduced to destitution and if the protection of Moratorium is not extended to them, most of them will be much worse off than many poor peasants. Moreover, such protection, when offered and the repayment of debts, when begun, will result in the reduction of almost all the middle peasants only to the status of poor peasantry.

Therefore the Moratorium that we demand is to apply only to agricultural industry and to debts, contracted up to 1935 or even up-to-date either for paying off old debts, or purchase of lands at old pre-1930 prices (even if purchased since 1930) maintenance of family or payment of agricultural expenses, meeting demands of land revenue or rent, improvement of lands or construction of living house or cattle-shed, the celebration of marriages, etc. or standing surety for others. In all this, preference shall be given to debts contracted up to 1935 and those since made to meet former liabilities or agricultural and family expenses.

Banking Enquiry Committee, it devolved all responsibility for relieving the distress of our peasantry due to agricultural indebtedness upon the Provincial Government, thanks to the recommendation of the Economic Conference of 1934 held in Simla. It has so far refused to take any action, though the Central Assembly unanimously recommended in October 1936 to take some effective steps to help our peasants.

As contrasted with this refusal of Pre-Autonomy Governments to face the facts and discharge its responsibilities, the policy of the Indian National Congress stands out in great relief. The Faizpur session of the I.N.C. had decided in favour of the declaration of Moratorium and the President of the Congress assured the peasants in the National Convention held in March 1937 that an interim Moratorium would be declared. Within a month after assuming office, the U.P. Congress Ministry has declared interim Moratorium for arrears of rent, and the other Ministries are preparing their plans for declaring a state of Moratorium. So the Andhra Peasants who led the way, the Peasants Group of M.L.A's and the A.I.Kisan Sabha can congratulate themselves that their proposals are likely soon to be implemented.

THE IMPLEMENTING OF MORATORIUM *

It is being said by some of our Ministers that it is not so easy to work out the details of the Moratorium in practice as to talk about it. Though it is true that this question bristles with difficulties, its solution is not so difficult, if only we know why we want the declaration of Moratorium.

* On the initiative of Prof.N.G.Ranga the Madras State cooperative conference of 1931 favoured this proposal for Moratorium and led the way for other cooperators in India.(Ed)

Up to what limit of one's indebtedness is this Moratorium to be extended? Surely not to the enormous debts contracted by Zamindars.

What is the maximum limit of indebtedness to be covered by Moratorium? Just as much as will leave, after its clearance, at least 15 and at the most 20 acres of wet land or 30 and 40 acres of dry land to every able bodied member of a peasant's family. Since most of the paddy wet land used to sell, prior to 1930, at not less than a thousand rupees per acre, and that most of our peasants had borrowed up to 50% of their assets before the depression had set in, we have to exempt at least Rs.15,000 and up to Rs.25,000 for every adult peasant.

So far we have dealt with the debts incurred by himself or inherited by a peasant. There are in addition, many unfortunate peasants who have foolishly stood surety for many of their fellow peasants to the debts contracted by the latter either at the banks or private money-lenders or co-operative credit society. Almost all these people did so under the bona fide impression that their surety was only a courtesy and the assets of the real debtors were good enough to repay the debts. These people have also to be protected by our Moratorium. But how far? Up to just as much as their own original pre-1930 properties were worth i.e., Rs.30,000.

What will happen, once Moratorium is declared for all such agrarian indebtedness? All decrees, sale and attachment proceedings have to be stopped. No more proceedings shall be allowed by the courts for the realisation of debts.*

* As a result of Kisan agitation National Congress advised ministries. (1937-39) to afford the protection of Moratorium to our peasants and Rajajee and Pantjee, the then premiers led the way by declaring Moratorium in 1937-38. (Ed)

For how long shall the Moratorium continue? It is wrong to fix any maximum period of time for which alone the Moratorium is to be declared. It has to continue only for so long as the proposals for the final settlement of the agricultural indebtedness receive the necessary legislative and administrative sanction.

Will not the declaration of Moratorium dry up the flow of fresh credit into the agricultural industry? To some extent, it may have that effect. But we must realise the fact that even today the economic depression and the consequent inability of most of our peasants even to pay the interest on their debts has so far reduced the confidence of the money-lenders in the solvency of agriculturists as to prevent any flow of credit to finance agriculture. It is a wonder how our poor peasants have been carrying on their agricultural operations without even 25% of the usual flow of credit they need for financing their work. Part of the explanation may lie in the continuous sales of their gold and silver hoardings and another in their curtailing to the utmost their usual monetary transactions. Whatever it may be, in view of the unresponsive character of credit-market which has lasted for well over 7 years, not much harm can be done by Moratorium in checking the free flow of capital into agriculture.

Yet, the State has to take care to provide as freely as needed, cheap but well secured 'taccavi' credit to all those peasants who need it for really productive purposes.

There remains the question of defining the agriculturist. The Deccan Agriculturist Relief Act and the Punjab Land Alienation Act have defined this term and the recent Debt Conciliation Acts also have attempted. It is generally agreed

that everyone who either belongs to the hereditary castes of peasants or actually cultivates the land or gets it cultivated by others, through supervising its cultivation is an agriculturist. So the proper thing to do is to define a peasant, for the purposes of debt-redemption and the incidental Moratorium, as one who can be expected to have not more than 20 acres of wet land or 40 acres of dry land, after his debts are cleared off.

Once Moratorium is declared and peasants and workers are given some breathing time, free from the harassment of the creditors, Courts and Civil Debtors' Jailors, our Ministries have to get busy to enunciate the principles along which the settlement and liquidation of agricultural debts are to be achieved in the immediate future. The U.P. Government has already declared, in effect, a Moratorium for the arrears of rent and if we trust the Press Reports, all the Congress Ministries have their schemes of Moratorium on the anvil.

It is meet that we shall concern ourselves with the discussion of the principles that ought to be followed in achieving agrarian debt redemption. Once these principles are settled upon, we can expect the Debt Settlement Committees, to consist of equal representatives of creditors and debtors and presided over by a Judicial Officer.

To start with, (a) it is but reasonable to expect, all the accumulations of interest over and above 3% simple interest, ought to be cancelled.

(b) Then the original sum borrowed plus the interest, as settled by (a), minus the subsequent repayments made by debtors and the interest thereon has to be scaled down in proportion to the fall in prices of assets of our peasants.

(c) Before coming to the stage of settling how the liabilities of our peasants as determined in the manner outlined in (b), care must be taken to see that a minimum holding and agricultural stock and implements and living quarters and stables are left to every peasant in order to enable him to carry on his occupation, even after setting aside the rest of the property of peasants for either paying off the whole of the outstanding debt or calculating the repaying capacity of debtors, through a large number of small annual instalments.

(d) As far as possible, it must be seen that no more lands of peasants are alienated either to creditors or others in repayment of debts, unless the debtors themselves prefer such an alienation to having to repay their debts through instalments.

(e) Only non-agricultural landed properties, as are not needed for the minimum comforts of peasants, and cattle and other animals as are not needed for normal agricultural purposes, can be alienated in order to pay off the outstanding liabilities of our peasants.

(f) In regard to the number of instalments in which to repay their debts, our peasants claim that at least a period of sixty years ought to be allowed, as is the case in most of the European and American countries. The chief consideration that ought to weigh with our legislators is the capacity of our peasants to pay the instalments, after maintaining themselves on at least the minimum standard of living. Therefore such instalments ought to be as low as possible and so, the period in which the debts ought to be made repayable ought not to be less than sixty years.

(g) In view of the fact that most of the creditors have already realised more than 75% of the capital invested by them and the outstanding liabilities are to be paid really from out of the hard-earned incomes of peasants, no interest ought to be allowed on the outstanding liabilities, during the period of repayment.

(h) Coming to the properties already alienated, either voluntarily or compulsorily through the mediation of Courts, although there is much to be said for the re-opening of all such transactions as involve the agricultural lands of debtors, it certainly is much more practicable and fair to re-open only those transactions in which agricultural lands had been purchased by the very money-lenders or Zamindars to whom the peasants concerned owed their debts. The creditors can be given the choice of either paying to the debtors the difference between the price of such lands as ruled in the pre-depression period and that at which they were actually taken possession of by the money-lenders. But such repayments ought not to be liable to be distributed again among all the creditors on the plea that they had received only a partial payment for their claims.

2. (a) The next question that has to be examined is the economic position of the creditors themselves. Some of them may themselves be the debtors of either Banks or Co-operative Banks and therefore be in need of the same kind of accommodation and help as is extended to their debtors. Suitable protective measures have to be taken to help these creditors.

(b) Some of the creditors may be in such unenviable economic conditions as to be threatened with immediate

insolvency, if they have to wait for a long time to receive the full payment from their debtors. To help all such persons, the Government may come forward, as was suggested even by the Central Banking Enquiry Committee, to help such people in some suitable manner i.e., by issuing them marketable debentures carrying nominal interest and recovering in its turn, such sums from our peasants. The Government, of course, has to lose something in the way of the interest payable and the management of such debts.

3.(a) We have then to consider the fear, felt even by many of our peasants, that if Moratorium were declared and the existing agrarian indebtedness is sought to be liquidated as suggested in our proposal 2, then the whole credit-worthiness of our peasants may evaporate and no creditors may be willing to advance any credit to our masses. We must however remember that even today not even 25% of as much fresh credit is being supplied as in the past and yet our peasants are somehow managing to carry on their agriculture. That does not mean that our peasants have not suffered much owing to the growing irresponsiveness of our credit market. It only means that in the past our peasants were either induced or encouraged to borrow much more than was actually needed by them. Yet it is necessary to make adequate arrangements for the supply of credit for the current needs of our peasants and workers. The following proposals are suggested to meet this need.

a) Let there be established, straight-away, in all the villages as ask for them, Co-operative Credit Societies organised and controlled by peasants and workers themselves, but guided by Co-operative Inspectors of the Co-operative Department.

b) Government shall stipulate that every bank, plying its trade, must advance up to at least 1/32 of its investments, at 3%, to the Central Provincial Co-operative Bank to enable it to lend that credit to our peasants at not more than 4%. Private money-lenders also can be encouraged to invest their money in the Provincial Co-operative Bank at 3 %. Thus we can get enough credit needed for agricultural finance.

c) The Provincial Government has to advance at least a crore of rupees to the Provincial Co-operative Bank to be distributed among peasants, through the Village Co-operative Credit Banks but in accordance with the Taccavi Acts, which have to be properly amended.

d) All private money-lending shall be declared illegal.

e) No peasant shall be allowed to borrow from any-one but a Co-operative Credit Bank and also from only one Co-operative Credit Bank. The credit-worthiness of every peasant in a village shall be estimated by the Co-operative Bank which is authorised to lend him money and a peasant must have the right to appeal against the estimate made by his local Co-operative Bank to the district Co-operative Bank, which must be aided, in all such matters, by the Advisory Committee of Kisans and Muzdoors.

f) The land of the peasants ought not to be alienated, hereafter, in satisfaction of any debts to any private individual. If at all, any peasant were to fall into arrears, continuously for six years or fails to pay his arrears, District Co-operative Bank in consultation with the local Advisory committee his lands ought to be transferred to the ownership of the Co-operative Bank. But such land can be allowed to be cultivated

by the defaulting peasants with the assurance that they can resume the ownership of their lands if and when they pay the arrears and continue to pay the usual instalments, payable in satisfaction of any fresh credit taken by them from the Banks. If, however, such peasants do not pay up their arrears within 6 years of normal economic conditions, then their lands shall become the entire property of the Co-operative Credit Banks.

Let it not be understood that through these measures we want to dry up the credit market or deprive peasants of their right to alienate their lands. We want to save the peasants in spite of themselves, since most of our small holders have shown, incapacity to look after themselves, thanks to their ignorance and the viles of money-lenders. We also want to prevent any further alienation of peasants lands, which, if allowed as in the past, will result in great harm to the interests of their heirs, in order not to swell ranks of the unemployed and landless labourers.

All this takes it for granted that our Provincial Ministries are prepared to take energetic and comprehensive action in redeeming the existing indebtedness of our peasants and also in providing enough credit to satisfy the current needs for agricultural credit. It implies the readiness of Government to establish, finance, supervise and guide Co-operative Credit Banks on as wide a scale as is needed, and the Capacity and willingness of the peasants to work the Co-operative Banks and safeguard their finances, by administering its banking activities as wisely as possible.

No one need fear that these assumptions are not capable of realisation. Our Provincial Congress Ministries, which are capable of declaring a 'Moratorium' and raise a

crore loan per each province for developmental purposes within a month after coming into power, can certainly be trusted to take prompt action in this direction. Russia, which has marked the greatest progress in co-operative movement since 1917, shows us the possibilities for the extension of co-operative if only the provincial government cooperative if only the provincial government cooperated whole heartedly with the public and the Congress, Muzdoor and Kisan Sabhas. The necessary educational work in the principles and practices of Co-operative Banking can and ought to be given to all the co-operators in order to fit them for their work.

Let it be remembered, however, that agricultural credit is needed for our peasants not only for redeeming their old debts and financing their current needs but also for encouraging them to adopt better methods of cultivation and increase their capacity to produce better and more variegated agricultural wealth. It is, therefore, extremely necessary to metamorphos the instrument of credit from a deadly and suicidal instrument into a heartening and progressive stimulant to all our peasantry so as to achieve at the earliest the re-organisation of agriculture and the happiness of our peasantry.

Moderate though these proposals are, when contrasted with the anxiety of many of our Kisan comrades, they are much more radical than the schemes so far propounded by the advocates of rural reconstruction and the proposals, embodied in the pre-autonomy legislation. They, are however, moderate and minimum enough to be immediately implemented by any Ministry which is really sincere in its desire and professions to rescue our peasants. My Kisan comrades must remember that even under the existing very

inadequate Debt Settlement Laws of C.P., when the Debt Settlement Committees had succeeded (in 1935-36) September) in conciliating debts amounting to Rs.187 lakhs for Rs.98.93 lakhs and effected a remission of 47% our proposals must result in much more remission and much greater protection of our peasants.

On the other hand, moderates and supporters of the capitalists may criticise our proposals by saying that we propose to go too far. They may prefer the licensing of private money lenders - a device adopted by some provincial councils of 1936 to our suggestion of penalising all private money lending to our peasants and workers. But they have to remember that this system of private money-lending has landed us in our present deplorable agrarian indebtedness and has caused the ruin of millions of our peasants and workers and that it is indeed a great concession that we are prepared to agree to, to allow them to lend to our Co-operative Credit Banks, all their available capital at 3% simple interest. Let it also be remembered that we only propose to go a little further than sections 60 and 61 of Civil Procedure Code when we want the minimum holding and agricultural stock of our peasants to be exempted from their liability for repaying debts. We are not satisfied with the Punjab Land Alienation Act since it has nevertheless resulted in the ruinous transfer of lands from small holders to the bigger landholders, many of whom are fast becoming absentee-landlords. Hence our proposal that no lands shall be alienated for the repayment of old debts, if the peasants desire to retain their lands and peasants' lands shall be hereafter made inalienable to any private money-lender. Our other proposal that all arrears of accumulated interest, over and above 3% simple shall be cancelled, is also reasonable, since the incapacity of our

peasants to repay anything does not properly admit of even that much of remuneration to the capitalists, to whose trade our Kisans are so much opposed.

Estimates of Rural Indebtedness

(Made by the Central Banking Enquiry Committee
in 1929)

		in crores of Rs.
Assam	—	22
Bengal	—	100
Bihar and Orissa	—	155
Bombay	—	81
Burma	—	50-60
Central Areas	—	18
C.P.	—	36
Coorg	—	35 to 50
Madras	—	150
Punjab	—	135
U.P.	—	124
		===
	Total	900
		===

CHAPTER V

RYOTWARI LAND REVENUE SYSTEM

Our Land Revenue System has as ancient a history as our own Nation, since it has assumed its organised and civilised social structure. The Hindu Rajahs and Maharajahs, who had as much respect towards ancient laws and established conventions and precedents as the British rulers, had tacitly admitted the right of the actual cultivator of the soil for the permanency of tenure, subject to the payment of the share of the State in the produce of the land. It is of little importance to practical politicians and economists and less so to the peasants to know whether or not the Hindu Rulers considered themselves as the owners of all the cultivated land and uncultivated but cultivable land, or admitted peasants into their cultivation as tenants at will. Suffice it to say that in actual practice, the right of the peasants for permanency of tenure over the land they cultivated came to be established by custom and respected by practice. In some places, it was the individual who was made responsible for the payment of the Rajabhaga or Land Revenue. In others, it was the village Community of cultivators, through the Patel or the elders who were held responsible, having the power to distribute the lands between the various peasants within the village. All the same, through-

out the Hindu period the right of permanency of tenure was exercised by peasants either severally or jointly.

The Mahabharat itself admits that Rajabhaga is one-sixth of the total produce of the land, leaving the remaining 5/6th to the peasants. The Arthashastra of Kautilya of the third century B.C. confirms this. Historians are all agreed that this demand was not constant but used to vary, ofcourse in upward direction and to the detriment of peasants throughout the Hindu Period. Our information regarding the process of ascertaining the gross produce from every field in every village, collecting the 1/6th or other share of the State etc., is very meagre but if we are to be guided by the practices obtaining in the Indian States and many Zamindaries, which must be largely survivals of the ancient practices, surely our ancestors could not have fared well under that ancient Hindu system.

We have more information regarding the Land Revenue system of the Moghuls, thanks to the researches of Moreland and others. The rights of peasants to permanency of tenure does not seem to have been generally disputed for any length of time in any extensive area, although in various places at different times the local Zamindars seem to have unjustly driven away peasants and misappropriated their lands and other properties, and threatened others with similar fate if they did not accept their unfair demands.

It is true that during their three centuries of ascendancy, the land revenue demand grew from 1/6th of the gross produce to 1/2 of it, what with various ~~abwabs~~ ^{abwabs} and additional imposts levied successively at various times. Excepting Akbar, no great Moghul ruler attempted to develop

a settled and uniform policy of land revenue for the whole of the kingdom. Even Akbar had to vary the incidence and scope of applicability of his system with special reference to the varying degree of his ascendancy in different parts of India.

The system of Zamindars or Talukdars or such other middlemen seems to have been used from very ancient times by our rulers to collect the land revenue demand. These people at the same time military overlords of their jurisdiction, had always exercised undue power and advantage over peasants and did not scruple to exploit and suppress their peasants, to pay for their ever-growing needs of civilised existence. It has therefore come about that they had gone on adding their own 'cesses' to the States' land revenue demand, and left the poor peasants with hardly anything with which to meet their costs of cultivation and minimum costs of living. What wonder then is there that when the British government took over the land revenue administration of Bengal, they found the peasants in a wretched condition and felt pity for them,* in spite of their own collusion with the Zamindars, the 'oppressors' according to them in the act of extracting the last drop of blood from the impoverished peasants ? Sir Thomas Munroe had to take special steps to induce Madras peasants to go back from Mysore. Whether they flee, to their villages and lands which they had abandoned because of their inability to meet the demands of the State.

*" So far from being generously treated by the Zamindars, the Bengal cultivator was rackrented, impoverished and oppressed, that the government of India felt compelled to intervene on his behalf and by a series of legislative measures that commenced with the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1859 and culminating with the act of 1885, to place him in the position of greater security which he now enjoys " (PP-6. Land Revenue policy of the Indian Government. Lord curzon)

It was only in 1935 that the Loharu State had to take coercive steps to bring back its peasants to their villages from the forests whither they flew to escape from the unbearable taxes. In many Zamindars of various provinces, many peasants are today abandoning their lands and fleeing to Burma, Malay States, etc., so onerous have their arrear of rent and land revenue demands grown to be and so valueless have their lands become.

The British administration, where it had established or recognised the Ryotwari settlement, particularly in Madras, Bombay and parts of C.P. and the Punjab, has succeeded in bettering this position and ridding this system of most of its gross evils. From being half of the gross value and more, the revenue demand has come, by successive stages, thanks to sympathetic administrators like Sir Thomas Munroe and Elphinstone, politicians like R.C. Dutt and high dignitaries like Lord Curzon, to absorb half the net value* in theory, and much more in practice. Even Lord Curzon had to admit and the general experience of our peasants confirmed that, often the stated land revenue demand, which in theory has to be only 1/2 net rental value in Bombay, and 1/2 net income in Madras, has come to be much more than that, even amounting to 3/4ths of the net income. The Godavari-Krishna Economic Enquiry Committee of the Madras Council, of which I was the official Secretary, found that a large majority of petty land owners having five acres of wet land or less are obliged to pay a portion of their land revenue from out of their portion of their gross produce which ought to be set aside for the cost of cultivation, and so the land revenue is constantly encroaching upon the capital value of the land itself. This conclusion holds good for other parts of Madras Presidency and Bombay also.

Therefore, though in the direction of surveying the lands, maintaining records of the rights and granting remissions in times of extreme distress and famine, the British administration has marked much progress, in regard to the actual incidence of land revenue upon the majority of peasants, it has meant no improvement, owing to the extreme and continuous subdivision of land and the consequent unprofitableness of cultivation, and the wholesome rise in the standard of life of the peasant as well as the worker.

It is but stating the bare truth of existing conditions of peasants' life of to-day, to say that the majority of our peasants are obliged to go without any remuneration at all for their family labour and supervision contributed to the cultivation of their land, in addition to some slight losses of capital or with a continuous growth of debts, incurred on the security of the capital value of their lands and other property in order to meet their land revenue demand. Hence the Universal demand made by politicians, economists and welfare workers to exempt all uneconomic holdings from land revenue demand.

* The Mahabharat prescribes that 1/6th of the gross produce should be taken by the king. The following is a comparison of that standard with the rate of assessment under the British rule:

"The report from the central provinces shows that the proportion to produce of the gross rental ranges from the 1/6th to 1/4th and that the enforcement of any such standard would double the liabilities of the Ryots". (pp.16, *ibid*).

Lord Curzon quotes the opinion of the Madras Government that if 1/5th of gross produce is accepted as the rate of assessment it will double the present land revenue. He further quotes from the Famine commission report (paragraphs 261-268) that the proportion of existing land revenue to the gross produce is 4% in central provinces, 7% in Berar, 10% in Ajmer, 7% in Deccan etc.

What is the general attitude of the State regarding this Revenue demand? It no longer finds it profitable to claim that all lands belong to it and therefore it has the right to charge whatever rent it likes, as witnessed by the Taxation Inquiry Committee's Report. It does not even disclaim all responsibilities to the welfare of the peasants in so far as this demand is concerned as evidenced by the Resolution in Council of the Governor-General of 1902. Both Lord Curzon and the Taxation Enquiry Committee are agreed that the land revenue demand is too high and must be lowered. The former wants the resettlement exhauncements never to exceed $18\frac{3}{4}\%$, provided the total assessment is only 50% of the net income, and the latter desires that resettlement ought to be stopped and the total assessment restricted as far as possible to 25% of the net income.

The joint Parliamentary Committee of 1919 suggested that the system of land revenue should be considered by the Legislatures and legislated upon, and left the incidence of it to be decided by the legislators. Bombay and Punjab alone have legislated for it. They fixed the amount that can be demanded as land revenue, at 50% of the net rental value, including within the definition of costs of cultivation, the contribution made by the peasant and his family and at a reasonable return for his capital and enterprise.

In actual practice, except for a few exceptional cases, at every resettlement in Bombay and Madras, an enhancement of land revenue demand, often exceeding the $18\frac{3}{4}\%$ limit prescribed by Lord Curzon, was made owing to the surreptitious increases made through the alterations in classification of land, (either 'taramwar' or sources of irrigation. This

system of course is highly defective and unjust and causes much harm to peasants, in that it is based on wrong and undependable calculations and gives no room for adequate remissions when prices fall or crops fail or both happen at one and the same time. Hence the decision of the Punjab Government to introduce sliding scales, according to which the demand is to go up or down in proportion to the rise or fall in prices over an agreed number of years.

But the whole system of land revenue assessment and resettlements based upon wrong and unjustifiable and unverifiable factors and assumptions. The Madras Government had to confess, in 1931, that there was no agreed and scientific system for calculating either costs of cultivation or standard of living. The method of ascertaining the gross yields of different crops on different kinds of lands, so far adopted by the State is wholly unscientific. The Government's methods of ascertaining prices of commodities and estimating the sowings and yields of different crops were found to be highly defective by the Bowley-Robertson Economic Enquiry Committee, and the Bloomfield Inquiry in the Bardoli Resettlement of Bombay. These inquiries have also established the highly undependable character of the calculations made by the Settlement officers in their attempt to ascertain the so-called net income, increase in net income and rise in the price-level. Hence the 1937 Madras Land Revenue Committee makes recommendations, which are subsequently accepted by the Interim Ministry, to stop all these calculations, abandon further resettlements and cancel the resettlement enhancements imposed upon a number of districts.

If resettlements are thus to be stopped, is there to be permanent settlement ? Not so, say the Taxation Enquiry

Committee, and the 1937 Madras Land Revenue Enquiry Committee. The former suggests that up to 25% of the land revenue, (which has to be lowered so far as to absorb generally 25% of net income from land), could be levied by the Local Boards to meet their local civic demands, and the latter recommended that on the advent of exceptional needs of the State for additional revenue, the Legislature alone should have the right to impose additional surcharges on the present land revenue demand. But unfortunately, neither of them is in favour of exempting uneconomic holdings from assessment.

What does the Congress want to do for our peasants ? It wants to exempt all uneconomic holdings from land revenue assessment. It wishes to effect either 50% or as great a reduction as possible in the land revenue demand. Though none has said it in so many words, the recommendations of the Madras Committee, the decision of the Madras Government and the Congress Agrarian Programme imply the stoppage of all normal growth of land revenue demand. There may be a decrease but there cannot be an increase, barring exceptional circumstances, according to the decision of the Madras Government in July 1937.

What reduction in the present land revenue assessment is possible to be made without any detriment to the present financial adjustments and commitments of the provincial Governments ? Our South Indian peasants' movement demanded 33.35% reduction, the Madras Legislative Council asked in 1933 and 1934 for 25% reduction, and the pre-reform Madras Government gave 25.5% reduction and protested against its inability to grant any more without jeopardising its financial stability. But post-reform Interim Ministry ordered 25% reduction and one need not be surprised if the Congress

Ministry finds it possible to order 100/3 reduction, since really the Madras Government finances permit so much concession. The Bombay Government also ought to be able to concede just as much.

Will not these concessions mean a considerable loss of revenue to the provincial Governments? They do. How can then our provincial governments finance themselves? In one of two ways; either by a drastic economy in establishment and the scale of remuneration or by tapping additional sources of revenue, or both.

The exemption of all uneconomic holdings from payment of land revenue will cost at least half the income now derived from that source by the Bombay, Madras and Punjab Governments*. Such a loss cannot be met to any considerable extent by a cut in salaries, since the Government of India Act (1935) prevents the reduction in salaries and allowances of all those officers engaged before 1930. Nor can it be made good, except to a slight extent, by the introduction of new scales of pay for new incumbents. Indeed what may be gained by possible economies in land revenue department owing to cessation of resettlement operations will be nothing when compared to the immense additional sums to be spent on new social services, so badly needed.

Therefore additional sources of income have to be tapped to make good at least a greater portion of this loss.

* The total net income from land revenue, derived by the Governments of Madras, Bombay and Punjab, in the financial year ending 31st, March 1936, was Rs. 10.48 crores. So nearly 5 crores will have to be made up from other sources of revenue or economy, if un economical holdings or exempted from assesment in these three provinces.

It is quite legitimate for the Congress Cabinet to tax the unearned incomes derived by speculators and others by the sales of land. Such sales of land as have been inherited and alienated for redeeming debts or for purchasing other and more profitable lands will not be taxed.

Lastly, the present irrigation cess will have to be so far reduced and re-modelled as to suffice for the payment of interest and amortisation charges on the capital invested upon the irrigational projects, and just for the maintenance and development of additional non-paying irrigation projects needed for famine protection. Such a cess need not be more than half of the present cess.*

But our peasants will not be satisfied with this alone. They want an immediate re-orientation in the policy of public expenditure of the State, so that they can derive more active benefit from it and thus recover from their present abject poverty, helplessness and ignorance.

I hope it will be remembered by everybody that our Indian peasant has been bled so mercilessly and continuously ever since the emergence of the Modern State, and that the chief engine of oppression utilised to exploit him has been so largely the land revenue system, that the Congress Ministers have no other choice but to tackle this knotty question of land revenue, and scrupulously try to implement their own agrarian and Karachi programmes without any delay. A real transfusion of blood alone and that too, quickly can give relief as well as satisfaction to our peasants.

* The total receipts from irrigation revenues in the financial year 1935 to 36 were Rs. 13.08 crores and the working expenses for the same year were Rs.4.84 crores, thus leaving a net surplus of Rs.8.24 crores. If we deduct from this Rs.5.76 crores as interest charges on a capital outlay of nearly 149 crores we are left with a net income of Rs. 2.48 crores.

CHAPTER VI

THE FATE OF THE ZAMINDARI TENANTS

THE economic condition of the tenants under the Zamindari system is very much worse and more depressed than that of the Ryotwari ryots. Hence the universal minimum demand of the Zamindari ryots that they must be placed at least on the same status vis-a-vis their tax-collectors as the Ryotwari ryots.

Surely this is an extraordinarily strange demand, for the economic plight of the Ryotwari ryots is itself most unenviable and insupportable.

The Taxation Enquiry Committee found that the Ryotwari ryots are mostly very much depressed by the excessive and repressive incidence of land revenue assessments and Lord Curzon's Government admitted almost as much. Even the latest Committee of the Madras Government said, "it holds no brief for the principles of this land revenue system," and suggested a reduction of the land revenue demand to the level of that prevailing in 1923-24, and wanted that in no case should this demand be more than 25% of the net income from land. Even the most moderate nationalist daily like the

"Hindu" of Madras strongly contested the suggestion of this Committee that when exceptional financial exigencies of the State demand it, the Legislature may be empowered to levy a surcharge not exceeding an anna in the rupee during the first ten years. In fact, it agrees with the proposal made by the Congress and incorporated in our Kisan Charter of Minimum Demands that a holding yielding less than a minimum annual income shall be exempted from the incidence of land revenue just like the exempted minimum earnings of the income-tax payers. When such radical reforms are demanded almost in one voice by all the nationalists and the public, as a minimum demand in the interest of the Ryotwari ryots, it certainly is an extraordinary phenomenon that the zamindari tenants shall be asking, as their minimum demand, simply to be placed on the same footing as Ryotwari ryots. Their present economic sufferings must indeed be awful and intolerable.

THE PATHETIC WANT OF ANY SYSTEM IS INDEFENSIBLE

What is their present plight ? These Zamindari, ryots enjoy permanency of tenure in Madras, Bengal and Bihar but have yet to gain it in parts of Orissa, C.P., Assam and U.P., whereas the Ryotwari ryots are practically the absolute owners of their holdings. Their lands, unlike those in Ryotwari areas, are not in many places either surveyed or settled. Their land revenue assessment, still known as rent is, in great many cases, yet to be settled according to the far from scientific criteria specified by the various tenancy laws. It is fixed either in terms of grain or in proportion to the crops grown or in some arbitrary manner, having little to do with the actual area of the land, its fertility and yield and the ability of the peasants to pay it. The governments's system of land revenue assesment is

unscientific and arbitrary enough but this pathetic want of any system for fixing the rent the Zamindars is, to say the least, indefensible.

RYOTWARI RYOTS Vs ZAMINDARI RYOTS

The contrast does not end there. The rights conceded to the Ryotwari ryot to claim remission of land revenue on all his wet lands and to expect it on his dry lands in times of famine or general failure of crops, is not yet enjoyed by the Zamindari ryots. The Government ryot has only to pay one rate per acre upon all his dry lands irrespective of the crop raised, whereas the Zamindari ryot has often to pay different rents according to the different crops he raises. The former is free to raise whatever crop and in whatever season he likes with or without the aid of private tanks or wells, whereas the latter is obliged to pay higher garden rates upon his crops raised under the wells or tanks which he himself constructed. The present land revenue officials are addicted largely to the vice of bribery and their tolls upon the peasants are high, but they are anger when compared to the Zamindari officials. In fact, the former are more or less adequately paid while the latter are the most inadequately paid and so have a greater inducement to supplement their earnings by taking bribes right and left. The repairs of tanks and other water supply resources are done in time though not adequately by the Government, thanks to the Tank Restoration Schemes while the irrigation works of the Zamindars are mostly in bad repairs and their tenants have little effectual power to get them repaired in time or adequately. The records of rights are not half as efficiently and conscientiously kept by the Zamindars as by the government's Land Revenue Departments, with the result that the tenants of the zamindars are very much in the hands

of their officials. These tenants are subject to a veritable day to day persecution by even the petty forest officials of the zamindars, in regard to their need for forest produce such as fodder, fuel and timber and there is nothing like the establishment of Forest Panchayats, as in the Madras Ryotwari areas. They are obliged to pay a number of illegal cesses, imposed upon them for no legitimate and known reason while the Government ryots have to pay no such abwabs (illegal cesses). Even in regard to social services, the Land Mortgage Banks do not like to lend any sums to these unfortunate tenants, since their lands are subject to the first charge claimed by the Zamindars to recover their rents. The Ryotwari ryot can obtain better, cheaper and more adequate justice from the Courts than the Zamindari tenants and is, moreover, comparatively free from the persecution of the Government, while on the other hand any tenant who dare dispute the arbitrary imposts or claims of his Zamindar is marked out as a disloyal tenant who ought to be persecuted.

Except for the small cesses levied by the Local Boards over most of which the Zamindars have presided till now, these landlords have contributed almost nothing either directly or indirectly through the state to the continued and progressive improvement of the economic conditions of these unfortunate tenants. An account is rendered, however unsatisfactory it may be, for every pie of land revenue collected by the State, the manner of its collection and expenditure to the public through the provincial Legislatures, but the landlords are not responsible to anyone for the enormous sums they collect as rents and spend as their private revenues.

It is this vicious, wasteful and ruinous system that our peasants wish to see abolished. They cannot understand, why

in the name of justice, they shall be condemned to this unmitigated persecution especially when their brethren, the Ryotwari ryots cultivating the lands in the same way for generations together are dealt with more humanely and given better facilities and greater rights. So they want to be immediately placed on the same footing as the Government ryots.

VESTED INTERESTS

But our Zamindars maintain that they have legitimate rights over their domains, inherited from their ancestors; that their claims to collect rents from the tenants are just as justifiable as that of the tenants for the permanency of tenure. In support of these claims they are often able not only to point out the terms of Permanent settlement but also to flourish the Sanads granted to them by the Mahommedan and the Hindu Kings. What are we to do with these well-documented vested interests? Are they inviolable? Our only answer is that their rights, whatever they are, have to be justified by the public good they confer either to-day in the immediate future. Any institution, however hoary with past glories, must be replaced by a more modern, useful and beneficial one if its continued existence cannot be justified and does mean the infliction of positive harm to the present and future generations. Judged from that standard, this Zamindari system is to-day a wasteful and inefficient one causing great harm to peasants and resulting in suicidal diversion of enormous public revenues, amounting to Rs 64 crores per annum, into the private pockets of the Zamindars, whose ideas and practices of expenditure are inimical to the progress of our masses and the well-being of our peasants. The present Land Revenue Survey and Settlement system is more efficient, cheaper and scientific than that of the Zamindars and so must replace the other. The

existing practice of devoting the proceeds of land revenue of the Government to public welfare and administration is superior to the Zamindari absorption of rents paid by the tenants and so must be extended to cover the latter also. (*Vide the Modern Indian peasant*)

TREAT ALL TAX-PAYERS ALIKE

Moreover there is no justice in subjecting these large masses of peasants to this most repressive and unscientific system of land revenue and rent, while exempting the minimum incomes from all non-agricultural sources from the incidence of income-tax. So all incomes be treated alike and let not the possession of land continue any longer to be a curse rather than a blessing. Our peasants ought to be, if at all, treated more leniently than the non-agricultural classes in virtue of the arduous and extremely hazardous nature of their occupation but if the financial exigencies of the State do not permit it, let them be taxed and treated at least in the same way as all others. Hence our demand is to exempt all incomes below Rs.500 per annum from the levy of any direct tax rent or revenue demand.

II

ORIGIN OF THE ZAMINDARI SYSTEM

Even their history does not justify the claims of the Zamindars. There was never any time in our modern history when the ancestors of these Zamindars had created their rights over their lands through actually cultivating them, or by investing their capital and bringing lands under cultivation through their own enterprise and diligent industry. Barring a

few, who had come into their Zamindari rights by their own purchases, the Zamindars have come down to us from the Hindu and the Mahommedan periods as the intermediary agencies utilised by the State to serve its own convenience for the purpose of collecting land revenue and maintaining law and order in their respective areas on behalf of the State. The Hindu Kings as well as the Nawabs and Emperors made use of these Zamindars only to that extent as was necessary and conferred upon them such rights and demanded the performance of such duties and the payment of such taxes and 'Nazaranas' as was deemed necessary and available by them. It is true that during the reign of some weak Maharaja or Nawab, some Zamindars used to declare themselves independent of any superior ruler. It is also true that several of them were passing in quick succession from the status of independent Rajas to dependent Zamindars, and vice versa, with the result that their ryots had got into the habit of looking upon them as really independent Kings.

But there is no doubt that during the reign of strong, vigorous and vigilant rulers like Chandra gupta, Asoka, Samudragupta, and the Kakatiya Emperors, Akbar and Krishna Dev Rai II, most of the Zamindars were strictly controlled and their powers restricted and their duties carefully limited and specified. At no time were these Zamindars considered to be the absolute owners of all the lands within their jurisdiction; immovable from their Zamindaries, and entitled to the rights of Zamindaries, irrespective of the functions they had to perform within the ambit of the State machinery. They were always treated as State functionaries, certainly enjoying a favoured position but equally obliged to perform certain well-understood public functions. Their most important functions, the maintenance of a certain section of the

national defence forces, has come to be taken over by the State. Their next most important duty, that of collecting land revenue from the peasants, is today being discharged by the State's own Land Revenue department much more scientifically, economically and certainly less unsatisfactorily. Therefore their appeal to history and its obligations cannot really take them very far or induce us to moderate or postpone our minimum demands.

But as a matter of practical politics, we may have to consider the attitude as well as the pledges given by the British Government and its predecessors, the East India Company. On a closer examination, however, we find that the attitude of the British towards these Zamindars has not been uniform, that the British rulers are not so unavoidably committed to the maintenance of their system* irrespective of the practical exigencies of the State, and that the practice of British Government in India has so far tended only to restrict the rights of the Zamindars and to offer greater and greater protection to the tenants. In fact, in the early days of the Diwani in Bengal, the British administrators were far from friendly with the Zamindars. They had even gone to the extent of "appointing energetic young men of Britain as Supervisors", to protect the tenants from the rapacity of the Zamindars, to restrict the latter's arbitrary rights, in addition to augmenting the incomes of the State from land revenue. Not so long after, i.e., in 1793, the Permanent Settlement of Bengal was established with a view to make peace with the Zamindars and ensure political safety for the British Regime. It was stated quite clearly in the Sanads issued to the zamindars under the Permanent Settlement that they had to look after their tenants in addition to their paying regularly the "Peshkush" due to the State. But as time

went on, most of the Zamindars had become heartless and indifferent towards the fate of the their tenants. They began to enhance the rent and imposed ever new cesses. A new generation fo British Collectors and Judges succeeded the Supervisors. They knew nothing of the history and the functions of Zamindars little understood the functions of their predecessors. The supervisors cared not for the real welfare of the peasants, and they took them to be the counterparts of the British Landlords, and so came to deny the very existence of the hard-earned and long-standing rights of the tenants for permanent occupancy. The Zamindars took the fullest possible advantage of this fortuitous conspiracy* of events, and played havoc in ruining the peasants by raising rents, increasing acwabs and evicting former tenants. The great Indian Mutiny has also helped them, by making the Government lean on them more and more.

BENGAL TENANTS' REBELLION

But the Bengal tenants rose in rebellion in unorganised and spontaneous manner against this oppression, and carried on a violent and vigorous agitation against the Zamindars

* Mr. Becher, the resident in Durbar for Bengal says about these zamindars; "they should know that on proof of any oppression, they should forfeit their zamindari for ever (page.42.ibid). The dreadful famine of 1770 wiped out atleast 11% of population of Bengal. But the net collection of Revenue 1771, was even more thabn that of 1768. The resident at the court of Bengal says, "that diminution of revenue should have kept an equal pace with the other consequences of so great a calamity, that is the famine and that it doesnot was owing to its being violently kept up to its former standard with the help of such taxes as the NAJAY"(p.146.ibid)

NAJAY is the tax levied on a tenant if his neighbour ran away without paying rent or revenue.

between 1858 to 1878. Even the well established British raj had to recognise the strength of the peasant's discontent, as expressed in the sporadic outbursts of violence against the Zamindars and their agents, raids upon Zamindars' properties and refusal to pay any land revenue. So a committee of Inquiry was appointed in Bengal in 1885, and the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885, was passed on its recommendations. By this Act, the Bengal tenants more or less gained permanency of occupation in their lands.

The passing of the Bengal Tenancy Law has marked the beginning of a change of policy of the British towards the Zamindars. It was followed by the North West Frontier Tenancy Law, the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1901, the Deccan Agriculturists' Act of 1875 the Madras Estates Land Act of 1908, the C.P. Tenancy Law of 1890, the Agra Tenancy act of 1925 and the Bihar Tenancy Law of 1927 and 1936. Through all this legislation, the British Government has first of all established the right and the duty of the State to interfere in the relations subsisting between the Zamindars and the tenants, and thus to protect the interests of the latter as against the former. It has asserted the claim of the State to continuously step forward to regulate their mutual relations and to condition the rights and the privileges of the Zamindars even under Permanent Settlement. Thus the difference in the status of the Zamindars under temporary and permanent settlements was done away with except for the fact that the former's contribution to the State was temporarily fixed, whereas the latter's was permanently settled, whereas the tenants of both are granted permanent occupancy rights. This is a great gain.

ZAMINDARS TAKEN AS ALLIES :

But, between 1920-35, a change has come upon the British in India. They no longer feel any sympathy towards our peasants. They have realised that an alliance with Zamindars is more profitable for them and their Empire than any flirtation with the masses. The emergence of Zamindars almost all over India as a political force, cooperating with the British through working the constitution has awakened the British to the realities of practical politics and driven them into an alliance with the Zamindars. Hence the acceptance by Parliament of the recommendation of the J.P.C. that any bill affecting the permanent settlement should obtain the previous sanction of the Government ~~should obtain the previous sanction of the Governor~~ before it could be introduced into the Legislature.

Referring to the speech made by the Premier of U.P. regarding the uselessness of the zamindari system, the "Statesman" wrote: "Whatever is in store for so-called vested interests, they have had a long innings and the land holders have conspicuously failed to give that leadership to the country masses that in other countries has made the rural districts a stronghold of conservatism" (10th August 1937).

The 1939 Prakasan report (Government) confirmed Prof. Ranga's Committee's condemnation of the Zamindari oppression. (1933) and Rajaji declared with their support that the permanent settlement was against national interest. The congress ministries succeeded to abolish the zamindari system through successive Acts. with in the first five years of swaraj. (Ed).

CHAPTER VII

PEASANTS IN THE INDIAN STATES

It is a notorious fact that the peasants in our Indian States have many more tax burdens to bear and illegal levies and cesses to pay and more inhuman official zhulum to stand than our British Indian peasants. Their land revenue system seems to have been very little altered, if at all for the worse, from the days of the Moghuls. Any one who has read Morelands' three valuable books "At the death of Akbar", "From akbar to Aurangazeeb" and "The History of Land Revenue Systems of the Moghuls" finds that in all its essentials, the present system prevailing in most of our Indian States is the same as that of the Moghuls, with some changes, necessitated by the efflux of time. In many parts, the lands have not been surveyed peasants are obliged to pay tax on their lands whose extent is only approximately known and proper land records are not maintained. The evil of joint pattas obtains on such a large scale. The Loharu troubles of 1935 brought to public notice the glaring misery of peasants who were not even allowed to desert their lands and houses and run away into forests, reminding one of the cruel days of early British rule.

Life in British India is hard enough for our peasants and workers. A per capita annual income of Rs. 25 for our agricultural classes does not give much scope either for adequate food supply or proper shelter from cold and heat or even plentiful supply of good drinking water. But what must be the fate of the peasants in the States, when they have no dependable law to count upon, fairly stable and unprejudiced Courts to appeal to and at least seemingly merciful police to turn to. Every official in a State is a Bada Saheb, riding rough shod over the peasants and the Ruler is himself either an imbecilic cruel potentate or a pitiless but efficient Shylock.

Nazaranas are the rule. From the highest Nawab or Maharajah to the lowest lackey, everyone, however remotely connected with the State Authority, has to be propitiated by our peasants. From plough cattle to fowls, from labour on the public works to labour on the private lands of the officials, from marriage presents to funeral contributions, many and varied, wearisome but life-long contributions have to be made by our peasants to all the demi-gods of the State Swarga with the result that States' peasants are no better than galley slaves and are in an immensely worse off than the south american slaves of 1850's Who is it that said that to be born in India is the highest fulfilment of a man's destiny ? I am sure even he will be bound to apologise for having harboured such a preposterous idea if he has to flee as our States' peasants are often obliged to, from the tax-gatherers, and the Collectors of grain, cattle, fowls, sweets, fruit and even damsels. But alas, where can these unfortunate peasants of the States go ? All avenues to emigrate are blocked. There is already the black frost of unemployment set upon the sprouting industrial life of British India. So finding nowhere to go to, they consign themselves to their miserable fate.

It will make a heart-rending story to narrate but a few of their woes. Suffice it to say even third degree methods are freely restored to at tax-collection times. Since in most parts and in a majority of cases, grain collections are the rule, one is most poignantly reminded of the Russia of 1922 and its frightful grain collections at the thought of our own States' annual grain collections.

Has not the time come to seek to put an end to these sufferings of our peasants, to oblige the States to remodel their taxation system at least on that of the British Indian System ? But who is to do it ? Surely not the communal leaders of either the Hindus or the Muslims or both, for that way lies the ruin of our peasants. The results of Muhammadan agitation in the Kasmir and Alwar States and those of the Hindus in the Loharu and other Muhammadan States have been far from useful to the peasantry as a whole. Indeed instead of concentrating the public attention upon the real crying economic grievances of the peasants as a class, such a communal leadership sidetracks the whole movement, misleads the public, helps the counter-communalists to stand by the administrations under the false pretext of safeguarding their communal interests and thus defrauds the peasantry.

Hence the need for a non-communal class organisation among the peasantry of the States. It has to be, to start with, mainly an agitation to gain economic ends; and political results are bound to come in the train of economic improvements. The present States Subjects Movement is, like our Indian National Congress, mostly engineered by the middle-classes and has, as its main aim, the achievement of the control of the States by the middle class leadership. The motive power for the movement is drawn from the need of the middle-

classes for self-expression in political life. So it cannot really satisfy the greater, more fundamental and intensely more imperative needs of the masses. Hence the urgent need for the development of the peasants movement, with the aid and co-operation of but entirely as a separate entity from the Indian States Subjects movement. So let us all hope that in the wake of the efforts being made by some of our Agra friends of the Ganesh Group, many well-wishers of peasants and many more peasants of the States will come forward to awaken the peasants of the States and co-operate with us in making the All-India Kisan Committee a real unifying force of the masses of this unhappy but great country.

Since the above was written in 1936 April, several attempts have come to be made in the Rajputana States and the Nizams to organise our peasants. Though the peasants leaders in the Punjab States could not make much progress, they have succeeded in organising a Central Kisan Sabha. In the Nizams, the government has approved of the development of Kisan Sabhas. In Cochin, the government had to bend to the wishes of the people, as expressed through the agitation carried on since 1933 at very great sacrifice and pass a Debt Redemption Law. But the Mysore Government is still adamant in its opposition to the Kisan movement.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PROBLEM OF EXCLUDED AREAS

THE Faizpur session of the Indian National congress has passed the following resolution, owing to its realisation of the grave danger threatening the Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas:

“This Congress is of opinion that the creation of the Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas, and Chief Commisioner’s Provinces, including British Baluchistan, from the 1st January 1937 and covering the area of 2,07,900 square miles and inhabited by 13 million people, is yet another attempt to divide the people of India in to different groups with unjustifiable and discriminatory treatment, and to obstruct the growth of uniform democratic institutions in the country.

“This Congress is further of opinion that the separation of these Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas, is intended to leave a larger control of disposition and exploitation of mineral and forest wealth in these areas, and keep the inhabitants of these areas apart from the rest of India for their easier exploitation and suppression.

“This Congress holds that the same level of democratic and self-governing institutions should be applicable to all parts of India without any distinction.”

There are millions of tribal and backward people inhabiting the vast hilly and other adjacent areas, who it is true, are badly in need of special social, economic and industrial assistance and much political, educational institutions and for a long time the British Government has left them to their fate and consigned them to the tender mercies of the trader, money-lender and land-grabber from the plains. Suddenly the British Government had pretended to realise in 1930-32 their parlous condition and sought to protect them by excluding their areas from the benefits of Provincial Autonomy.

This is on a par with its own inhuman exploitation of Kenya Highlands. For, the right thing to do is not to prevent them from enjoying Provincial Autonomy, but to provide adequate funds to finance all the additional industrial and social services, and make it possible for them to make speedy recovery etc., and reach the same level of civilisation as prevails in other parts. Instead, by carving out a large part of India into Excluded Areas, the British Government has, by one stroke, sought to create this cancerous growth in India, where they can allow the British industrial and agricultural vested interests to grow, and generate a series of future Ulsters to thwart the growth of Swaraj of not only these helpless tribes and others of the Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas but also of the rest of India.

A brief account of their disabled and stunted political status will bear this out. They are not to have their own

legislatures, nor are they provided adequate representation in the legislatures of the provinces in which they are situated. There is no constitutional machinery by which the wishes, needs of the people of these areas are to be adequately ascertained before any law is passed. Indeed they are to be governed not by laws but by ordinances or legislations promulgated for them by the respective officials at their discretion. The Ministries are not interested in them and so cannot be usually expected to work as assiduously for their welfare as for the rest of India. Whether or not any portion of such excluded areas has reached such a developed civilised state as to be merged in the rest of self-governing province is to be decided not by the people concerned, not even by the local legislature but by the Governor in his discretion.

Under such circumstances how can there be any legitimate political or economic growth in such areas ? How can their populations come to enjoy any civil liberties ? Who can prevent the British capitalists, with or without the active co-operation of Indian capitalists, exploiting the natural and human resources of these vast, unexplored and virgin tracts ? It is sheer impudence for any one to say that the rights of these helpless, uneducated, non-political minded and backward tribes and others can better be guarded by the British than by the responsible Ministries of the Provinces.

In fact the Indian social workers have done much more during the last 17 years for these people than the British administrators. Thakkar Baba and his disciples in Guzerat, Beharilal Patel in Betul of C.P., Father Elwin in Gond of C.P., P. Kodandaramayya and Mandeswara Sharma in Andhra and Orissa have been doing meritorious social work among these peoples. They have led the way for the foundation of the All-

India Excluded Areas Conference at Lucknow. Mr.P.Kodandaramayya, M.A has devoted himself to the cause of these backward tribes since 1920 and through the Swarajya Ashram at Polavaram, and the Agency Conferences, has been trying to awaken the Indian public to the political consequences of neglecting the development of these areas. Through his initiative, the first All-India Backward Tribes Conference was held in 1935 at Parvatipuram under the presidentship of Desodharaka Nageswara Rao and the same political reforms as were then offered for the other peoples in British India were demanded. He again was responsible for the success of the first conference at Lucknow in April 1936 and second conference at Faizpur in December 1936 of the All-India Excluded Areas Association under the presidentship of Babu Ramnarayan singh M.L.A., Khuladar Chaliha M.L.A. respectively. At these conferences, a resolution was passed demanding that not a cent of land should be permanently alienated, to the detriment of the future needs of the tribal masses, to any Britisher or Indian capitalist. It was also resolved that as soon as might be, Provincial Autonomy should be extended to these areas also.

To conclude, it must be the duty and privilege of all social workers and politicians to do all in their power during the next five years to organise these tribal masses and other Kisans into their Kisan and Muzdoor Sabhas and develop their political and class-consciousness. It is only by thus raising them to the level of others, that the Swaraj to be won for others can be achieved earlier and when achieved enjoyed for long.

APPENDICES I

Hon. Biswanath Das, Prime Minister of Orissa, says

“Orissa has got over 20,000 sq.miles of her area partially excluded from normal administration with a population of 2,670,000. This works out more than 60% of the entire area of the Province. No other province has such a vast extent of country and partially excluded areas. The responsibility of improving this extensive area is not supplemented by any central subvention. *The needs of these areas are like* those of a growing child. Education, medical relief, public health and communication are the greatest wants of these areas. There is also ample scope for industrial and agricultural development in them. We have issued instructions to heads of departments to give preference to these communities while recruiting menials and officials in the partially Excluded Areas”. 1-9-37.

The Government of India Act (1935) - Section 92 regarding Administration of Excluded Areas.

92-(1) The executive authority of a province extends to excluded and partially excluded areas therein, but not-withstanding anything in this Act, no act of the Federal Legislature shall apply to an excluded area or a partially excluded area, unless the governor by public notification so directs, and the Governor in giving such a direction with respect to any Act may direct that the Act shall, in its application to the area, or to any specified part thereof, have effect subject to such exceptions or modifications as he thinks fit.

(2) The Governor may make Regulations for the peace and good government of any area in a province which is for

the time being an excluded area, or a partially excluded area, and any Regulations so made may repeal or amend any Act of the Federal Legislature or of the Provincial Legislature, or any existing Indian law, which is for the time being applicable to the area in question.

II

Partially Excluded Areas

MADRAS

The East Godavari Agency and so much of the Vizagapatam Agency as is not transferred to Orissa under the provisions of Government of India (Constitution of Orissa) Order, 1936.

BOMBAY

In the West Khandesh District, the Sahada, Nundarbar, and Taloda Taluks, the Navapur Petha and the Abrani Mahel and the villages belonging to the following Mehawasi Chiefs, namely, (1) the Farir of Kathi (2) the Farir of Nal (3) the farir of Singpur (4) the Welvi of Goahali the Wasawa of Chikli and the Farir of Navalpur.

The Satpara Hills, Reserved forest areas of the East Khandesh District.

The Karwari Taluk and Peintpetha of the Nasik District.

The Dahaun and Shalipur Taluks and the Mokhada and Unbargaonpethas of the Thana District.

The Dohad Taluk and the Jolod Mahal of the Broach and Panchamahals District.

BENGAL

The Darjeeling District.

The Dewangunj, Srivardi, Nalidawari, Haluaghat, Durgapur and Kalmakanda police stations of the Mymensingh District.

THE U.P.

The Janusar-Bawar Pargana of the Dehra Dun District.

The portion of the Mirzapur District South of the Kaimur Range

BIHAR

The Chota Nagpur Division

The Santhal Pargana District.

THE C.P. & BERAR

In the Chanda District the ahiri Zamindari in the Siroucha Tahsil, and the dharora, Dudmala, Gewardha, Jharappra, Khudgaon, Kotgal, Muramgaon, Palasgarh, Rangi,

Sirsundi, Sonsari, Chandala, Gilgaon, Pai-muranda, and Potegaon Zamindaries in the Garchiroli Tahsil.

The Harai, Gorghat, Gorpani, Baltagarh, Bardagar, Partabgarh (Pagara) Almod and Sonpur Jagirs of the Chhindwara District and the portion of the Panchamarhi Jagir in the Chhindwara District.

The Mandala District.

The Pendra, Kenda, Matin, Lapla, Uprora, Chhuria, and Korpasi Zamindari Districts. The Anudhi, Koracha, Panawaras and Ambagargh chowki zamindars of Durg district.

The Baihar Tahsil of the Balaghat district.

The Melghat Taluque of the Amaraoti district.

The Bhainsdehi of the Betal district.

ASSAM

The Garo Hills District

The Mitui Hills (in the Nowgong and Sibsagar Districts)

The British portion of the Khasia and Jaintia Hills Districts other than the Shillong Municipality and Cantonment.

The District of Angul.

The District of Sambalpore.

The areas transferred from the Central Provinces under the provisions of Government of India (Constitution of Orissa) Order, 1936.

The Ganjam Agency tracts the areas transferred to Orissa under the provisions of the aforesaid Order from the Vizagapatam Agency in the Presidency of Madras.

* Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya have come to be formed as self governing states, with their own assemblies and ministries in the Indian Republic, thanks to the pioneering work of Messers Prof.N.G.Ranga, Jaipal Singh, Fizo Lal Denga and Kodanda Ramayya and others.(Ed).

CHAPTER IX

FORESTS

INTRODUCTORY

I. "Among the peasants' greatest needs are firewood to replace manure, small timber for houses and wood for implements, as well as grazing and fodder for his cattle. It has been recognised with increasing clearness that forestry has an important vocation as the handmaid of agriculture".

[A resolution of the United Provinces Government, quoted by Mr. Robertson, Deputy Conservator of Forests, (U.P.) in his book, "Our Forest" Page 57.]

II. "But the great lesson to be learnt at the present time is that as modern civilization is largely dependent on forest products, a definite minimum area of land under forest is an economic and physical necessity for the well being of every civilised nation." [Page 4, "Indian's Forest Wealth" by Mr. Smythies, Imperial Forest Service.]

III. "Forest Produce is so complementary, so essential, to agricultural life at its best, that those whom distance has cut off from it inevitably suffer a lowered standard of living," [Our Forests." P. 57]

IV. "Which ryot can look upon things complacently while his neighbour's cattle are being starved and impounded? Which ryot's blood does not boil when he witnesses a menial peon beating or insulting another ryot or his relative? Which village can meekly submit (to various indignities inflicted by Forest Officials) without organising itself in self-defence?" [Report of the Economic Enquiry Committee of Peasants, 1933.]

India comes possibly next to Russia, Australia, Canada, Norway and Sweden, in the area, riches and variety of her forests. Barring Siberia, there is no other country which is so much dependent upon her forests for her local rainfall, water-supply for drinking and moisture as India. But while Russia derives much benefit for her dairying industry from her Ukranian and Cacausia steppes and the vast grazing grounds, Norway and Sweden carry on their match-manufacturing with the aid of their forest produce, Canada and Australia their thriving dairying and cattlebreeding, thanks to their immense grazing and forest facilities. India, of all the countries with such great forest resources, derives the least economic advantage from her own forests, thanks to the most narrow-minded and unscientific exploitation of her forests by one of the least efficient and most corrupt departments of the State.

The only thing that our forest Department can claim to its credit is the preservation of our forests and the prevention of its progressive destruction which had set in during first hundred years of the British Rule. Even this least service to our forests results in unspeakable sufferings to the hill tribes, millions of peasants who all live either within or in the neighborhood of forests. The official records of action taken against breaches of forest laws can only speak of an insuffi-

cient number of the disastrous contacts that this Department makes with out masses. The Forest Laws are in themselves very anti-peasant and arbitrary and confer autocratic powers upon the forest officials. For instance, a forest official is at liberty, on the slightest suspicion to seize any forest produce, the cattle and cart conveying it and put it to auction, while the case, connected with the alleged offence is still pending disposal in the Court. He can impound the cattle of peasants in whatever mannner he likes and oblige the peasants to prove that their cattle have not trespassed. He can fix the compounding fees and force peasants.

It is after having paid such a dreadful toll to the Department, that our peasants have had to face prosecutions and convictions over many alleged breaches of the Forest Laws launched upon them by the dissatisfied or faithless forest officials. Apart from the anyance and expenditure caused to many more peasants by many more prosecutions, the persons who came to be actually convicted in 1934-35 were as many as 2,56,304. The economic depression has eventually wetted the appetite of the forest officials and forced more peasants to dissatisfy them more by not being able to fill their pockets, for the number of peasants convicted for breaches of Forest Laws has run up from 2,10,740 in 1930-31 to 2,56,304 in 1934-35. Surely here is a case for the radical revision of the forest Laws so as to minimise the powers of the forest officials, devise and institute necessary " checks and balances" upon their inveterate thirst and capacity for taking bribes and their ability to harass our peasants and workers.

Once we talk of amending the Forest Laws, we are obliged to examine the uses which our forests ought to be put to. Whether our forests are in the possession of certain uses,

which they alone can serve that the society must carefully guard against their wrong utilisation or diversion into wasteful channels or their 'purdah' purification and thus becoming a liability instead of becoming an asset to the Nation.

What are the uses of the forests ? The forests are prized and their preservation and development are zealously carried on by every nation for their salutary effect upon increasing the rain-fall, reserving the moisture and in preventing the erosion of the surface soil of the hills and the mountains and the undulated plains in their neighbourhood. They give us the much-needed medicinal herbs and timber of various kinds which has great industrial value, and other produce of industrial and commercial value. Then there is the preservation of wild life and environment. So far as these uses of forests are concerned, the State has the duty to develop these forests and protect them to these ends, and for this it has to empower its Forest Department to prevent all breaches of its measures. Between the conferment of such powers on the Department and their exercise by the Department must be in harmony with the fact that these same forests have to serve equally necessary 'uses' for the agricultural industry and that peasants are obliged to live in their close proximity, carrying on their agricultural, cattle-breeding, bee-keeping and such other occupations. Moreover, there are lakhs and lakhs of workers who are dependent for their livelihood not only upon agriculture and cattle-breeding, but also upon wood-cutting and gathering of fuel and grazing.

Our peasants, it must be remembered, have progressed in their farming from the 'podu' or forest cultivation to the latest plantation and garden methods of cultivation, and from cattle-breeding on the steppes and hills to the dairy-farming

near the towns, and therefore the forest has an irreplaceable and inevitable place in our peasants' rural economy. Once we divorce our peasants, especially those who have to live within the close neighbourhood of the forests, from the forests and prevent them from making use of the forests, consistent with their preservation for non-agricultural uses also they will suffer immensely not only economically but also psychologically and the stagnation that will set in on their cattle, sheep, goat will be much worse than on themselves. Is that a happy prospect for any nation ? What are the agricultural uses of the forests ? Cattle and sheep graze in them ; fuel for house-hold purposes and timber for agricultural and cottages are supplied by them, and other food materials are found in them. All these are of immense value both to the peasant and the worker. The total utility derived by the millions of peasants from the forests cannot be measured adequately, either by Rs.64,55,000 derived by the sale of grass from the forest, or by Rs.70,17,081 worth of forest produce granted freely to the peasants, but by the extreme and almost insatiable need for this forest produce that is dimly reflected by the additional three crores of rupees they lavish upon humouring the forest officials. In addition to these the Zamindars and their forest officials collect much as fees and bribes. Is it safe for the State to allow any further starvation of this extreme need of our rural masses, and allow them to be progressively impoverished and exploited by the Forest Department and the Zamindars?

Mahatma Gandhi wants our peasants to feed their cattle well and not to bleed them, as at present, for their own preservation. Lord Linlithgow desires them to concentrate on cattle-breeding, develop dairy-farming and take to their vocation with great zeal, and yet our Forest Department is shutting up almost all our forests in the face of these pressing and

irresistible and growing needs of our peasants. One can understand and may condone this heartless policy, if at least Government is deriving a commensurately great income. But the facts are otherwise. Government got only a total revenue of Rs. 395 lakhs in 1934-35, out of which Rs. 269 lakhs were spent on administration alone, leaving only Rs. 137 lakhs as net income. When we look into the provincial figures, the position is still worse, for instance, Bombay derived a net income of Rs. 24 lakhs, Madras Rs. 6 lakhs, Central Provinces only Rs. 13 lakhs. Who can justify these arbitrary powers of the Forest Department, which in spite of them, swallows 2/3rds of the income from the forests for their own maintenance?

The next point is as to how to distinguish these different uses of the forests, the sources of which are indistinguishable, and arrange for the proper safeguard of the industrial resources of the forests. We do not want our peasants to interfere with the operations needed for the preservation of the forests and their development, nor do we desire them to share in the industrial and commercial resources. We, at the same time, desire the continuation and extension of the right of our peasants over the use of the fuel, timber, grass and water resources for drinking purposes. How to reconcile these claims? We want our forests to be divided or classified into two broad categories, one which is mostly useful for commercial and other purely for geographical purposes, and the other mostly useful for agricultural purposes. Such distribution is actually made in the Madras Presidency. We want the latter portion of the forests to be handed over the respective statutorily established Village Panchayats, responsible to all the adult population, and subject to the general supervision of the Forest & Revenue Departments. So that the forests thus

transferred to popular control are adequately preserved, in addition to their being made available to the equitable 'use' of all the peasants and workers in the respective areas. At the same time, our peasants have a claim upon the 'agricultural uses' of the forests reserved for the direct administration of the Forest Department but such 'agricultural uses' of such forests can be left to be regulated, and commercialised also by the Forest Department in constant consultation with the respective District and Taluk Kisan Sabhas and in accordance with the general principles laid down by the Proposed Provincial Joint Forest Council, consisting of the representatives of the peasants and workers and Forest and Agricultural Departments. Such a Provincial Joint Forest Council will, of course, have to raise improved 'grasses' and store large enough quantities of them as an insurance against any out-break of famine for fodder or for both fodder and food when such fodder may have to be distributed freely to preserve the cattle.

It may be questioned whether such Village Panchayats can properly discharge their duties of preserving the forests and improving the quality and quantities of 'grasses' grown and make it possible for as many cattle as at present to graze in them. The answer to this lies in the very encouraging experience of the 1100 Madras Forest Panchayats, to whom most of the "Ryots Forests" are handed over and which have been administering those forests to the entire satisfaction of the Government for the last twelve years. These Forest Panchayats have their own staffs for guarding the forests, distributing the grazing facilities, selling the fuel and otherwise, deciding upon the distribution of the various "agricultural uses" between the various peasants and workers in their respective villages. Whatever surplus revenues there are, can be and are being devoted to various rural services such as

roads, hospitals, veterinary medicines. It is true that the Madras peasants are not quite satisfied with this position, since their demands that (1) the rent payable by these Forest Panchayats to Government has to be halved (2) all the Ryots Forest ought to be granted to such Panchayats and (3) the Forest Panchayats placed on a statutory basis, are not yet accepted by the Government. Moreover the demand that peasants ought to be taken into consultation and co-operation in regard to the disposal of the forest produce of the Reserved forests, useful to agriculturists, has not been granted.

This system of Forest Panchayats has helped cattle breeding and lessened the official persecution of peasants. In fact our peasants, once they were placed in charge of the preservation and management of the forests have, of their own accord, decided not to allow goats into their forests and have succeeded in most cases, in persuading peasants to sell away their goats or stall feed them. On the other hand, the official management of the forests has resulted in the actual decrease in the number of cattle allowed to graze in our forests from 128 lakhs in 1931 to 119 lakhs in 1935. Therefore the best thing for the Government to do is to hand over all the nonreserved Forests, to the forests Panchayats, constituted on a statutory basis and responsible to the adult population of the village.

The corporate rights of our peasants and workers in the neighbourhood of forests are of such importance in the daily life of our masses that an enquiry ought to be made into their past enjoyment and incidence and their present necessity for our rural classes. In almost all our provinces the Forest Department has either encroached upon such rights or ignored their existence with the result that our peasants had very much to suffer. All such rights must be restored.

Forests are one of the greatest sources of trouble and persecution for our Zamindari peasants. The control of the Zamindars over the forests, hills, dales and tanks therein is so complete and unrestricted that in almost all the provinces of India, where there are Zamindari possessions, our peasants have come to be very much oppressed. All the traditional rights of peasants for freely gathering fuel, and timber for household purposes and fodder for their cattle and manure for their fields were brushed aside and even their priority of right to graze their cattle in the neighbouring forests dismissed. Grazing fees were either introduced where there were none or enhanced unconscionably in all other places. The oppression of our peasants, carried on by the petty and low-paid forest officials is so much that if for no other reason, at least for this alone, this Zamindari system has to be abolished. In fact the Zamindars prize their forests not so much for their revenue yielding capacity as for their use in keeping down the peasants in that neighbourhood and obliging them to be loyal and obedient to themselves.

To free our peasants from this tyranny of forests and convert the forests into a source of wealth and happiness to our peasants and their cattle is the imperative need of the hour. Let us hear what the present Viceroy says about cattle. "The ox is the foundation of India's agriculture. Indeed, I am aware of no other single contribution which lies within our power to make towards the enhancement of the agricultural wealth of this country, which in its potential value, is in any degree comparable with general improvement of the live-stock. "It has been calculated," Lord Linlithgow proceeds, "that the total annual cash value of Live-stock in India, if we include the annual value of cattle, below, produce, manure and other products is

of the order of Rs.1300 crores," "It is impossible to overstate the importance to the agriculture of India of an adequate supply of good working bullocks for the bullock is practically the sole source of power available to the cultivator, whether for cultivation, for transport or for the lifting of irrigation water. Now need I emphasis the value of cattle manure or the importance of the place which cattle dung used as fuel, still holds in the domestic economy of the large proportion of rural population". Hence the resolution of the All-India Cattle Conference demanding cheaper, (if possible, free) grazing facilities in Government and other forests. Let the Viceroy and his confreres, the Provincial Governors lead, encourage and support our Ministers in their attempts to save our Zamindari tenants from the clutches of the Zamindars. Let them stand by our Kisan Sabha in its demand for the constitution of Forest Panchayats to administer these forests, for the reduction of grazing fees and for the restoration and increase of the ancestral and natural rights and claims of our peasants for cheaper and more adequate grazing facilities for their cattle and freedom from the oppression of the Zamindari forest officials and minions.

There is no doubt whatsoever, that the Land Revenue Administration, with all its faults, rigidity, bribery and heartlessness, is immensely more efficient, and less costly and than that of the Zamindars. The Zemindari employees are low-paid, uneducated and corrupt officials, highly unfit to have anything to do with such innocent and unprotected peasants as we have in our country. One of the greatest grievances of our peasants is the costly and painful persecution carried on by these Zamindari officials.

At the same time let it not be understood that we are ignorant of the need for the proper preservation and even improvement of our forest wealth, not excluding the forests for 'agricultural use' We agree with Mr. F.C.F. Robertson when he says that "forests considered merely as a vegetative entity, are the silent, unpaid and too often uncared for cha-ukidars of two things terribly precious to man his soil and his water." So we are anxious that regular educational propaganda must be carried on among the villagers and their Panchayatdars as to the best possible means for improving and protecting their forests. Mr. Robertson's appeal to every Panchayatdar that "it is you who can teach your less enlightened fellows that tree crops are as essential and every bit as precious as their field crops" is timely. We have to make the peasants who live closer to forests realise how specially fortunate they are, if only they gain control over their forests and protect them efficiently. It is necessary to organise regular training classes for all Panchayatdars and their officials who are placed in charge of forests and teach them how to preserve and develop their forest fortunes. Given such an education and propaganda, I am sure, our Forest Panchayats will not only succeed in preserving the existing forests and improving the quality and quantity of forest growth but also plant every piece of available state lands with trees, bush and grass.

It is not statesman-like to further postpone the radical solution of the forest grievances of our Kisans. It must be remembered that in order to get these grievances redressed, our Kisans had gone on Satyagraha in Venkatagiri Zamindari and Palnad of the Andhra, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Assam. It is good news that the Bombay Congress Ministry had decided to abolish grazing fees, amounting to about Rs. 4

lakhs a year. But it is not enough. We want the transfer of the control of all forests of 'agricultural use' to our Panchayats, whether they belong to the State or landlords. We also want a more democratic control of the Reserved Forests. Let us hope that at least the Congress Ministries will set an example to other Ministries in this direction, as in other directions.

Prof Ranga was the Secretary to the Madras Presidency Forest Panchayats Association in 1929-31. He conducted an enquiry in 1928 into the forest grievances of the villagers of Guntur District and their sufferings from forest laws and the Forest Department, in his capacity as the Hon. Special Officer of Madras Government for economic survey. (Ed.)

CHAPTER X

IRRIGATION

WHATEVER might have been the case in the past, our Provincial Ministries have a great responsibility to discharge as far as insurance against famine is concerned. The Central Government has quietly divested itself of all responsibility for affording relief to our peasants and workers in times of famine, due to floods or drought and so the Provincial Governments are today obliged to shoulder it. One of the most important famine-insurance means that has so far been found to be not only temporarily effective but also permanently preventive of a recurrence of famine is the development of irrigation. Unfortunately for nearly two decades, our Provincial Governments, barring the Sukkur-Barrage and Mettur schemes, have done so little to develop this means for various reasons, not the least important of which are the lack of proper appreciation of the peasants' troubles and the want of adequate funds; caused by the unwillingness of Government to borrow funds owing to a mistaken policy of Public Finance. But the Autonomy-Ministries cannot afford to pursue this dangerous policy, dangerous because any continuation of it will further delay the recovery of our peasants and make them easier victims of famine and thus will come to destroy the very

foundation of these Ministries i.e. the confidence of the people. Even hundreds of crores spent upon the development of irrigation will not be illspent for there are vast opportunities for the fullest exploitation of irrigation facilities of our country.

Ours is such an unfortunate country of great floods and greater famines that one is often tempted to throw up one's hands in despair. Provinces like the U.P., Bihar and Bengal, not excepting portions of the Punjab and Orissa, are as much devastated by floods as Madras, C.P., Bombay and Rajputana by dearth of rain. Protection from such floods is as great a necessity for them as that against failures of rain for the latter. An adequate and far seeing programme of protecting the peasants of these provinces has to be worked out and energetically exploited. It is good news that the Congress, having realised the great need of this, has appointed an Inter-Provincial Anti-Flood Committee to study this problem. The services of the Central Irrigation Bureau can also be availed of in preparing our schemes.

Therefore, when we talk of irrigation facilities, we must be understood to be favouring the simultaneous development of their complementary aspect i.e., the drainage facilities too, for the one without the other will not be such an unmixed benefit as may be thought of in some quarters. We therefore want both irrigation schemes such as the Godavari, Sukkur-Barrage, Mettur projects. The Tungabhadra and Krishna Reservoir schemes, the Lower Bhavani and Sabari schemes are yet awaiting development so far as South India is concerned. North India has her own sorry tale to tell.

Then there are the possibilities for the further development of minor irrigation schemes; as can be exploited by harnessing every small river, rivulet, stream or spring.

The construction of new tanks and the improvement of old tanks and the diverting of the waters of small rivers and rivulets into them will afford a considerable amount of protection to a large area.

By encouraging peasants to dig private or co-operative tanks and wells by offering them co-operative loans and helping them to instal pumping engines, more and more of the lands of our villagers can be afforded a more regular water-supply than is available at present.

There is much to be done in the way of improving the existing irrigation schemes, the major as well as the minor, by raising shutters, improving or reconstructing the headsluices and raising their discharging capacity, the widening and deepening the canals, strengthening the bunds, introducing a better, more scientific and accommodating system of water-distribution between different channels and sluices and eventually, as between the peasants of the upper and lower reaches. The prevention of silting of canals and the constant repairs of the canals, channels and drains are of extreme importance. There is yet the great problem of educating our peasants as to how to economise their use of irrigation water, to put it to the best possible use and to make it go the longest distance. This has yet to be tackled. If need be, an educational campaign, though very costly at the initial stages, has to be undertaken. But it will be extremely worth while to do so, for if we succeed in this we can make the present irrigation water serve nearly

twice as much land as at present and also minimise the present and future difficulties due to drainage and surplus water. Short courses of study in the principles and methods of irrigation, drainage and cultivation run at various centres, and on popular lines are sure to interest our peasants in schemes of reconstructing and better utilisation of our existing irrigation facilities.

In developing all these schemes, we have to keep in mind the fact that they all subserve the great need of insuring larger and larger areas of our country from famines, providing greater and greater granaries in other non-famine areas, readily available to be tapped whenever famine shows its head in other less fortunate areas and in general, affording protection to peasants as a whole from the unfortunate phenomenon of three bad harvests in every five which has so far weakened the economic stamina of our peasantry.

If however we really are to derive the greatest benefit from irrigation and experience least trouble from drainage, we must develop a more democratic and trustworthy scheme of controlling the officers and other employees of the Public Works (Irrigation officers, from the overseers and their subordinates to the Executive Engineers, are addicted to their almost incorrigible habit of bribery. They not only cheat the State in getting more money granted for schemes than is needed and in carrying on the construction etc. work less efficiently but also defraud the peasants by refusing to let water flow to their fields in time and adequately unless their 'Mamools' or customary bribes are paid. It is no exaggeration to say that whatever may be the democratic rights we may shower upon our peasants they can never be expected to

become self-respectable and independent, until and unless we devise some means by which we can control the rapacity and deprivations of this P.W.D., so extreme is the need of our peasants for water and so great is their dependence upon those who regulate its distribution. It is to minimise this trouble that in South India, Irrigation Panchayats are organised in a few villages and Irrigation Advisory Boards are appointed in some deltas. But their powers are so few and the scope of their functions so narrow that they have not succeeded in affording any relief to our peasants.* It is therefore necessary to organise Irrigation Panchayats for groups of villages, under any particular channel and empower them to decide, in consultation with the Executive Engineer concerned upon a rough time-table for the distribution of water, once water is let into the channels. Then when actually water is available and the distribution has to take place, the Irrigation Panchayat will go on sitting from day to day and deciding upon the actual turns by which different groups of peasants under various sluices are to draw off their quota of water. The Irrigation Panchayat will have to be assisted by the P.W.D. overseer and Sub-Divisional Officer and the latter have to loyally carry out the dictates and decisions of the Panchayat. Where and when the P.W.D. Officers on the spot seriously disagree with the Panchayat, either in the interests of the protection of the canals in times of floods or in the interests of the minorities, they can, by wire, appeal to the Superintendent Engineer and the Delta Irrigation Panchayat and take the necessary measure in the meanwhile. But the power to get any particular Overseer or Sub-Divisional Officer transferred must vest in the Panchayat, provided, a vote in favour of such transfer is passed in two consecutive irrigation seasons.

The most important thing to be remembered by our Provincial Ministries is that every drop of water is extremely precious in this sun-baked country and to our famine-ridden peasantry and therefore a vigilant watch is kept upon its being properly utilised and exploited for the benefit of our people. No irrigation scheme however insignificant from the point of view of its 'ayacut' is negligible from the viewpoint of our peasantry and every tank, well and even a pool has to be carefully protected and utilised. No Government whose P.W.D. does not think it its duty to preserve every irrigation source and whose Ministry does not hasten to spend adequately on every irrigation project, however small it may be, can deserve the affection of the masses of our country. Similarly it is the bounden duty of our Provincial Ministries to catch up every drop of unwated water, divert it through proper and adequate drainage channel and lead it rapidly to the tanks on sea, and thus prevent the spoilation of the standing crops and salinity of the soil.

Till now too much stress has been laid both by our economists and administrators upon the distinction created by the local Governments between the so-called productive and unproductive irrigation projects. as long as the latter are intended to serve only an insurance against famine, it must be realised that the bare facts of losses, given in the Finance and Revenue Accounts of Governments, can but represent only a partial truth since no account is taken of the financial and other gains obtained by society through such projects' capacity to minimise the occurence of famines and their incidence once occurring.

Secondly we must remember that so far the local Governments have been fortunate in realising appreciable profits

over most of their productive schemes, over and above the interest charges. It has therefore been argued by our peasants for a very long time and with much justification that these surplus profits ought to be set aside for the further development and maintenance of the so-called unproductive but famine-insurance schemes and not absorbed into the General Revenues. As long as our local Governments are unable or unwilling to maintain adequate famine-insurance funds and spend enough upon new and necessary irrigation and drainage schemes, the demand of our peasants for the establishment of a separate Irrigation Development Fund to absorb all the profits from irrigation becomes irresistible. (For further information the history of irrigation development, pages 199 and 200 may be seen)

CHAPTER XI

CROP-PLANNING - 1

A PLEA FOR ALL-INDIA CROP-PLANNING

In Considering the advisability or inadvisability of maintaining the present area or extending or decreasing it under any or some or all other crops now being grown in India, we have to take into consideration not only the usual point of a decent profit per acre to our peasants but also the necessity for and benefit from the development of a proper system of rotation, substitution of some crops for other crops in different years, intensive as opposed to extensive cultivation, diversification of crop economy with a view to minimise the under-employment of our peasants and their cattle and servants through a large part of the year and to maximise the returns from the labour of our peasants, their lands, cattle and other agicultural stock.

Unfortunately our peasants have till now mostly concerned themselves with their very primitive, crude and non-economic methods of cultivation, extensive cultivation of crops and have mostly fought shy of intensive, diversified,

multi crop systems of agriculture. To add to their troubles, their marketing facilities have been but few; Indian markets being hopelessly unorganised, infested by grabbing and unscrupulous traders.

What then is to be the future of our crop-planning in India? It is suicidal to allow the present untenable situation to continue, in which every province considers itself free to develop its own crop economy, irrespective of the crop planning of other provinces. The natural consequence of the present anarchical conditions will be a lop-sided development of acreage and production of different crops in different provinces, leading the provinces to compete with each other in an unhealthy and ruinous fashion and involving the railways and shipping interests in all kinds of undesirable discriminations. A similar situation had arisen in Australia and the Federal Government was obliged to legislate for regulating this inter-provincial competition for markets for their products. It is imperative that we shall take early steps to avoid such a situation and the consequent need for legislation

It is therefore advisable that a permanent All-India Crop-Planning Committee shall be established, consisting of the representatives of the Local Governments, peasants and marketing interests, with powers to study the crop economy of different provinces, the facilities available for different crops as regards marketing their produce outside and inside India and to regulate the growth of the production of different crops, to prevent the further production of those crops which have touched the point of satiety of the markets available and to develop the markets available for various crops and this committee has also to keep in mind the necessity and advisa-

bility of developing diversification of crops and garden cultivation. This Committee may have to be aided and its work supplemented by various Provincial Crop Committees and a start may be made with the establishment of such committees for the commercial and other crops, an appreciable portion of which seeks the export market.

Indeed in view of the paucity of funds available for Provincial Governments and the very serious inroads into their finances our peasants' demands are likely to make, it is wise that some special cess, provided it is not excessive and agreed to by the organised and concerned peasants themselves, is levied and the proceeds of it to discharge its functions. It will then be possible for them to finance not only marketing schemes, co-operative storage but also to improve the standards and grades of the various products concerned and finance experiments made and demonstrations held to develop and popularise better methods of cultivation. The operations of such Committees, supplemented, co-ordinated and guided by the All-India Crop-planning Committee and Provincial Government will go a long way to improve the economic conditions of our peasants, in their productive operations.

Of course, the Provincial Governments are not and cannot be expected to wash their hands of all responsibility towards the development and regulation of proper crop planning in the country and the improvement and popularisation of the productive methods and the financing of various agricultural and marketing experiments constantly to be carried on. In fact it is their duty to do their best to supplement the work of these committees, which are to be constituted mostly for the

purpose of making the peasants concerned responsible for taking the initiative and providing the drive for the improvement of the economic and technical conditions governing the production and marketing of various agricultural products.

The All-India Crop-planning Committee is to receive a handsome grant from the Central Government, not less than Rs.25 lakhs a year and an equal amount from the Provincial Governments. And as and when the Crop planning Committees come into existence, their mannual financial responsibility can be decided upon. To start with, this committee must take over the existing marketing section of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research.

CROP PLANNING AND ECONOMY - 2

Is there not something wrong in the crop-planning of India ? Is the area under cultivation in India being put to its best possible use, producing the largest possible amount of wealth? Is it not possible that there might be some commodities which are over-produced or some commodities which are not produced in sufficiently large quantities ? If so, there must be a re-adjustment. Is this crop planning to be for each province or is it to be with reference to the whole of India ? When we are expected to arrange crop-planning for India as a whole it will be extremely difficult in some cases not to so adjust things that thereby the interests of the province are not kept in view to the extent that they would be if Indian interests were not to be supreme." — Sir Fazl-i-Hussain at the Crop-planning Conference of 1934.

Total Areas and Populations

	Acres	Populations	(000)	(000)
(1) British Provinces	6,86,891			2,74,382
(2) Indian States	4,26,250			75,809
(3) Tribal areas in N.W.F.P.	14,536			2,102
(4) Br Baluchistan	34,706			464
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Total	1,612,383			352,757
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But only 667,334,000 acres of land strictly belongs to the British Provinces and this was distributed as follows in 1933-34.

Acres% of total (000)		
Forests	89,067	13.4
Not available for cultivation	144,650	21.7
Cultivable waste, other than fallows	153,449	23.0
Current fallows	47,453	7.1
Net area sown	232,246	34.8
	-----	-----
Total	667,865	100.0
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Thus 65% or 433,148,000 acres was available for cultivation, although only 34.8% was actually sown. But if areas sown more than once were also counted, the total net area sown would come to 267,160,000 acres.

There is an immense possibility for the increase in the yield of our cereal crops.

Even Japan, whose conditions of crop economy and distribution of land and small holdings are not dissimilar to those of India produces 3040 lbs. of rice per acre as against our maximum yield of 1295 lbs. Egypt produces 2,783 lbs. per acre.

India fares just as badly in regard to sugar. India 2,400 lbs., Japan 3,340 lbs., Egypt 3,378, Java 11,988, and Hawaii 18,799.

The figures of yield of different crops do not and can not indicate any general tendency for betterment or worsening of the yields of crops in different provinces. The variations from province to province and from year to year in the yield of crops are so great. One has to remember however that the yields of any crop from year to year are greatly at the mercy of vicissitudes of seasons and the shifting economic conditions of peasants and the variations between different crops are also due to the different kinds of soils, subject to varying degrees of rainfall and the changing economic conditions and tenure of peasantry.

Rice: Maximum 1047 lbs. per acre reached by Bombay in 1934-35.

Wheat: Maximum 945 lbs. in Bihar and Orissa in 1934-35. Minimum 278 lbs. in Hyderabad in 1934-35.

Sugar-cane: Maximum 6290 lbs. in Madras in 1934-35. Minimum 1581 lbs. in Punjab in 1934-35.

Tea : Maximum 541 lbs. in Assam in 1925-26. Minimum 44 lbs. in Mysore in 1934-35

Cotton : Maximum 165 lbs. in Assam in 1934-35. Minimum 46 lbs. in Mysore in 1934-35.

Jute : Maximum 1367 lbs. in Bengal in 1934-35. Minimum 918 lbs. in Assam in 1934-35.

Linseed : Maximum 480 lbs. in Assam in 1934-35. Minimum 140 lbs. in C.P. & Berar in 1925-26.

Groundnut: Maximum 1089 lbs. in Madras in 1925-26. Minimum 371 lbs. in Mysore in 1934-35.

While the production as well as international trade in the staple commodities such as wheat, rice, rye, barley, cotton, wool, jute, oats, did not increase beyond 10% in production and 40% in trade (and indeed barley and oats showed considerable decrease in trade) commodities catering to the latest scientific needs, such as rubber, artificial silk, olive oil, groundnut, hemp seed, linseed and subsidiary food products such as potatoes, palm kernels, butter, cheese, eggs, bananas, mutton, citrus fruit, coffee, cocoa, sugarcane and beet sugar have shown considerable progress either in production or in trade or in both.

What about other commodities ? say, vegetable oil - seeds, etc.,

Rape seeds :- India produces 84.4% of the world production, Japan coming next with her 7%, China with her 1.3%, Roumania with 2.1% in 1933. so India need not be afraid of any competition and does not need any special preference.

Cotton seed: India is the second largest producer of cotton seed, claiming 18.0% of the world production, her main competitors being U.S.S.R. claiming 7.3%, China 11.6%, Egypt 6.7%, U.S.A. 52.6%. Since none of these countries is able to export much and India herself exporting only a little, no preference is needed by India.

Groundnuts:- India is the largest producer; having for her share 55.5% of world's production of groundnuts, the

other producers being French Morocco with her 13.2%, Netherlands with 3.8%. U.S.A with 6.8%, Brazil with 1.7% China with 4.6% in 1933. So India need fear only French Morocco and since France is the largest importer of ground-nuts, no amount of preference can substantially help India in the world markets.

Linseed: India is the third largest producer of linseed in the world, Argentina coming first with her share of 49.5% of the world's production, U.S.S.R. coming second with 24.3% in 1933 U.S.A. with her 5.5%, Uruguay with her 2.3% and Poland with her 1.4% are the other important producers. Since Argentina has a specially favoured position in British markets. India cannot be very much benefited by preference, though it can be of some help, U.S.S.R. of course is not a great competitor in this commodity.

Sesamum: India is again the biggest producer of Sesamum, claiming 73.8% of the world's production, the next biggest producers being China with 4.5% and Turkey with 5.4%. Therefore India does not need any preference, to enable her to find a market for her sesamum.

Rubber and Textile Fibres: But India's position in regard to Rubber and Textile Fibres is not so favourable or invulnerable. For instance she produced only 2.1% in 1925-29 and 1.1% in 1934 of the world production of Rubber and any preference shown to her in any Empire market is useful and welcome. But we must not forget the fact that so far only rich and organised planters (mostly Europeans) are interested in most of this production and so the Indian peasants do not stand to gain much.

Cotton: India produced 15.6% of the world's production in 1933-34, as against 49% of U.S.A., 7.1% of U.S.S.R., 6.7% of Egypt, 4.7% of Brazil, 10.2% of China. She is still importing Egyptian and Americal cotton, although nearly 50% of her short staple cotton is exported to Japan. But the British imports of her cotton are still within the range of a few hundreds of thousands bales and no amount of preference can really help her to any considerable or marked degree.

Wool: India had only 2.7% of the world's production to her share in 1933-34 and so could not hope to supply herself fully with all the wool needed for internal consumption, without having to import large quantities of it.

Jute: India produced 98.8% of the world's production of jute in 1933-34 and as long as she does not seek to take any monopoly advantage of her position, she needs no preference for marketing it in the world's markets.

SUMMARY OF THE SEASONAL OR OTHER CONDITIONS AFFECTING PRICES OF FOOD-GRAINS ETC., IN EACH QUINQUENNIAL FROM 1861-65.

1861-65:

A general rise of prices took place in about 1860. With the suppression of the Mutiny and the transfer of the administration to the Crown, there commenced a new era of commercial and industrial activity. The resources of the country were developed by the construction of roads and railways, the improvement of harbours and the extension of irrigation. The cotton famine caused by the American War of Secession (1861-65) gave a great impetus to the cultivation of cotton in

India, which while the war lasted brought large profits to the cultivator and the merchant. The influx of the precious metals which had begun about the time of the Mutiny was thus further stimulated, and from about the second year of the war a great rise of prices took place throughout the cotton-growing districts of western and central India, as also to a smaller degree in other parts of the country. Prices were also raised by the famine of 1861 in the Upper Doab of the Province of Agra and neighbouring districts of the Punjab and Rajputana and by the scarcity in Cutch.

1866-70

On the collapse of the inflation caused by the American war prices would have fallen but for the great famine of 1866 in Orissa, which extended into Bengal proper, Bihar, Madras, and the eastern part of the Central Provinces. Another notable famine — that of 1869 — affected Western Rajputana and parts of Northern India and the extension of scarcity, towards the west and south, produced a rise of prices in Bombay, the Central Provinces and Hyderabad.

1871-76

During 1871-75 prices were not seriously disturbed by any calamity except the scarcity in Bihar in 1874 and although large purchases of grain were then made by the government and scarcity prevailed in the adjoining districts of the United Provinces, the disturbance of prices was not widely felt. The export trade in rice expanded greatly in 1872-73, and was on a greater contraction in 1874, the year of the Bihar famine than in the deccan famine three years later.

1877-78

In this quinquennium occurred the great famine of 1877-78, which affected an enormous tract in western and southern India, and extended with diminished intensity into the north, causing a general rise of prices of food-grains all over India. The export trade in wheat, which had begun in a small way after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1870, received a check in the year 1878-80.

1881-85

Speaking generally, all crops except rice were good or abundant during these years, though there was scarcity in a portion of the Punjab in 1884 and distress in parts of Bengal and Madras in 1885. The rice crop was bad between 1883 and 1885 owing to drought and floods, but wheat was plentiful, and the average price for all grains was low.

1886-90

It is difficult to find adequate reasons for the great rise in prices which took place during these five years, for the 1889 famine in Ganjam (accompanied by distress in Orissa, and scarcity in Bihar) was only of local importance, and prices had already reached their highest point in 1888. The export trade in food-grains was not larger than in the preceding quinquennium.

1891-95

The high prices ruling during 1886-90 were still further raised in 1891-92 by prolonged drought causing scarcity and distress in Madras, Bombay, the Deccan, Bihar and upper Burma. A strong Indian demand for rice was coupled with large exports, and at the same time there was an unprecedented

export of wheat owing to the failure of crops in Europe, so that Indian prices rose almost at famine levels. With better seasons prices fell, but the lowest point reached in 1891-95 was still above the average level of the previous quinquennium; and, in that period, the import of silver for coinage continued on a large scale until the closure of the mints in June, 1893.

1896-1900

This quinquennium witnessed two distinct famines. The first one occurred in the latter part of 1896 and extended into 1897; and the second occurred in the latter half of 1899 and continued, like the previous one, through the ensuing year. These famines bore a close resemblance to each other in this, that they were more or less equally intense and equally widespread. The fall in prices associated with the closing year of the preceding quinquennium was thus one of short duration. In September, 1896, a sudden rise took place in the prices of food-grains. In November, famine prices were declared in Northern and Central India, and soon after they became general. The autumn harvest of 1897 relieved the tension somewhat, and the bumper crops of 1898 saw prices assume a relative low level. But this improvement was again not sustained, for the complete failure of the south-west monsoon in 1899 followed by poor winter rains re-induced famine prices in the following year. The monsoon of 1900 was more favourable than its predecessor; still it was not of such a character as to efface altogether the ill-effects of the previous season of drought.

1901-1905

There was no very marked return to ordinary price levels in 1901 and 1902 as the weather conditions were

generally not favourable, except perhaps for rice. But in the next two years, and particularly in 1904, agricultural conditions were distinctly good, especially in the case of wheat crop. There was in these two years a corresponding improvement in prices of food-grains, especially of rice and wheat; but a set-back was experienced in 1905. The seasonal conditions of that year were marred by a partial failure of the monsoon in northern and western India, and by heavy rain and floods in Bengal and Eastern Bengal. A sharp and rapid rise in the prices of articles of Indian produce, especially food-grains, began in 1905.

1906-10

The rise was sustained in 1906 as the spring crops of that year, except wheat, were generally not good, and the autumn crops were damaged more or less by excessive rain and floods, particularly in Bengal and Eastern Bengal. Agricultural prospects were to a certain extent improved by the good winter rains which, though late, saved a part of the spring harvest of 1907 in northern India. But as unfavourable conditions prevailed in other parts of the country particularly in Bengal, prices remained unaffected: and when the failure of the south-west monsoon occurred famine conditions declared themselves over a large area. The wheat and oilseeds harvests of 1908 were very poor owing to deficient and badly distributed rainfall. Neither were the autumn crops good. The rise of prices was accentuated in 1907 and 1908 by the widespread failure of the crops in northern India. The wheat crop of 1909 showed an advance on the previous year, though the winter rains were generally deficient and the untimely rain in April damaged a quantity of the grain on the threshing floor where the crops were reaped early. The monsoon was exceptionally

favourable, and there was a considerable increase in the total out-turn of the staple crops. There was a phenomenal rice crop in Burma* and the two Bengals, the extended cultivation in the latter having stimulated by low prices of jute. As a result there was a general decline in prices in 1909. The timely and well distributed winter rains brought fine crops to harvest in the spring of 1910. The monsoon of that year was on the whole favourable and the crops good. Prices continued to fall, but in the case of rice a strong demand from China operated to keep the rates at the level of the previous year, particularly in Burma.

1911-15

The spring crops of 1911 were on the whole good though frost and rust affected them in parts of northern and western India, and prices continued to fall. The monsoon of western India where the autumn crops suffered, more or less from drought, and prices of rice showed an upward tendency accentuated by strong export demand. The spring crops of 1912 suffered through drought in western and in parts of northern India and prices rose, and although the monsoon in that year was not on the whole unfavourable, the strong export demand maintained the prices of rice at a high level. The rise in prices continued in 1913 and the spring crops of that year were affected adversely by deficient rains in the Punjab and in the western parts of the United Provinces and in the Bombay Presidency. The monsoon, on the whole, was not very satisfactory. In 1914 the spring crops suffered through drought in many districts in northern and western India, chiefly in the United Provinces, Rajputana and Sind. The

* Burma was later separated from India.

monsoon was, on the whole, favourable for the autumn crops except in parts of northern and western India where heavy rains in September were injurious to the cotton crop. The winter rice crop was adversely affected by deficient rainfall during the months of September, October, and November in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Burma, and the United Provinces; elsewhere conditions were favourable. The spring crops of 1915 were good, except in parts of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and the eastern districts of the United Provinces, where the crops were affected by drought. The monsoon of 1915, however, was not very favourable. It arrived late and was weak and irregular in parts of the Bombay Presidency and the Punjab; the rainfall in the north-eastern, central and southern India, on the other hand was good. Excessive rain, however, caused serious floods in Assam and in parts of Bengal and the United Provinces.

1916-20

The spring crops of 1916, except linseed, were seriously affected by the failure of winter rains, especially in the unirrigated tracts. The monsoon of 1916 was particularly good; it arrived early and continued late, the distribution being remarkably uniform. There was ample moisture for the maturing of the autumn crops, which were distinctly better than those of 1915. The monsoon of 1917 gave abundant rainfall throughout the country, especially in north-west India. The heavy and continuous rains adversely affected the growth of some of the autumn crops, such as cotton and indigo, but provided a good seed-bed for those crops that are harvested in the spring. Some of the later crops, especially winter oilseeds, suffered somewhat through the holding off of the winter rains. The monsoon rains of 1918 began earlier than

usual but were very weak over nearly the whole country outside of Burma and north-east India. The winter rainfall was greatly defective. These adverse climatic conditions affected both the autumn and the spring-crops. The monsoon of 1919 gave a rainfall above the average, though it retreated from Northern India earlier than usual. The season was on the whole, favourable and a crop larger than that of the previous year was harvested, except in the case of indigo. The spring crops were affected in places by hail, rust and winds. The monsoon of 1920 started well but ended badly. The rainfall during the year was in defect over most of the country, the only exceptions being south Madras and parts of north-east India. as a consequence a smaller yield than that of the preceding year was obtained for nearly all crops.

1921-25

The spring crops of 1921 were affected by drought and hot winds. The monsoon of that year began normally and gave generally good rain in all the provinces. The season was favourable to the Kharif (autumn) crops which yielded a much better out-turn than in the preceding season. The spring crops of 1922 gave good out-turn. The monsoon of that year gave generally normal rain in central and north-western India. The season was favourable to the Kharif (autumn) crops also, which gave a good yield. In 1923 also the spring crops yielded a satisfactory out-turn. The monsoon of that year though late in appearance gave fairly well-distributed rain over the greater part of the country except in Sind, Gujarat, and parts of Madras. The yield was less than in the previous season. The monsoon of that year was late in establishing itself, particularly in north-west India, but the rainfall was slightly above the normal and fairly well distributed over most of the country.

The season was fairly good for the autumn crops. In 1925, the spring crops were affected to some extent by frost, hail, rust and high winds and gave only a fair out-turn. The monsoon of that year, though not uniformly satisfactory, was, on the whole fairly favourable to the autumn crops.

1926-30

The spring crops of 1926 were affected by defective winter rains and gave only a moderate out-turn. The monsoon rainfall of that year was a little above the normal. Seasonal conditions were, on the whole, fairly good for the autumn crops. The spring crops of 1927 gave, on the whole, a good out-turn. The monsoon rains of that year were, on the whole, favourable for the autumn crops. In 1928, the condition of the spring crops was unsatisfactory but the autumn crop of that year gave generally good yields. The spring crops of 1929 gave a fair out-turn. The monsoon of that year gave fairly well-distributed rain over the country. The season was favourable to the kharif (autumn) crops also which gave a good yield.

1931-35

The spring crops of 1931 gave fairly good yield. The monsoon of that year was, on the whole, well-distributed. The season was fairly favourable to the autumn crops also. In 1932 also the spring crops yielded a fairly good out-turn. The monsoon of that year was fairly normal and gave, on the whole, well-distributed rain over the country. The season was favourable to the autumn crops also which generally showed a better out turn than that of the previous year. The spring crops of 1933 gave a somewhat better out-turn than in the previous season. The monsoon of that year started a little

earlier than usual and was, on the whole, well distributed. The season was fairly favourable to the autumn crops also. The spring of 1934 were damaged in places by cold spell and frost and gave, on the whole, a fair out-turn. The monsoon of that year appeared somewhat later than usual but there were no prolonged breaks and the rainfall was fairly well-distributed. The season was very favourable to the autumn crops also. In 1935 also the spring crops gave a fair out-turn. the monsoon of that year was, on the whole, normal although defective in some provinces and unusually dry during its retreating period. The season was fairly favourable to the autumn crops but jute and winter rice crops were adversely affected by unfavourable weather conditions.

APPENDIX

Sir John Russel F.R.S., the British Expert who made his report on the 7th October, 1936 on Indian Agricultural Research, has also suggested the establishment of a crop planning cum development commission to deal with:

a. Soil conservation, etc., manuring, soil erosion salt, alkali.

b. Crop production, especially the planning of cropping schemes, the balance between cash, food fodder crops, the fusion of animal husbandry and agriculture, the action taken on the results of marketing and other economic enquiries.

c. The exploitation of discoveries or processes of commercial importance to smooth the way for others to embark on industrial enterprises by helping to bridge the gap between the laboratory and the factory.

d. The multiplication and distribution of seeds of approved varieties of crops.

e. The improvement of village roads. It will be interesting to note that the Peasants Group of M.L.As (Centre) has made a similar recommendation on the 4th of September.

CHAPTER XII

AGRICULTURAL MARKETING

Now that our Congress Ministers are slowly settling down to work, it is meet that we concern ourselves with the discussion of what ought and can be done by them to help different sections of our people. Since I am specially interested in the welfare of our peasants and have been studying for some years the problems affecting them, I propose to consider on this occasion the problem of marketing.

The importance of marketing to our peasants cannot be exaggerated. Government estimates that at least 15% of the value derived from agricultural commodities is pocketed by merchants for effecting their sale. Since the total value of our agricultural produce was Rs. 711 crores in 1934-35, the merchants' profits alone came to Rs. 106.50 crores for that year, and one should not be surprised if our merchants had absorbed even more than that. It is the duty of every well-wisher of our peasantry to see that this terrible drain is stopped. Even those interested in the consumers of such commodities as rice, wheat, grams and pulses, oilseeds and fibres have to try to help our peasants to have more economical and direct way of approaching the consumers so that the latter may get their goods more cheaply.

Not all our agricultural produce is consumed, in our own country, although it is true that we are less dependent upon export markets for our goods than many other countries. We do export considerable quantities of our products to other countries and one need only mention that half of our groundnuts and one-third of our cotton are exported to indicate the importance of the export markets to our Kisans. Much can be done by Government in the way of giving bounties, charging lower railway freights charges, advancing cheaper and adequate credit and using the political 'pull' and influence with other countries in order to push the sales of our goods. But all such things can be done in our country only by the Central Government with which we are not so much concerned in this paper. It may however be stated, in passing, that so far our Government instead of doing anything positively helpful to our Kisans has gone out of the way in imposing on them the Ottawa Pact through which our Kisans have gained so little direct advantage but have lost many markets on the Continent since countries like Germany, Italy, Poland, France did not like to patronage our imports and consume our goods. The only good thing it has done i.e., the quota system in our trade with Japan by which Japan has agreed to purchase a specified quantity of our cotton and more in proportion to our purchases of her cotton goods was in fact forced upon it by the pressure of our peasants*. The import duty on broken rice and that on wheat were only defensive measures* and so is the sugar import duty. Its notable contribution is the creation of the Central Marketing Department and the passing of the Agricultural Commodities Standardisation Act of 1937. It can do a lot, in the way of statutorily establishing common weights and measures for the whole country, organising National Market-

* Prof.N.G.Ranga organised them and pleaded for them in Assembly.

ing Boards to have the monopoly of selling our goods in other countries, advertising our produce in the rest of the world to mention only a few. But it has not even appointed Trade Commissioners in all the countries that do large business with us or published the reports of our existing Trade Commissioners in our vernacular languages.

NATURE OF LEGISLATION

Coming to our Provincial Governments, they can immediately pass legislation, on the lines of the Bombay Standard Weights and Measures Act, to fix some uniform weights and measures for our agricultural produce, and definitely specify the penalties following upon their non-acceptance or observance. Secondly, legislation to establish open markets at all the prominent grain markets in the country, to define their constitution and to safeguard the interests of our Kisans and curtail and control the powers of the merchants and to empower such Market Authority to establish necessary godowns is very badly needed. The Markets Acts of Madras, Hyderabad, Bombay and C.P. have to be suitably amended. Thirdly, grading and standardisation of our various agricultural commodities have to be compulsorily effected, if such produce is to be admitted into the recognised Markets and legislation to this end, if needed, must be undertaken. Fourthly godowns if possible with re-inforced concrete flooring and roofs have to be constructed to hold at least 10% of the marketable produce, preferably at the Railway stations, and at least at the most important country cross-roads and markets. This can be done through co-operative societies, provided States recognise their debentures as Trustee Securities. So these four essential and immediate needs of our peasants can

be satisfied without much additional initial expenditure, though the recurring expenditure on administration may amount to a few crores a year. It must however be remembered that it is not enough to pass legislation and leave things to take care of themselves. These laws must be vigorously enforced, most of the markets brought immediately under the operations of the Markets Act, the speculation of the traders rigorously put down, and the illegal and one-sided exactions towards so-called charity prevented proper weights and measures and the approved grades and standards enforced and such other necessary and effective measures taken to benefit our peasants.

One other measure, which may not need fresh legislation in all the provinces, is the prevention of adulteration of ghee and oils, mixture of various kinds of cotton and other fibres, tobacco and various cereals, which if not prevented effectively would cause the progressive deterioration of the prices obtaining in the markets. The law dealing with standardisation may also provide necessary punishments for such malpractices.

MARKETTING COST

We now come to the most important remedy to prevent much of the losses incurred by our Kisans in marketing their produce and also by the consumers in our country. Much the most important consideration affecting the effectiveness of the competition of our agricultural produce in the world markets for such produce is the comparative prices at which our goods are offered, in addition to their excellence in quality, grading, cleanliness and trustworthy specification.

The most important thing therefore to do, is to minimise the cost of marketing. This can best be done by the State itself undertaking the marketing of all the most important commodities, with the help of National or Provincial Marketing Boards, on the lines of those now functioning in U.S.A., France, England and Canada. It is true this can be more effectively achieved if the Government of India takes it up and if all the provinces fall in line, but there is no harm in the six Congress Provinces taking the lead and showing the way for other provinces to follow suit. The establishment and the functioning of these National Marketing Boards, for there must be one such for every important produce, need not cost the Governments much since they mostly pay their own way, and all that the Governments have to do is to prohibit private trading and profiteering by all the present numerous, inefficient and wasteful agencies for marketing our goods. The Royal Commission on Agriculture and the Central and Provincial Banking Enquiry Committees have all complained against the inefficiency, costliness and unserviceable character of our present marketing agencies, and therefore no time need be lost over any fresh enquiries and our provincial Governments can straight away proceed with their work connected with the establishment of the Provincial Marketing Boards.

It need not be feared that it will become impossible for the numerous merchants in the country to eke out any living if these Marketing Boards are established, because there will still be a tremendous lot of genuine marketing work to do in easing the passage of the ever growing number of small commodities between our peasants and the ultimate consumers. Of course they cannot hope to obtain their present illegitimate profits, but they can certainly perform the most

essential national duty by quickening and cheapening the marketing of the various goods that are needed in every day life besides processing them.

PERSONNEL OF MARKETING BOARDS :

The personnel of the Marketing Boards and Market Committees has to be settled in such a way as to obtain the maximum co-operation from our peasants, so that there will be no possibilities for a ca-canny and sleepy activities. All that has to be done for the rapid growth of markets and for the improvement of our peasants' approach to the consumers can come to be achieved by the very people who stand to be benefited. At the same time it must be realised that not any and every peasant who may please the Minister in power can be expected to put so much spirit and dynamic energy into such work as to achieve the maximum benefit at the earliest opportunity, and that the choosing of the representatives must be entrusted to the Kisan Sabhas which to-day are the best representatives of the progressive spirit and abilities among our peasantry.

State Insurance gainst fire will automatically have to follow the establishment of co-operative godowns and will be found to be feasible and profitable.

The provision of Co-operative Godowns and State Insurance Schemes will make it easier and safer for the State to advance credit up to 60% of the normal value of agricultural produce and thus help our Kisans to finance their agricultural operations without having to either fall into the clutches of money-lenders or indulge in the disastrous forward contracts.

Steps must therefore be immediately taken to construct a large number of very big State Godowns at all the chief markets, to get a much larger number of them constructed by Co-operative Societies and to encourage merchants and others to construct as many of them as possible according to the specifications supplied to them by the State Marketing Authority. But such private godowns must be made liable to be taken over by the Co-operative Societies, if and when needed, by paying the prevailing market price.

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

The supply of up-to-date news and knowledge about the prices prevailing in various markets for the various Indian products as compared with those of the competing foreign products is most essential. The daily and weekly press can be persuaded to help, but the Government itself ought to publish a daily and a weekly in the language of the province and distribute it as widely as possible. The Radio has to be used for this purpose to a much greater extent than at present. This must however be supplemented by running popular courses at various centres for teaching the Kisans and their youths the elementary principles of grading, cleaning and otherwise preparing their produce for the markets and also how to utilise the information supplied by Government about prices etc.,

I have herein outlined only a few of the most essential and immediate needs of our peasants that ought and can be done without much cost and at once and if within this year these demands are satisfied, many more schemes can in the meanwhile be worked out in the light of the experience gained in this year and it will be time to demand and achieve national co-ordination in all these and other Schemes.

IN OTHER COUNTRIES :

Let us briefly see what other countries are doing in this direction. Canada has established a Central Selling Agency and a Wheat Board 'to take over the holdings of wheat with the object of furthering the sales of Canadian wheat. The Canadian Grain Act 1930 provides for official standard grades and governs the system of inspection and all matters such as elevator charges. In Australia the Act of 1935 was passed to establish a home consumption price for such part of the product as is consumed within the Commonwealth through an excise on flour (wheat) varying in accordance with wheat prices. It also prohibited interstate trade except under a licence. In Argentina the Marketing Board is intended to control all institutions or bodies which intervene directly or indirectly in the domestic or export grain business and to establish fixed types of wheat which correspond to the production in the various zones of the Republic and to determine the limits of the zones. 'It has also to control, on the advice of the National office of weights and measures of the Ministry of Agriculture, the operation of all apparatus for ascertaining specific weights, grades analysis of foreign matter, scales etc., In United States of America, the Commodity Exchange Act was passed in 1936, which is intended to diminish or eliminate the burden of excessive speculation by the fixing of trading regulation governing the volume of speculative trading in 'futures' in any commodity covered by the Act. Bucket Shops are outlawed and all the fictitious practices are prohibited in connection with the sale of any commodity in inter state commerce. The Commission administering this Act has the power of closing any Exchange (market) which violates the rules of the Act. A system of official grain standards is in force

throughout the U.S.A. The South African Wheat Industry Control Act of 1935 provides, power wholly or partially to compensate wheat producers or co-operative organisations for any losses sustained in consequence of the storage of wheat and to advise the Minister in regard to the control and regulation of imports and exports, fixation of grades, etc. In England the Wheat Act specified a Standard Price of 10 shillings per cwt. and if registered growers failed to realise this price from the sales of wheat, they should receive a deficiency payment equal to the difference. In France the law of 1936 August established for, the fixing of a legal wheat price and the maintenance of this price by interposing the Co-operative between the farmer and the miller. The Board has also the monopoly over imports and exports Approved Cooperatives will be permitted to purchase wheat from the producers. Aided by the Agricultural Credit Fund with the backing of the Bank of France, these Societies will be empowered to grant credit facilities to farmers and the costs will be met from the fund contributed by farmers, except those with the smallest holdings. Italy has stipulated that all wheat seeking the market must be consigned to collective depots for collective sale under a central Bureau which also controls the storage. The price of wheat is fixed each year by the Ministry. Yet our Central Marketing Experts want us not to demand most of these things from our Central Government and to be contented with an improved contract model and organisation of merchants, an imbecile's paradise.

CHAPTER XIII

PLANNED ECONOMY

We have been hearing so much for the last fifteen years about the unemployment among the educated middle classes that we often forget the existence of a much greater problem of unemployment among the peasants and agricultural workers. It is to the credit of Mahatma Gandhi that our Indian politicians have been obliged to admit the existence of the immensely greater and more dangerous problem of rural unemployment. But unfortunately neither the politicians nor the Government have thought of doing anything substantial towards relieving the extreme distress of the rural public, consequent on their unemployment. It had again to be tackled, to the extent that his limited resources in men and money and the halting and unconvinced support rendered to him by many of our Congressites by Mahatma Gandhi first through the khadi programme of the last sixteen and the A.I.V.I.A. activities of the last two years. It is true all that the Mahatma has succeeded in doing has touched only a mere fringe of this vast problem; yet it is about all anyone has tried to do and but for his persistent and convinced ministering to the great and growing pains of our millions of rural unemployed. Our Government as well as existence of the groans and pangs of

the traditionally silent millions of our country-side. Indeed even now, in spite of all the trumpeting for, the cause of the poor by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the constructive efforts of the Mahatma, our Provincial Legislatures as well as the Legislative Assembly are trying to voice the needs of the educated middle-classes, to the complete neglect of the Kisan King, groaning in his almost inescapable chains of political and economic slavery, thanks to the much advertised but misleading Sapru Report. To serve its own purposes, the Government now tries to talk of the problem of rural unemployed, to excuse itself for not doing anything for the relief of the smaller problem.

Many are the remedial measures suggested by various economists of the world for relieving the problem of the unemployment of the masses. But it must be recognised that this scourge of unemployment is incidental to and inevitable in the capitalistic system of organising our economic life. So long as private ownership of means of living such as factories and minerals is permitted and so long as the whole economic activities of our masses in preparing our supplies and in satisfying our demands are controlled or guided only by the principle of self-interest, unemployment cannot be avoided. Hence the peasants and workers anxiety to abolish the present economic system and replace it by a socialist system to regulate our economic, political and social life. They see that Russia which has achieved only a Partial Socialist reorganisation of her economic life has been able to spirit away this gnawing cancer of unemployment and they feel convinced that if only a real socialist transformation is achieved, unemployment need not exist at all.

TRANSITIONAL STAGE

But the coming of Socialism may take a long time. What is to be done in the meanwhile ? Will the 'do-nothing' policy of the British Government help us ? Emphatically 'no'. It can only lead to as it has already done, the progressive pauperisation, demoralisation, emaciation and the final extinction of all spirit of our masses. It is easy to condemn our peasants for their lack of enterprise and energy but one ought to remember the evil effects, for generations together of the gnawing pains, physical and psychological, inflicted upon them by the unrelieved and unnoticed blight of unemployment and under-employment. The wonder is that in spite of their untold sufferings, our masses are yet alive to the changing conditions and are willing to welcome the message of Mahatma Gandhi and embrace the programme of the Kisan Sabhas.

But even the Mahatma's remedy is not enough. We need more drastic, nation-wide and more progressive schemes to save our masses. Even what Roosevelt is doing through the NIRA, can tackle this problem in this capitalist state. The five year plan of Russia alone may be adequate to arrest the growth of our unemployment. But can we have such a programme, without first of all upsetting this apple cart of capitalism ? We can at least try. Sir M. Visweswarayya says we can. Mahatmaji says we must try and lose not even a minute to tackle this problem.

DEMAND IN PLENTY:

Our millions of unemployed are obliged to kill their time without mentally and physically degenerating, not because there will be no demand for what they can produce but

there is no State or co-operative or communal machinery to harness their creative faculties to the needs of our society. From the supply of a few ounces of food of the most elementary kind, through the supply of mere rags of cloths to the semblance of huts, the barest minimum needs of our vast millions of downtrodden and starving people have to be satisfied. To cater to such an almost limitless demand, which has a great capacity to grow on what it feeds on, all our unemployed millions can be set to work. In but a few years, unemployment will give place to life giving employment for all and the three hundred fifty millions of fully employed Indians will and can usher in a greater healthier and nobler society than what we have.

WHO IS TO DO THIS ?

Let our Provincial Governments but try to create employment, by themselves undertaking, with the active co-operation of Local Boards and co-operative movement and the assistance of the Congress, to develop and carry out national Housing, Educational, Hand Loom and Hand Spinning, Electrical generating and other schemes. Let them begin to develop water-supply irrigation and industrial schemes. Road making, railway and canal construction are to be developed. No fear need be had about the want of money. Money there is in plenty in the country and a bold policy of nation building will be enough, given the support of the Congress and the masses, to make the State loans over-subscribed. This is our peasants' demand to-day.

Recently a healthy and welcome change has come over the policy of Provincial Governments, since the advent of the Congress Ministries. The U.P., Madras and Bombay

Governments are going to raise a crore rupee loan each to develop the industries of their respective provinces. Hon. Mr.Giri, the Labour Minister of Madras has publicly expressed the readiness of the Government to undertake a planned Economy to develop the industrial resources and avenues for employment. The Finance Minister of Bombay proposes to undertake a bold policy and programme of exploiting all modern resources for the stimulation and development of our cottage industries and the other Congress provinces may follow suit. He also proposes to nationalise all public utilities, such as the road motor transport, not only because he wishes better conditions for workers and cheaper and better services for the consumers but also because he wants to derive additional revenues for the State. This is a very welcome departure from the industrial policy of Provincial Governments hitherto followed and if pursued with vigour, imagination and determination by his and other Governments, large and growing revenues can be had by the Provincial Governments, without having to impose any onerous tax-burdens upon the poor of our country. Indeed, the Mysore Government derives easily one sixth of its total annual revenues from its industries hydro-electric schemes, in addition to supplying electricity at the cheapest rates.

Hon.Mr.Giri is proceeding with his scheme of enquiring into the extent and incidence of unemployment among the educated, to start with and providing employment for them. Prof.K.T.Shah and Mahatma Gandhi propose to conscript all the educated youngmen to serve as teachers in elementary and middle schools at very low salaries and thus help the minimisation of unemployment and maximisation of social service.

OCCUPATIONAL STATISTICS

There are large numbers of workers who are today employed on non-productive works and who can certainly be better and more fully employed. We have to exploit the resources of the present avenues of employment and create new sources of employment.

CHAPTER XIV

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ranade and Ramesh Chander Dutt advocated the speedy industrialisation of our country as they thought that thereby our people could become more rapidly civilized, in addition to enriching themselves like the Western nations. Mahatma Gandhi opposed it in 1920 as he was afraid that such an industrial progress, if achieved on Western lines, would bring in its concomitant evils of industrial strife, labour unrest, slums and exploitation of labour. Both schools of thought wanted employment for the millions of unemployed and under-employed of our country. The one wanted more and more industries on the western lines and the other a more systematic return to the cottage industries of India such as Khaddar, other cottage industries in order to provide employment for our workers.

During the last twenty years our industrial development has taken a queer turn. It neither tended to become nationalised or socialised nor returned to the Cottages of self employed workmen. On the one hand, the Provincial Governments were slowly giving effect to the recommendations of the Industrial Commission of 1916-18, thus encouraging

private enterprise, by supplying it with cheap capital and the services of Engineering and other technical staff at nominal fees and obtaining for them cheaply and readily much invaluable technical information concerning their trade prospects. On the other hand, many Local Boards and some Provincial Governments have, instead of undertaking them directly encouraged many private companies to supply them with many industrial and commercial services like electricity, motor-transport. These developments have resulted in the intensification of industrial growth in our country under the leadership of private enterprise without any of the advantages of a self-supporting capitalism of the west but with all its disadvantages.

During the same period, Mahatmaji's Khaddar propaganda has succeeded in making more and more people realise the utter impossibility of completely industrialising our country in the near future and thus providing work for at least a good minority of our unemployed masses. It has also demonstrated the necessity for starting further industrial development from the very primitive plane of our present ruralised industrial structure. It has however failed to convince any appreciable number of either economists or politicians of its capacity to provide for any large numbers employment that makes a decent and progressive standard of living possible.

We are thus to-day faced with these two positions, private enterprise which is incapable of marking any rapid progress without much costly spoonfeeding from the State and a cottage industrial structure which is incapable of affording better conditions of living for an increasing number of workers. We are also obliged to, thanks to Mahatmaji's

Propaganda and Socialist convictions, prevent the introduction of capitalistic industrial structure that will result in the enslavement of labour, disproportionate accumulations of capital in the hands of a few functionless people and the diversion of all the benefits of industrial growth from the whole society into the hands of a few.

What is then the right policy to be followed by our Provincial Governments? The A.I.V.I.A. wants us to concentrate upon localising our industries so that each village or Thana or Taluk will become as independent as possible of the international market for industrial goods and will supply all its needs with its own manufactures. If necessary, it wants our people to check their anxiety to multiply their needs and to stop the further diversification of their fashions. But at any cost, our villages must be made as independent of the fluctuations and vicissitudes of the world markets as possible. First of all, it is impossible for us to effectively check the people's growing desire for more goods and need for different satisfactions. Secondly however much Indian villages try to become self-sufficing they cannot entirely become independent of world markets and unaffected by world movements of prices etc. Thirdly it is neither profitable nor healthy that our masses, whose needs are already so much starved and whose productive capacity is too small, shall now be encouraged to restrict themselves solely to their present primitive methods of manufacture.

At the same time we will be committing a grave blunder if we pitch our faith upon capitalistic industrial development alone to save our masses from their present unenviable economic degradation. No amount of capitalistic

exploitation of our natural resources and labour productivity can relieve our masses of their poverty and suffering. In fact the surest way for our further degradation and destruction lies in the continuation of the present policy of Laissez-Faire of Government towards the major industries vis-a-vis the public and labour and the present programme of Provincial Governments to bolster up many minor industries.

Therefore the right thing to do is to develop either state-owned and managed industries, both big and small or co-operative enterprises or both. The next best thing is to allow the growth of private enterprise, on its own merits and with its own resources but subject to strict State control and regulation. As long as there are independent and small craftsmen, plying their trade on their own, the Provincial Departments of Industries have to assist them in every way with their capital advice technical and commercial and organisational.

The Provincial Departments of Industries have to try their best to achieve primarily great functions. One is to run as many enterprises as possible on behalf of the state on an entirely business-like basis and realise maximum net revenues (I do not like to use the word profits in this connexion, as possible, consistent with the maximum of satisfaction to consumers. The other is to help all those private or quasi-public enterprises which agree to conform to the standards of efficiency, conditions of employment and treatment of consumers laid down by the State. The third is to stimulate, in every practicable manner, the growth and aid the progress of the consumer's and producers' co-operative enterprises so as to avoid the evils of private enterprise. The fourth is to provide as much profitable employment for as many people as pos-

sible by encouraging and modernising and financing our cottage industries and the large numbers of workers employed therein, either independently or under the guidance of others.

I am perfectly convinced that our Provincial Governments can provide employment for very large numbers of our present unemployed people by themselves, undertaking the manufacture of many goods, such a clothing, cars, vans and tractors propelled by motors, housing, transport, electricity and other forms of power. The Mysore Government has made a great success of its sandal wood soap, oil and other manufactures and its Hydro-Electric Schemes. The Madras Government's Kerala Soap Factory is a paying concern and the Government of India's Railways have given a better account of themselves than those of Great Britain, South Africa and America. Therefore it is wrong to think that State's industrial undertakings cannot be expected to make good and yield appreciable revenues.

Co-operative industrial enterprises, if organised on a large scale and run profitably can also be expected to yield good enough revenues to the State, as in Russia. I am sure our artisans and craftsmen will not begrudge their due contribution to the maintenance of the State, if they are aided by it in every way possible in gaining an adequate employment and a decent living.

Thus the objective of our Ministers for Industries shall be not only to develop cottage industries and thus raise the standard of living of our workers employed therein but also to provide avenues for the employment of many others. They have also to create and increase the marketing facilities for the

disposal of the products of cottage industries. They have in addition, never to neglect the claims of mechanised, up-to-date methods and means of producing preferably under the direct management of the State and at least through Co-operative Societies by which we can not only provide better paying employment to a large number of workers but also produce goods, subject to the law of increasing returns so as to satisfy the crying and growing elementary needs of our masses. But any other policy, especially the continuation of the present policy whereby private Capitalists alone can be benefited will prove disastrous to the public and the working classes. Let not a distorted prejudice against industrialisation blind us to the advantages of a well regulated and managed system of industrial life and activity.

CHAPTER XV

VILLAGE PANCHAYATS

FROM Mahatma Gandhi to Sir James Grigg, the Finance Member of the Government of India, every one rightly wants us to start from the village, if we want to achieve the real re-construction of our country. Mahatma Gandhi went so far as to say, that he would lay the foundations of our future constitution on the village Panchayat. What is this village panchayat? It is to our history what the parish is to English, and the 'mir' to the Russians. It is difficult to trace in what century the village Panchayats have taken their definite shape, as we have come to know of them in history. Certainly, it must have been the progenitor of the Municipality of Pataliputra. It can not be a later growth than the craft-guild and the Merchants' Guilds mentioned in the Mahabharat. Any how it had attained its fullest growth, in all its many-sided activities in Southern India, very early in the history of that part of our country.* The Panchayat of Bhattiprolu in Guntur district was discovered to have had 17 sub-committees to carry on its various constructive activities. Many Panchayats used to run banks, wherein villagers could deposit their money for generations together. Usually these Panchayats used to be the medium between the villagers and the local rulers and till late in the Company Rule,

they preformed the function of land revenue collection, especially in the Punjab and the North-Western Frontier. Indeed in many parts of India. agricultural, land was not permanently parcelled out between peasants at all; it remained the property of the village communities as a whole, and it was distributed every year between various peasants according to their customary rights and privileges, and it was rarely that a peasant got the same land again to his share successively for two generations. Tanks, wells, irrigation works, communal gardens and grounds were maintained and temples protected by the Panchayats. Mrs. Annie Besant was right in saying that it was because of their non-interference with the main structure, functions, and the powers of the Panchayats that the successive generations and dynasties of kings and emperors managed not to be troubled to any considerable extent by the uprisings of the peasant masses. But the advent of the British rule and especially that of the Queen's Government had spelled the destruction of the Panchayats, through the Village Officials in the Ryotwari areas in Bombay, Madras and some other provinces, and through the Zamindars and police officers in the Zamindari areas. The British Government destroyed that stable mass organisation which had for centuries helped the Indian masses to retain their ancient civilisation, which was both political and economic in its functions, with the sanction of religion behind it.

During the last thirty years, our Nationalists have agitated for the re-establishment of the Panchayats in our villages, and the allocation of a portion of the land revenue to them, to enable them to cater to the civic needs of our villagers. Madras Presidency has taken the lead in this direction and

* See Radhakumud Mukherjee's *Local Government in Ancient India*.

thanks to the patriotic zeal of Diwan Bahadur A.N. Gopalswami Aiyangar, the Registrar General of Panchayats, and now the Prime-Minister of the Kashmir State, thousands of village Panchayats have come to be statutorily established with fairly large powers and privileges.

Our Nationalists were right in dreaming of the Panchayats, as the only organisations that would cater to the basic civic needs of our masses, helping them to create and enjoy more and more employment, in healthy atmosphere, away from the towns and their demoralisation and diseases. There is a great deal to be said for the plea of the A.I.V.I.A., that as far as possible, a village ought to be made independant of the terrible octopus-like financial grip of the urban capitalist world; with the universal distribution of cheap electrical power, and the possibility of achieving even 'increasing returns' from small plants, run by cheap and efficient power distributed to the villages. With such production units, it must be possible to manufacture in the village itself, a large portion of the articles needed by the villagers. Surely for some years to come, there is plenty and more work to do for our unemployed and under-employed workers and peasants, because immense amount of labour will be required to construct sufficient houses for all the poor and toiling people of our country, and for the building of schools and hospitals, and for the production of enough clothing for all, and of all kinds of cereals, fibres, fruits and other agricultural produce for the consumption of the masses.

Apart from these needs for food, raiment and housing, there are other elementary needs of our peasants such as a good supply of drinking water, sanitary arrangements, communications, burial grounds, play-grounds and other cultural

amenities. These can be catered to more effectively by village Panchayats than by any other institution, because they have the opportunities to do things in the name of all the villagers. Tanks can be constructed, repaired or kept in good condition, wells dug, earthen or metalled roads constructed and kept under good condition, dispensaries latrines constructed and play-grounds laid out for the children of the village, by the Panchayats.

Though it cannot play the principal part, it can give a stimulus to the State or co-operative bodies in their efforts to increase the actual quantity of food and raiment available to the masses.

The village Panchayat can do much to encourage and organise the cultural life of villagers, by supervising the village school, organising Parents' Councils, maintaining the play-grounds and the village library, conducting exhibitions, organising sports competitions and encouraging open-air theatricals. In short it can become the corporate leader of the villagers in all their daily growing cultural and civic needs.

But wherefrom is the Panchayat to derive the funds needed for all these constructive and cultural activities? If we are to judge the resources of the Panchayat in the typical Anglo-Indian fashion, we are to confess ourselves to a disappointment, since even in the most progressive provinces like Madras and Bombay, the Panchayat gets only half an anna in every rupee collected as land revenue. If, however, we count all the productive capacity of our villagers, available in that part of the year when they are not employed in their agricultural work, we have an immense and real supply of resources,

in the form of productive labour. With this available source of labour our Panchayats will find themselves capable of achieving all the public activities, which are necessary for the villagers. At present, the villager is forced to be idle for a part of the year, and so much of productive capacity is going to waste, only because there is no entity or institution to utilise that available labour for collective and social reconstruction activities. If this productive labour is properly utilised, the result will be an enhancement of the creative powers of the masses, and a great contribution and increase in the wellbeing of the villagers. Moreover, such pursuits will overcome the nauseating and deleterious psychological and social effects of unemployment. As they are anyhow managing to exist, though unemployed, it is immaterial whether they are paid or not, while they are being employed on the production of public utilities, provided they get the satisfaction of serving their Society. Then what is it that prevents them, to-day, from attempting thus to employ themselves? It is indeed the lack of collective leadership, which is recognised not only as a superior spiritual force as that of the Mahatma, but also as an intimate and practical-minded entity, established by themselves and recognised as working for their own immediate needs, collective and several.

But will the mere establishment of Panchayats give the necessary stimulus for the villagers to undertake all the above mentioned constructive activities? Very likely not. The Panchayats need a progressive leadership, and such leadership may not come forth from the members of the Panchayats themselves. So the mere presence of a Panchayat is no guarantee that the civic needs of our masses are likely to be satisfied by the Panchayats. So what is needed is a constructive and well-recognised lead given by a great personality like

the Mahatma, or by a great institution like the Congress or by the popular Ministries, or the combined lead of all these three entities.

WHAT THE CONGRESS MINISTRY CAN DO?

Supposing a rural reconstruction programme, concentrating upon a few most important things to be done in a year out of a particular five or ten year span, is decided upon. On behalf of their particular provinces, the congress Minister assures the President of the India National Congress that the plan will be achieved in the specified time. The Ministry thus obtains the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi. It then appeals to and secures the whole-hearted support of the Socialist Party, Kisan and Muzdoor Sabhas, and every Congress Committee. Assured with all this support of all the organised constructive ability, genius and earnestness of the nation, the Ministry can, with the unstinted co-operation of its services, proceed to make its exhortation to all the villagers, Panchayatdars and Panchayats, members of the District Boards and Provincial and Central Legislatures, to help it to make good the pledge given to the Nation, solemnly from the dias of the National Congress.

They shall commence the 'rapids' of all the streams of organising and propaganda resources of our Kisan and Muzdoor Sabhas, Congress Committees, Parties and their leaders, into our villages, heralded and backed as they must be by the Press, Radio, Cinema and the Official channels. What surprising things were done and the manner in which they were achieved during the two historic fasts of the Mahatma, have to be multiplied many times and the sense of emergency

that then prevailed must be imported into this campaign too but multiplied fourfold, and then can our masses be trusted to awaken themselves from their age-long stupor, bestir themselves to action and catch some of the infection of the stupendous zeal of our national leaders and servants for revolutionary action and help us to achieve at least a reform and a reconstruction in their outlook on life itself.

INAUGURATE A NEW ERA

We shall then inaugurate a new era in which each village vies with the other, one district with another, and one province with its neighbour. Which department of Government can be complacent in the face of such a rising tide of popular fervour, practical response and support? Which officer will then grudge a few more additional hours of work a day or week? How can people like to own that they belong to a certain village, taluk or district, unless they also help to the best of their capacity in the discharge of the work set to those particular areas? Need one wonder how we shall reward the best comrade, or the best village or district? Is not a mention in the Congress Bulletin, donning of a tri-colour emblem, the presentation of the Red Flag or the National Flag with some special inscription on it, enough for any comrade, or area to enthrill others to emulate their example? Let Mahatmajī come out with his inimitable 'drive', Pandit Jawaharlal with his 'imagination, dynamism and faith' and the Congress with its overbearing but kindly 'whip', and let the Ministries rush to action with an un-dying faith, over-flowing spirit of onward march, and I am sure that our peasants, our workers, Congress Committees, Youth Leagues, Women's Associations and Vanar-senas, will rise to the occasion and achieve much

greater wonders than what we have only heard of as legendary achievements of Rama. Can such a campaign, constructive and effective, be undertaken and if undertaken can it achieve the desired results within the specified time? Yes, that and much more can be achieved, if only we have the will to do it. Russia has achieved her first five year programme within four years and now bids fair to more than finish her second five year plan before this year is out, because the whole Bolshevik Party had put its shoulder to the task. Soviet Government won the co-operation of peasants and workers by its single-minded devotion to all that contributed to the people's advancement, and the masses were induced to pulsate with the revolutionary zeal and practical genius of their leaders.

WHY NOT INDIA?

India can also achieve similar wonders because such planned and controlled waves of popular enthusiasm and practical-minded passions are not unknown to India. The 1921-22 Non-co-operation movement with its one year programme did achieve the crore fund and the crore members for the Congress. In 1924 Mahatmaji's Delhi fast awakened our people to the necessity of Hindu Muslim Unity. The Poona Fasts have achieved the Poona Pact and the Harijan Sevak Sangh. The masses who could respond so greatly and nobly to the call of one man, who was running counter to the activities and the policies of the Government and who was even conducting his campaign in the teeth of terrible opposition of Government and its vicious claws of fire and sword, can certainly be trusted to rise splendidly in response to the united appeal of the Congress and all other progressive forces and the

Ministries, as the ocean does on a full-moon-day and achieve not only the task set for them but also much more and thus shame the timid, the sceptical and narrow visioned people.

I say this not only because of my reading of the nature and the extent of the response they have given on different occasions in our recent political history but also because of my own personal experience with the peasants and workers of Guntur District. Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao as the Secretary and myself as the President of the District Village Panchayats Association have succeeded in organising 575 village Panchayats in 30 months in 1931-33 as against the 125 Panchayats organised in the previous five years. In the same short period of 2 1/2 years we were able to help all the 700 Panchayats in the 700 villages of the district to consolidate their organisation work and establish themselves firmly in the affections of the people. We arranged for the conduct of the elections of the Panchayatdars and their office bearers. We got the final estimates made for 20 lakhs worth roads, culverts, bridges, burial grounds, public lavatories and the digging of tanks and wells and the repairs of other tanks and wells, construction of school buildings and libraries. We organised training classes once every year for three or four days at a time for every taluk and trained the Panchayatdars in keeping their accounts, conducting the meetings and getting the necessary estimates made for their works and carrying out their schemes such as the laying out of earthen and metalled roads and raising additional revenues of the Panchayats by adopting and developing various constructive and productive sources of revenues. We appointed Panchayat Inspectors for every ten to fifteen Panchayats on Rs.15 to Rs.25 from out of the ranks of social servants, some of whom were trained in the Rural Reconstruction classes organised by Mr. Subbarao and most of whom were trained by Mr.P.V.N. Rao did at a great cost and

sacrifice to himself, enthused and stimulated our peasants to such an extent that he got nine lakhs worth of construction works finished during that very short span of time. He succeeded in getting three lakhs of rupees from Government as grants-in-aid from 33 1/3% to 50% of the estimated cost of any work. He persuaded peasants to contribute their portion of the "works" expenditure—it might be anything from 50% to 75%—by contributing their share in terms of labour rendered by themselves, their servants and bullocks and all other resources. Our pressure bordered on actual coaxing of peasants, yet we did not shy of it and the peasants, in spite of their temporary feeling of annoyance, bent their shoulders under our "Yoke" and achieved their tasks. All this time, Taluk Boards and the District Boards were non-co-operating with us and the Ministry was hostile to our organisation. None of the district authorities cooperated with us. The Congress was indifferent to our work and the other non-official organisations were blind to the possibilities of the village Panchayat movement. Single-handed, with but a few thousands sacrificed by our secretary and with a dozen experienced and enthusiastic organisers our District Panchayat Association achieved much more constructive work, by now worth twelve lakhs of rupees, than all the Boards were able to effect during the last decade with all their vast resources from the cesses and the provincial funds. To-day our seven hundred village Panchayats in Guntur district are well on their way to providing themselves with the roads, culverts, lavatories, play grounds burial grounds, schools, libraries, tanks and wells and in many places the Panchayats are even supplying lighting, providing grazing grounds for cattle, construction of choultries and Harijan halls and supplying books etc. to Harijans and other depressed class pupils. Our Panchayats are now getting an

annual contribution of more than a lakh of rupees from the land-revenue, thanks to our Association's agitation for its rise from one quarter anna to one half anna in the rupee. Though we were prevented by the Government to serve the Panchayats by destroying our Association, it is owing to that earlier training given to them that our Panchayatdars have been able to withstand the official indifference and even hostility, as well as they have done till now. Now that the Congress is there at Fort St. George, I feel confident that they will resume their constructive activity, in spite of their almost inevitable internecine factionous fights, and take the lead in the presidency in serving our peasants—all glory to Mr.P.V.N. Rao. Is there then any wonder if I have developed unbounded faith in our capacity to achieve a great and even a stupendous national programme of reconstruction, given the unselfish, zealous and tireless work of our growing ranks.

It may be said that it is alright to prepare your whole machinery and perfect your means to make the masses work and if necessary, die for an ideal and it may even be possible to utilise the whole of the respective resources of the provincial Government and artifices and resources of the Press and other means of propaganda, but what is it that you want to achieve? Has not Gandhiji raised the same expectations and aroused the same enthusiasms and popular passions in 1920-21, 1930-31 and 1932-33 and yet, have we not had to regret that after all, we were then not having the right vision, objective and purpose and that if only we had them, we could have achieved much more and got nearer the advent of Swaraj? I agree we must know what exactly we do want to achieve through inaugurating such a dynamic mass programme of action. Our village Panchayats, placed on a statutory basis, assured of a definite portion of the Provincial

revenues and elected by adult suffrage can only serve as our agent and vehicle to carry out our programmes, in the name of the nation and through the co-operation of all our villagers. What we want to do is the strengthening of the masses by employing them on various creative and constructive schemes, the achievement of many practical and necessary civic amenities of villagers, for the want of which they are to-day most unhealthy, apathetic and uncivilised, and the creation of the hope, a self-confidence, a spirit of self-reliance in the heart of the masses and as a result of all this, the engendering in the minds of the people at large that through the lead of the Congress, the Kisan and Muzdoor Sabhas alone can, the real, satisfying and lasting advancement be achieved.

Once we create in a few years in the minds of the masses, this kind of confidence in the ability and anxiety of the Congress to contribute so largely to the economic and social advancement, we can be assured of their whole hearted support for a considerable time for many of our most hazardous schemes and I feel it in the very marrow of my bones, seasoned by daily contact with the mass mentality, that our peasants and workers will then be ready to unswervingly and enthusiastically face the blood and iron of the British imperialism, and the chicanery and selfishness of our vested interests and achieve swaraj.

So what do we want to do through our village Panchayats? We want them to provide their Harijans and others with adequate and simple housing. They have to construct roads within the villages and connect their villages with the local trunk roads or other metalled roads leading to the markets. We desire them to improve the sanitary conditions of

the villages, in the way of providing public lavatories, cleaning the roads, properly spacing the refuse and cow dung heaps from living quarters, periodically cleaning the wells and tanks, and preventing the spread of diseases. They have to organise public hotels where cheap healthy and tasteful food, prepared to retain the vitamins, are supplied to the poor people in the villages. We want them to organise and run libraries, wall newspapers and other cultural pursuits. They have to raise the capacities of the villagers for self-help, for raising more food on all the available communal lands and for serving each other by minimising their own unavoidable unemployment.

But most important of all, we want our Panchayats to co-operate with the village school, library, Kisan and Muzdoor Sabhas to engender in everyone the class-consciousness of the masses, and the internationalistic Nationalism and a burning hatred of all kinds of exploitation of man by man and all sorts of Imperialism. Our campaign, though accommodating the religious scruples of all religionists, must aim at creating a scientific and rational inquisitiveness and curiosity in the minds of our masses, and if the aid and recitals of our scriptures are to be invoked at all, the historical, rational and pragmatic side of their content must be stressed.

I believe in Mass Demonstrations in excelsis. Let there be Prabhat Pheries in the morning in every village. If need be different groups may have it at different times in the week to suit their occupational needs. But let our pledge of independence and the objective of functional organisations be read out to all. Let there be an oath of loyalty to the Nation and the masses, to be repeated everyday in every village, by all including the aged and the young. Then our practical recon-

struction campaign will no longer be in danger of being either mixed up or mistaken for reformism, and our aim of destroying this Imperialism and achieving complete freedom for the nation and complete power over the State for the masses will always be kept prominent in the view of all our comrades and the masses.*

* Alas, these hopes of Prof. Rangajee have not been realised and the party-wise, caste and communal divisions and political rivalries have prevented the formation of such constructive developments. Even the Bharat Sevak Samaj, which was organised, in the wake of advent of Swaraj by Nehru, Nanda, Ranga has failed and Rajiv Gandhi, The latest Prime Minister is busy pleading for decentralising our democracy from the Panchyats upwards.(Ed).

CHAPTER XVI

EDUCATION OF THE MASSES

“IF all the collegians were all of a sudden to forget their knowledge, the loss sustained by the sudden lapse of the memory of say a few lakhs of collegians would be nothing compared to the loss that the Nation has sustained through the ocean of darkness that surrounds three hundred millions. The measure of illiteracy is no adequate measure of the prevailing ignorance among the millions of villagers.”—Mahatma Gandhi in the *Harijan* of 1-8-37.

It is agreed on all sides that one of the first and most important things to be done is to eliminate illiteracy of our masses and to adequately educate all the children of the school-going age. It is not an easy thing to achieve this nor is it such an impossible thing as your administrators have so far made it out to be. We can achieve the education of all the children of school-going age within the next ten years and that of all the adults during the next twenty years, provided we stimulate and obtain the whole-hearted support of all the public-spirited people in the country. Russia achieved such a thing, miracle though it has seemed to be to the capitalist nations of the world, within the short span of a decade. Given

the same zeal and drive on the part of our administrators and the same co-operation and sympathy of our masses, we can also achieve such a signal triumph.

We spent Rs.26,52 lakhs, in 1935, on all kinds of education in the whole of British India. Out of this, only Rs.805 lakhs were spent on primary education, whereas Rs.157 lakhs and Rs.576 lakhs were spent on University and High school education respectively. That this is a disproportionate and uneconomical distribution of expenditure on the various kinds of education is proved by the fact that Great Britain which has practically accomplished universal primary education devotes as much as 68.2% of her educational expenditure on elementary education alone, as against 3.8% on university education and 18.4% on secondary education. But we in India are devoting only 34.3% on elementary education as against 14.7 and 24.1% on university and secondary education respectively.

The education of a pupil in the elementary school costs only Rs.7-12-0 per boy and Rs.9-6-2 per girl, per annum, while that of a university student is Rs.191-6-5 per boy and Rs.398-8-8 per girl, and that of a high-school boy and Rs.50-5-3, and a high-school girl Rs.78-14-2, so also that of the middle-school boy, Rs.19-11-1, and that for a girl, Rs.30-8-6.

Where, then, can we get Rs.13 crores, i.e. half as much more as we are spending totally on education? Reduction in the present land revenue and total prohibition are being undertaken by our Congress Ministers, which means a great loss to our provincial revenues. Coupled with this our educational experts are seriously of the opinion that the present

educational machinery cannot produce satisfactory and adequate results, especially as the teachers' conditions of services are unsatisfactory, his pay inadequate and irregular, and his status insufficiently recognised. They want us to institute a wide-spread system of regular courses of training for elementary school teachers. They say, "a sound policy directs that a further strengthening of the inspectorate should be undertaken without delay,".....since, "owing to inadequate supervision, schools, particularly in the rural areas, have little fear of a surprise visit or other visits on more than one or two days in the year". What wonder is there if an ordinary minister feels that he is between the devil and the deep sea, on the one hand loss of revenues and on the other, immediate demands for more expenditure even on existing schools?

Is there any solution? Yes, says Mahatma Gandhi, who it may be remembered, has been making many experiments in education, and who has gained valuable experience and knowledge through his many disciples conducting National schools since 1920. The views of the National Congress, which has run many hundreds of schools and conducted many educational experiments command the respect of not only politicians but also experienced educationists.

Let us hear what the Mahatma says, "As a Nation, we are so backward in education that we cannot hope to fulfil our obligations to the Nation in this respect in a given time during this generation if the programme is to depend on money.....By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man, —body mind and spirit. Literacy is not education, not even the beginning of it. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. I attach the greatest importance to primary education, which

according to my conception should be equal to the present Matriculation less English."

DEFECTS OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM

This is all very good. Even our educational experts are coming to this view. They say, "that one of the causes of the unsatisfactory progress is the unsuitability of the curriculum in the elementary schools, and the absence in many cases of proper methods of teaching. The scheme of studies is not sufficiently related to life and surroundings of both parents and pupils. This is particularly so in the case of rural elementary schools." If the village school is to be of real value to the village children and to the surrounding village life generally, the teaching imparted in the school must be directly related to the realities of rural life. They believe "it is probable that the project method of teaching in elementary schools is the best suited, particularly to the rural schools.....Formal and uninspiring teaching has been partly caused by an excessive use of text-books.....One of the reasons why the village teacher is unable to adopt suitable methods of teaching and also to make the village school function as the centre point of rural reconstruction work, is that the teacher trained long ago, probably in the antiquated methods, does not receive any further instruction in up-to-date method throughout his service."*

MAHATMA'S VIEW

Therefore, it behoves our educational experts to try the methods suggested by Mahatma Gandhi, a more practical and experienced expert. He says, "education should be self-sup-

* G.O. of Government of Madras, 1937 June.

porting. I would begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. I believe the highest development of the body and the mind and the soul is practical under such a system of education. The child should know the why and the wherefore of every process. This method does not exclude the knowledge of history and geography, but I find that this is best taught by transmitting such general information by the word of mouth....The sign of the alphabet may be taught later when the pupil has learnt to distinguish wheat from chaff and when he has somewhat developed his tastes.....One imparts ten times as much in this manner as by reading and writing.”*

BRITISH EXPERTS' VIEW

This nationalist view has received confirmation from the most unexpected quarter. Mr.A. Abbott, formerly His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Technical Schools, and Mr.S.H. Wood, Director of Intelligence, both of the British Board of Education, were brought by the Government of India to examine our educational system and make their suggestions. In their report on the vocational and general education in India, published on 27-7-1937, they say, “literacy, like happiness, is not achieved by pursuing it as a narrow objective: it is a by-product of satisfying activities. Literacy does not consist in reading and writing but in the use of reading and writing, and it may be added of speaking and listening.” “They envisage, in elementary education, such activities as the

* Prof.S.K.V.Aiyar of Panchayappas at Madras ventured to criticised this view but Right Hon.V.S.S.Sastry who presided at the meeting himself justified. Mahatmajee's suggestion. C.P.Govt. is going ahead with its plans to implement this scheme.

following: acting and singing: physical exercises, games and dancing, nature study and the care of flowers, and it may be animals, drawing and making things. Literacy comes incidentally as the child finds that he uses his knowledge of simple number relations or his ability to speak, read or write in the process of doing day by day something which gives him satisfaction.....the education in primary schools should be based upon the natural interests and activities of young children and less upon book-learning. manual work, that is manual creative activity of diverse kinds should be part of the curriculum of every school. "Regarding vocational training they say, "it is not on a lower plane than literacy education since the full purpose of education is to develop the whole powers of the mind, body and the spirit so that they may be devoted to the welfare of the Society. General and vocational education ought not to be regarded as essentially different branches of education, but rather as the earlier and the later phases of a continuous process, fostered by the Community, with the objects of helping the immature child to develop naturally into a good citizen."

CONSOLIDATE THE PRESENT POSITION

But before we can think of any further extension of primary education, we must, as some of the experts of our Government say, consolidate the present position. They point at the fact that 74% of the boys attending the primary schools never attain literacy. The experts of the Madras Government said in the Education Report published on 26th June, 1937 "the increase in the percentage of male literates only increased by 1.4% in the decade 1911-21, and only increased by 0.9% in the decade 1921-31.....It is obvious that in spite of all that

has been accomplished in the field of mass-education, there is little relationship between increased total enrolment and the production of literates from the elementary school system.....the main difficulty which has always faced the Educational Department is the difficulty of retaining children in school long enough to make them permanently literate, and the large increase in expenditure, total number of pupils and total number of schools have not succeeded in increasing the duration of school-life." They little realise that their extreme and blind insistence upon counting educational progress in terms of literacy alone has not a little to do with this failure. Because this 'wastage and stagnation' has continued and increased, the Madras Government wants us to consider, "what steps should now be taken to prevent, what from the financial point of view, is an ineffective expenditure of very large sums of public money."

In this connection the British experts, Messrs. Abbott, Wood say, "in our view both are to a considerable extent a result of the fact that so many of the children are frankly bored by the activity, or rather inactivity, offered to them in the schools.....When a normal child hails his release from the school at the end of the day either with shouts and horse-play or with a listless apathy, it is fairly certain that he has been ill-occupied during the school hours...In general, the primary schools are not alive and are altogether too solemn. Little children and continuous solemnity go ill together."

As suggested by Mahatma Gandhi, a number of handicrafts ought to be taught to different groups of pupils, in elementary schools, according to their special aptitudes and capabilities. "If the industrial products of all such activities are purchased in the first instance by the State, and then sold to the

public," we may be able to realise at least 50% of our expenses on elementary education, as is claimed by the Mahatma. Anyhow, the industrial, agricultural and cultural activities of our schools must at once be developed.

All this may be sound theory and practice of education, but who is to foot the bill? Where is the money? Mahatma Gandhi says, "I would begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft, and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. Thus every school can be made self-supporting, the condition being that the State takes over the manufactures of these schools." Though it is possible to realise a good portion of the school expenses by this method, it cannot of course be possible to realise, at least during the first two or three years, all the expenses incurred thereon. We will still have to spend at least six crores of rupees more than what we do at present. Moreover it takes time to train teachers, lakhs of them, capable of teaching vocational arts, and the training of such teachers will take surely a couple of years.

In the meanwhile, are we to sit quite passively awaiting the full financial results of introducing vocational training? Can we be content during this time with the present almost unobservable progress of elementary education? How and where can we find the desired six crores of rupees even to recoupe 50% of the expenditure on elementary education from out of its own industrial activities and train lakhs of new teachers who are needed, if we are to educate all the children of the school-going age?

Such questions are very inconvenient to answer as long as we do not take into consideration not only the mutual co-operation of the various departments of Government, as

suggested by Messrs. Abbott and Wood, but also the capacity of the masses to enthusiastically sponsor, and support our National campaign for spreading elementary education. It is typical of the mentality of these experts, either domiciled or exotic, that they have so far failed to realise this elementary fact, and that is why the financial cost of such a scheme simply staggers them and prevents them from even nibbling at the problem.

Russia, it must be remembered, has much to teach us in this sphere of educational development on a mass scale. If Russia has fought her neurosis, India not only can but must fight it and that fight must be inaugurated in the sphere of elementary education. How can India fight her neurosis? How can India create educated Indian masses in these days of poverty? The answer is not quite simple though not baffling. Indian masses alone can, if properly stimulated, solve this otherwise insoluble problem, through their political, social and functional organisations. Government Departments alone, however strengthened by additional supervising and teaching staff, cannot even touch the fringe of the problem. Mere establishment of compulsory elementary education, cannot satisfactorily attack this problem, as was envisaged by Sjt. Rajajee, in 1932, (he was then my fellow-prisoner in Vellore jail, and is now the Premier of Madras). The most necessary asset to make the spread of primary education a reality in the next five years, even with our meagre finances, is the co-operation of the masses. Given that co-operation India can surmount her poverty in money and other equipment, and achieve universal education.

RESPONSE OF THE MASSES

Are our masses capable of rising to this occasion? Have they the power to achieve what the Government Departments have failed to achieve? This answer to all such questions is contained in the miraculous, nation-wide and unstinted mass-response given to Mahatma's Poona Fast in 1932. In those fateful two weeks Hindu India had forsaken its age-long superstitions, and embraced the untouchables. If only we can generate such a fervour in favour of spreading education, awaken mass-consciousness to its duties towards its children, and canalise the response given by every individual and centralise it, we can certainly achieve triumph in this direction and can also prepare the masses very soon to gain greater and more tangible political power.

TECHNIQUE OF THE CAMPAIGN

Let Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal make an appeal on behalf of the whole Nation to the educated but unemployed youths to come forward and enlist themselves as volunteers into the National Educational corps. Not less than 25% of such people, men and women, will come forward to serve the Nation, especially as such an appeal will be backed by the Chief Ministers on behalf of their Governments with the practical and appealing inducements of Government employment and a decent subsistence allowance from the public treasury. Even if we need two teachers per village, we can, without any great difficulty, recruit at least 10 lakhs of educated young men and women as our teachers.

Though most of these teachers will be more highly educated than the average primary teachers, they will have to

be given some training in teaching, and that can be done within six months. That training can be supplemented by another six months' training spread over two years, utilising every week-end. Given the zeal to serve, and the National fervour to work, these people can certainly attain much greater proficiency in teaching than our present teachers. Such teachers will have to be paid Rs.15 to Rs.20 if with children. In addition they must be provided with free housing.

Next problem is how to provide these teachers with the pay and the housing? To this end, our Ministers have to establish a Statutory Village Panchayat in every village, the members of which are to be elected by all the local adult population, and expect every Panchayat to constitute a Parent Council. This Panchayat and Council shall have to bear half the salary of the teachers from out of their local collections and provide free housing for both the school and the teachers. At the request of the Congress President and on the exhortations of the Ministry, every village is sure to give this desired response. So the Provincial Government, aided by the Local Boards with their revenues from the educational cess, will have to pay only half of the salary of these new teachers.

The next step is to bring the children to the school, and keep them there. It will be the responsibility of the teacher to so conduct the school and the teaching as to make the pupils love the school and its activities more than their home environments. It will be the duty of the Parent Councils and the Panchayats to see that all the children of the school-going age are sent to the school.

To induce these two groups of village people to discharge their duties we ought not to depend even upon the paid

supervisory staff, as in the past, not only for reasons of cost, but also because such an inspection cannot by itself stimulate the ardour, and practical genius of our parents and the teachers. Though it is true that we need inspection of our schools by trained educationists, at the same time we have to look for the stimulus of social service that will energise our teachers and parents.

The Chief Minister and Education Minister have to issue a public appeal to all the teachers, parents and the pupils to compete with one another, by their villages, taluks and districts in trying to get as many students as possible, in educating them in the three 'R's, and some handicrafts, in gardening, geography, history, singing, dancing, drawing and in organising Vanar-senas etc., A time-limit, say of twelve months, shall be fixed for getting all the village children in to the school. In the next year period, Vanar-senas have to be formed, and so on.

At the end of every twelve months, a province-wide competition will have to be held, and that Village, Taluk or District whose schools and pupils have shown best results, will be acclaimed the winner. To do this, all the local Congress, Kisan and Mazdoor Sabhas will have to be utilised, their volunteers and organisers sent out on inspection tours to gauge the progress made by the different villages, taluks, etc., in their educational career.

To stimulate interest in this competition, and to persuade villagers to bring credit to their villages and their schools, the co-operation of the Press will have to be sought and the radio will have to be used, also the Government Publicity Bureau and all the Revenue Staff commandeered.

Monthly bulletins of progress of various parts of the district will have to be regularly sent out to the Panchayats and schools.

Then on the appointed day, the results will have to be announced by the Premier, as to which district in the Province, which taluk in the district, which village in the taluk have stood first, and have won the admiration of the Nation. Then copies of the photos of the pupils, the teachers, Parents' Councils and Panchayatdras of the best district will be distributed to all the villages, and these will be displayed in the offices of the Panchayats and all other Government offices.

Then a succession of Durbars, organised with the Gandhian simplicity, but with the Congress grandeur of mass-content will have to be held to honour the triumphant teachers, students, members of the Local Boards and the M.L.As. of the fortunate district, and the village, etc. No less a man than the President of the Congress himself shall present the Sanads, in the form of a National Flag with a special inscription, to denote the rank of the triumphant area, to the representatives of the particular areas. A lakh of people, thousands of volunteers, and the Congress Ministers gathered on such occasions doing honour, along with their great President, to the fortunate public servants, will kindle in the hearts of the whole public such ambitions to serve the people, and such fervour to strain all their resources for the education of the young generation that our parents, and teachers will rush back to their tasks with redoubled inspiration, energy and hope. Need I say what will be the geometrical rise of their tempo of the public spirit at successive stages of these competitions ?

At the end of every year's competition and Durbar, the Ministry and the Congress can fix the minimum degree of response they expect from every district, taluk and village. If any area fails to come up to the minimum of progress and proficiency, it is to be given a notice to show cause why, failing to reach the minimum standard in three months, a black flag ought not to be raised on all its Panchayat and school buildings, the grants, and increments of the teachers stopped.

I am sure that no village in any province of India will be so backward and wanting in public spirit as to deserve and bring upon itself the ignominy of a black flag. The prestige of Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress President and the power of the Ministry, and the campaigning of the Congress, Kisan and Muzdoor comrades are sufficient insurance against any such black flag for any village.

Given such a campaign and whirl-wind propaganda, and the unstinted co-operation of all the public spirited people of all the parties, we can achieve universal elementary education, within the next ten years.

Side by side with this, or rather preliminary to this, we have to radically revise the text-books available for our students in the Primary and Middle schools. They have to deal more with our history, arts and sciences, and our place in the world. They have to contain more of the best portions of literature, in short our students have to be given a thorough-going Nationalist-cum-rural humanitarian-cum-classwise bias, so that they can think aright about the problems of the world, and their own position and plight when compared to other classes and Nations in contemporary life.

Just as we have to take care to teach our pupils in the elementary schools several of our handi-crafts, and cultural subjects so also we have to take care to inculcate in them a wholesome love of books, learning and knowledge. Thus side by side with acquainting them with many technical instruments and machines, we have to familiarise them with the beauties and secrets of books. Therefore a school has to be provided with a workshop and a library.

If thus every pupil is helped to turn to the library as affectionately as he or she turns to the ward-robe, we can pave the way for the progressive rise in the knowledge of every such pupil, and thus insure against the loss of literacy and education. The Library movement is the best insurance against the deterioration of the education of the post-elementary school pupils. Hence the need to organise libraries in every village. Such a library must contain books, both instructive and interesting to young persons.

Similarly our national campaign for the spread of elementary education has to be accompanied by an equally vigorous campaign to spread adult education. One of the most essential things to do in that direction is the establishment of as many Middle schools and High schools as possible, to train youths upto their 15th or 16th year in various subjects, including of course those dealing with the theory and practice of various occupations, so as to fit them into useful and self-reliant citizens, and workers. The other thing is the publication by a National Board of Writers, of an all-round series of books on all modern subjects fit for the youth of this age and useful to the cause of Nationalism and Socialism. Then comes the need for the utilisation of the radio, Cinema, Theatre, Art,

Press, Cartooning, Wall-papers, and peripatetic Exhibitions and Museums, all run in a simple, cheap and artistic away to awaken and sustain the intellectual inquisitiveness of youth, and to help it to educate itself in the modern sciences.

Such a system of education inculcated with so much of public co-operation and spread so rapidly by so many lakhs of zealous public servants will form the sure foundation for our capture of power and Swaraj.

If we are assured of this much of initial educational progress during the next ten years, we can hope to launch an effective revolutionary campaign for the ultimate political power with the co-operation of even our children.

* It is a more than half a century since these schemes and hopes were entertained and propagated by Prof. Rangajii. The All India Adult Education was founded in 1938 by him, Kamala Devi, Aruna Asaf Ali, Bharai Devi Ranga, Chet Singh and others. It is 12 years since Janata Education Minister Pratap Chunder initiated Government campaign for Adult Education. Yet illiteracy and ignorance continues to be a mass wise and national liability Prof.Rangaji says "it is a poor consolation to me to receive the Nehru Award for literacy" in 1988. Ed.

CHAPTER XVII

FIGHT AGAINST OFFICIAL CORRUPTION

Even the greatest admirers of our services are obliged to confess that corruption is rampant in our services. If to-day our masses are contributing nearly Rs.200 crores to the maintenance of our Central and Provincial Government, it is no exaggeration to say that at least half as much more is extracted from them by the lakhs and lakhs of so-called public functionaries, that infest our country. Bribery has become such an inevitable incidence of officialdom that our masses have to count that in, when they make an estimate of the cost of their dealings with Government and the officials have got used to calculate it as a regular additional source of income. When war loans were being collected and later on returned, a certain percentage of the sums involved had to be paid as bribes. Peasants have to pay not inconsiderable sums to the village Officers at the time of making land revenue payments. If our people want to register their documents, the Sub-Registrars and district Registrars often collect not less than 50% as much more as the stamp duty payable. The excise people lay their tolls both from the manufacturers, vendors and buyers too. The Salt Department persecutes the manufacturers of salt and its vendors. The Revenue officers flee not only the poor villagers but also the lower Revenue officials. The forest

department is also notoriously habituated to exacting bribes from villagers, for actual or alleged breaches of the severe forest laws, and the employees in charge of the cattle-pond derive a regular income from the unfortunate owners of cattle, which accidentally get into the reserved areas, or which are often seized without such trespass, and put in the pond. The irrigation officials also take advantage of the entire dependence of village for irrigation water, and take heavy recurring tolls, and collect non recurring bribes also from peasants and contractors. Even the Royal commission on Agriculture has had to make an important mention of the oppressive corruption prevailing in the irrigation and forest departments. The Police and Public Works Departments are of course the most notorious offenders. One wonders which department is really free from this cancer of bribery. The Postal and Telegraph Department, the Agricultural, Veterinary, Sanitary and Public Health Department are not so bad. But every department without any exception is highly practised in 'nepotism' and the incidental 'bribery' when appointments are made or promotions given or transfers or other punishments contemplated. Even the Public Service Com-missions, which have been established to minimise this evil, have not always succeeded in keeping their transactions completely above board.

There are no two opinions in our country as to the incidence of this evil or its disastrous effects upon our economic and social life. It corrupts both the officials and the public and demoralises the one and degenerates the other. It is an evil which has to be fought most strenuously and relentlessly and any amount of initial expenditure is to uproot it will be more than worth our while. Indeed the fight against

it is as important as that to reduce the economic and unfair tax-burdens. To stamp it out, it is worth our while to organise a national anti-bribery campaign, and devise a machinery that will keep a constant watch over the services and their contacts with the masses.

It is also equally true that bribery is not confined to them alone but is indulged in by highly educated and paid people. The Text-Book Committee and University and Matriculation Examiners are found to be as much accessible to 'money' as the District Revenue, Public Works, Excise, Salt, Registration, Forest and Medical Officers. Therefore it is an evil whose tentacles are far flung, and whose hold is widespread and which cannot be tackled by anything less than a determined, well-planned and merciless national anti-bribery campaign. It is wrong to think that this evil cannot be eliminated as long as our masses are so ignorant and helpless, and the lower officials and their clerks so ill-paid. Although it is true that the more ignorant a man is the more liable he is to be easily frightened into preferring bribes and the more low paid an employee is, the more amenable he is to bribery.

Such a campaign, it may be said, is sure to cost a lot of money and in these days of general Poverty, it cannot be undertaken. But costly though it be, it is worth our while to undertake it because through it, we can succeed in stopping the illegal and unfair diversion of more than Rs.100 crores from comparatively poor people to fairly comfortable and well-provided section of our people.

OUR CAMPAIGN

First of all, we have to institute a regular machinery of Public Advisory Committees, attached to every important District and Taluk office of all those Departments which have earned any reputation for corruption and bribery. The members of such committees shall be elected by the various political parties in the country, in proportion to their respective strengths in the legislatures, or Local District Boards, or both, and also by the Kisan, Muzdoor, Women and Social Organisations, their respective representations being dependents upon the Departments concerned and the interest in them, their respective people are supposed to have. For instance, P. W. D. Advisory Committee, of say all members, will consist of, it is reasonable to assume, three representatives of the "Representative Bodies like the legislative or District Board, two of workers and seven of peasants, because it is the peasants who are mostly affected by the operations of the P.W.D. Similarly the Local Boards Engineering Advisory Committee will have to consist of equal numbers of workers and peasants representatives.

These Advisory Committees shall have the power to entertain complaints against any member of the staff of the department for which it is established and conduct in the first instance confidential enquiries into the conduct, past and present, of the employee or employer against whom complaints are preferred. If as a result of such enquiries, a prima facie case is made out against any of the employees, a regular official enquiry must be ordered into his conduct. Even if, as a result of such an official enquiry, the case is not proved against him, he must be transferred, if the Advisory Committee desires it.

These safeguards are provided because it is not always easy to make out even a *prima facie* case against a corrupt official, although he goes on harassing people. The worst of it is that those who give bribes are often anxious to derive some special advantage at the expense of either some one else or the State, and so, are unwilling to depose evidence against the official concerned. Moreover, considerations like false pity for the fate of the accused employee or fear of some retribution visiting them if evidence is deposed prevent many people from aiding the public in bringing to book the wrong doers. Lastly the present Provisions of the Criminal Law, which make both the giver and the receiver of bribes punishable, prevent those who have given bribes from owning the facts to any tribunal.

It is to prevent any hasty or prejudiced decision of the Advisory Committee from prejudicing the fate of employees, we have provided that in the first instance, the higher official must agree with its decision before it can be enforced and in case of disagreement between them, some decent interval is allowed to see that the employees concerned are watched carefully and do behave themselves and if in spite of all that, the Committee again decides by an absolute majority, on fresh grounds furnished to it, that they shall be transferred, no one can have any legitimate complaint against the transfer of such employees.

Suffice it to say that such Advisory Committees, empowered thus to spy over the activities of different departments and to welcome the co-operation of the public in checking bribery, will be able to create an anti-bribery atmosphere through out the ranks of our public services.

But any amount of zealous and scrupulous work of these Committees will become futile, if the public conscience is not aroused against this wasteful and nauseating habit of offering 'bribes' to officials and thus weakening the morale of public services, in addition to allowing wrongful redistribution of national resources. It is therefore necessary to carry on a systematic propaganda, through schools, broadcast, press and various organisations like the Congress, Kisan and Muzdoor Sabhas, against this evil. An anti-bribery week initiated by the president of the Congress and carried on by all the voluntary organisations and assisted by the officials, the highest and the lowest will have a very salutary effect. On every public platform, we can welcome the ordinary folk to narrate their troubles experienced at the hands of various officials, encourage various organisations to offer to assist the Advisory Committees in bringing to light the various malpractices of bribe-takers and bribe-givers. On the same platforms, the local officials, one after the other, either directly or through their representatives, can be expected to declare themselves against 'bribery', advise the masses never to give 'bribes' to anyone and even to go to the nearest higher official or the Advisory Committee with their complaints against any Government employee who has either asked for or received any bribe. The Advisory Committees will also have to render to the public from such platforms, an account of their work during the year, the kind of check they have exercised on the officials and the number of officials they have got punished. They have also to publish the names of people who have co-operated with them in detecting abuses and bribe-taking and announce the rewards of national flags or medals given them by the Ministry and the Congress. This kind of a campaign is sure to have very healthy effects upon the public

and services, and is likely to help the Congress, Muzdoor and Kisan Sabhas in their anti-bribery propaganda.

Our Congressmen and all others who hanker after a purified public life and a humanised and public service, will do well to attach as much importance to this anti-bribery campaign as to any other first-rate national campaign, as thereby they will be saving Rs. 100 crores per annum and helping the masses and purifying the national life.*

* The Kripalani Committee on Railways Santhanam Committee against corruption and administrative reforms committee of Morarjee Desai have been appointed since the advent of Swaraj and as a result Vigilance Commissioners and Lokayuktas etc., have been appointed. But this evil has been spreading its tentacles, coming to embrace politicians and political parties. The sections of the press have indulged in irresponsible charges. (Ed.)

Chapter XVIII

AGRICULTURAL LABOUR

I

One-third of our Kisans are landless. They are exploited most cruelly by their employers, most of whom are themselves the much exploited but land-owning and capitalistic-minded Kisans. In so far as those workers who are employed by landlords are concerned, their troubles are much different from those of the actual cultivators, not in principle but in degree of their incidence. The other workers who are employed by peasants themselves are most unfortunately obliged to struggle against the suicidal rapacity of even small-holders and it is this unfortunate cancer that threatens the development of a united front among the land-owning and the landless Kisans as against their common exploiters.

It is a fact, though deplorable that most of our land-owning peasants and cultivating tenants have come to look upon themselves as superior to the landless workers, who, to make matters worse, belong to so-called lower castes. A large section of our workers are Harijans who till only the other day, were considered as untouchables and who are even to-day suffering from some type of untouchability and who are

treated almost as slaves. Indeed the Harijans of the Punjab and others known as Kammins are prevented by the Land Alienation Act, from purchasing any lands. In parts of Guzerat, large numbers of agricultural labourers are attached to certain peasant-families almost as *villains* from generation to generation. In certain Districts of Tamilnad, Harijans are obliged to work freely for peasants on certain days in the week merely to get water baled out to them from the peasants' wells. In most parts of India, large numbers of workers do actually borrow small sums in order to get married, on the understanding that they and their children will serve the money lenders who are the local peasants as farm servants. Bond labour has to be legally abolished.

On first thoughts, one is inclined to organise these people to fight against the land owning peasants, including the small-holders to rid them of all the excruciating pains caused by their daily exploitation by their immediate employers. But the miserable plight of these unhappy people is more due to the heavy and crushing pressure upon them and their employers, of the present system of capitalism and landlordism and also of the State, dominated by capitalists and landlords and less to any inevitable class conflict between the small landholders and workers.

At the same time everyone who is really anxious for the prevalence of amity and development of unity between peasants and workers, must be prepared to persuade the peasants to share, even in the transitional period, with their workers as much of their low incomes as possible, to give up their present unhealthy practices, social and economic, of exploiting and suppressing workers and to sponsor comradely relations with their workers. He has also to do his best to aid the working

classess to organise and educate themselves on their class-basis and to enable them to attain humane conditions to life.

The first and the most elementary thing to do is to abolish by law all the disabilities that are now attached to those so-called untouchables, now known as Harijans and to throw open all Hindu religious places and all avenues of Public Service to all Harijans. The next equally elementary thing to do is to extend to agricultural labour all such labour legislation as the Trade Union Act, Workmen's Compensation Act, Payment of Wages Act, and give them the benefit of all those International Labour Conventions as have been adopted by other countries for their agrarian labour with such modifications as are necessitated by our Indian special conditions. As in England, India also has to create an Agricultural Wages Board to fix and prescribe their conditions of employment and the necessary machinery to see that the decisions of the Boards are implemented. These Boards should consist of equal number of representatives of both peasants and workers and presided over by one of the Judges out of a panel approved of by both parties. Even while such a wage settlement machinery is in the coming, it behoves the leaders of peasants and workers and Congress to do their best to promote amicable relations between these two sections of Kisans, not by perpetuating the present innumerable points of friction and practices of exploitation but by removing them and improving the social and economic conditions of workers, of course in harmony with the legitimate need and right of peasants for a minimum standard of living. It is to pave the way for the emergence of such conditions that the South Indian Federation of Peasants and Workers was founded in July 1935 and the All-India Kisan Sabha has decided to conduct an enquiry into the conditions of agrarian labour. The Andhra Ryots'

Association has issued a pamphlet specifying its friendly attitude towards workers.

Let no one think that this possibility of a clash of interests between these two groups of Kisans is only in our imagination. For in the Andhra such clashes had begun in 1933 and at spasmodic intervals ever since in several places. Thanks to the prevalence of good sense on both sides, speedy settlements were reached. It has to be admitted that the Kisan Sabhas could not effectively intervene in such disputes owing to their unpreparedness. It must also be remembered that interested parties, including the very Zamindars and Sahukars whom our peasants and workers have to fight are constantly trying to create rift in the Kisans's flute and make it impossible for peasants and workers by taking advantage of the many points of conflict of interest that exist between our peasants and agricultural labour. If today such attempts are being made in the Andhra and Bihar, the most advanced Kisan provinces, it will be the turn of the other provinces tomorrow and the day after, and therefore it is statesmanlike for our Kisan comrades to set about paving the way for a wholehearted and invulnerable alliance between workers and peasants.

II

Our Ministries can immediately set about providing these landless people with all the lands that are to-day in the possession of the State and under the personal ownership of landlords under the Permanent Settlement. Such lands to-day amount to nearly half as much as the lands under occupation and most of them are fit for cultivation. This policy has been advocated by the South Indian Federation since 1935 and by

the All-India Kisan Sabha since 1936 and by Hon.Mr.V.V.Giri, the Madras Minister for Labour and Industries.

It is true that much of this land is not very fertile and needs a good deal more expenditure and effort than ordinary land now under cultivation, to yield good enough results. But it is certainly cheaper to start with such lands than to buy the existing cultivated lands and grant them to the workers, thus inevitably displacing several small holders thereby.

But such lands ought not to be granted to the landless workers either for individual ownership and exploitation or with the rights of alienation and mortgage. They are to be granted to the Co-operative Societies of agricultural workers, to be exploited co-operatively and to be owned collectively.

It can be stipulated, in order to stimulate and retain the interest of workers in their collective welfare and progress of the finances of their collective holding, that as long as the original members or others who may be admitted into membership by all concerned continue to serve the Co-operative Farm, to the satisfaction of the Society, they are not only to be members of it but also to have a prior claim to the employment available therein over all outsiders. If ever one or more members or their family members who may be admitted into associate or full membership misbehave and incur the displeasure of the whole society concerned, they may be suspended for any length of time. But their heirs are to have the right to become members of such an agricultural society.

Every member has to be paid the usual wages, fixed by the the General body of all members in proportion to the work

contributed by him and the surplus income, met with at the end of the year, must be divided up among the members in proportion to the nature of work and days of work contributed by him. Other details of internal management can be worked out by the Societies concerned.

But before such holdings can be expected to afford even ordinary wages for their members, much developmental work has to be done by the State. The lands thus settled upon have to be rid of bogs, marshes and properly drained and thus freed from malarial environment. The agricultural Co-operative Societies have to be provided with either freely or at reasonably low prices, houses for worker, stables for cattle, wells for drinking water and irrigation. The irrigation facilities, if any are possible, must be developed, tanks and wells dug. Roads and other means of communications have to be provided and communications have to be provided and open markets opened. Of equal importance is the supply of one experienced Agricultural Demonstrator, at State expense, for a period of five or ten years, to every such society to guide it on up-to-date and profitable lines. Provision of cheap credit for financing current agricultural operations and facilities for developing gardening and cottage industries are also needed. Side by side with these steps, the civic needs of the members such as education, entertainments have also to be catered to. Only under such auspices can it be fair for the state to expect our agricultural workers to leave their villages and venture into unfamiliar places to undertake the more hazardous and more responsible work of exploiting undeveloped land for their own benefit.

I do not expect all our agricultural workers to be adequately engaged on such Co-operative Agricultural Holdings but it is

reasonable to estimate that a fifth of them may thus be provided with employment on them. It may also be easier to divert, some more say upto another 20% into industrial walks of life, that have to be expanded in the near future, and paid better wages and provided better conditions of employment than are to-day possible in agriculture. Then it cannot be as difficult as it is to-day to persuade our small holders to pay higher wages and treat their workers better, especially as the introduction of better machinery and more productive crops and methods of cultivation will then become more feasible.

III

In addition to all this, the State has to try to be careful that every additional mechanical and other advanced methods of production, when introduced, do not result in any further unemployment to the masses and do result in providing more employment to the masses. Secondly cottage industries have to be developed to the greatest extent, on the latest scientific lines to provide employment to as many as possible. Thirdly industrial development and the improvement of communications and irrigation facilities, and the inaugurating of a national policy of house-building for the masses have to be undertaken, also for the purpose of minimising unemployment and providing better paying employment. Lastly the provision of housing-sites and housing and dairying and bee-hiving facilities at reasonable prices will go a long way to equalise the conditions of life now obtaining for peasants and workers.

The establishment of labour Exchanges and Decasualisation Schemes and the provision of Unemployment Insurance, on however small a scale are the most insistent and necessary

reforms needed to improve the conditions of employment and life of our workers.

Lastly there are many small things that can and ought to be done immediately, which if done, can do some good to our workers. For instance, the customary rights of our workers to obtain fuel from forest can be respected, or reinstated or even increased. They can be allowed to freely manufacture and sell salt. The Local Boards can and ought to be made to pay minimum wages and salaries fixed by the Provincial Trade Board for Local Board Employees. As far as possible, the contracts of Local Board Works may be given to the Co-operatives of Workers, at reasonable rates. All the private lands of landlords and those of Public Endowments shall be leased out, at economic rents, to agricultural workers only. Similarly the lands of all the absentee landholders ought to be leased out to such workers or their Co-operatives at rents, to be fixed by Land Courts to be appointed.

Thus every possible avenue must be explored by the Provincial Governments not only to provide more employment and land for which agricultural workers are hungering after but also to encourage them to develop their organisations.

TABLE I

Number of cultivating owners, Tenant cultivators, and Agricultural Labourers, in different provinces, (from census of 1931) (number in thousands.)

Province	Cultivating owners	Tenant cultivators	Agricultural labourers
Assam... ..	997	597	55
Bengal... ..	5,084	816	2,458
Bihar & Orissa	330	7,908	3,121
Bombay	834	1,104	2,344
C.P. & Berar	1,995	111	2,923
Madras	4,500	1340	4257
N.W.Frontier	221	150	36
Punjab	1,762	1,157	545
U.Provinces	1,185	9,580	3,105
Total British India*	22,169	29,841	24,925
Total Indian States	5,456	6,328	4,732

TABLE II

Area cultivated and uncultivated in 1934-35 in each province

Province	Net area actually sown	Current Fallow	Culturable waste other than fallow
(In thousands of acres)			
1. Assam	5,988	1,824	19,120
2. Bengal	23,357	5,424	6,626
3. Bihar & Orissa	24,132	6,932	6,982
4. Bombay	32,802	10,718	6,666
5. C.P. & Bearar	24,608	3,989	14,210
6. Madras	32,802	11,166	13,442
7. N.W.F.P	2,199	579	2,752
8. Punjab	26,504	4,620	14,216
9. U.P	35,662	2,910	10,218
India, including Ajmeer Merwara, Delhi, Coorg, Burma, Baluchistan and Andamans.	226,980	52,999	154,260

* This total includes, Ajmer, Andamans, Baluchistan, BurmaCoorg and Delhi

APPENDIX

Tenant Sub Committee Questionnaire.

Issued By The A.I.K.C.

The Tenant Sub-Committee appointed at the Faizpore 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 enquiries on the lines suggested in the questionnaire into the economic conditions of tenants in a few villages, with which they are intimately in touch. They can then try to ascertain and furnish all the information they can obtain in their respective areas. They are advised to get into touch with the local tenants and those interested in their welfare, and also the land owning peasants, and ascertain their agreed demands if necessary by holding their Taluk and District conferences.

1.a) Name of the village b) District. 2. Population of the village (give classification of families on occupational basis) 3. Number of land owning families and persons and the area cultivated. 4. Number of actual cultivating families 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 Rytowari. b) The extent under Zamindari 9. The nature of the tenure under which land is held. 10. Area cultivated by owners. 11. Area cultivated by (a) their owner-tenants, (b) rented. 12. Area cultivated by landless tenants with size of the holding 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 expenses 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 ? 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 leases issued by the landlords, Zamindars or Inamdars ? if so send a copy. 29. For how many years do the leases run (i) for land owning tenants, (ii) for landless tenants ? 30. Do the land owners agree to supply any manure, or seed or plough or cattle ; If so, to what extent, in the case of (i) land owning tenants (ii) landless tenants. 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 that debt ? What is the average rate of interest. 34. Has their indebtedness increased, since becoming tenants ? If so, since when, (i) how much by land owning tenants, (ii) by landless tenants ? 35. Is the whole of the rent being paid usually ? 36. If not, what

portion of it is usually in arrears ? 38 What effect have the arrears upon the term of the lease and the rental insisted upon, over the new lease ? 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. 43 Is the number of tenants on the increase or decrease ? What is 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 Peasants' conferences ? In which conferences ? 47. Will the conferment of proprietary ownership be of any real help to the future generations of tenants, with permanency 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.

CHAPTER XIX

PEASANTS GROUPS OF M.L.As.

The All India Kisan Committee which met on the 14th and 15th of July at Niyamatpur in Gaya District has passed the following resolution:

“This Committee exhorts members of the Kisan Sabhas elected to the various Provincial Legislatures on the Kisan, Congress or United Front tickets to form or join Kisan and Labour Members’ Groups and promote resolutions, bills, amendments etc., and take all possible measures for the realisation of the Kisans’ demands as stated in the charter of Kisan Rights adopted at the Faizpur session of the All India Kisan Sabha and as amplified by the respective Provincial Kisan Sabhas from time to time”.

It is learnt that in pursuance of this resolution, some of the Congress M.L.As. of the Bihar Assembly have formed themselves into a Peasants’ Group. The members of the Bengal Krishak and Muzdoor Party of M.L.As. which was obliged to liquidate itself owing to pressure from the President of the Congress have subsequently formed their group. But owing to the prevalence of totalitarian idea of the func-

tions and importance of the Congress; the Madras Assembly Congress Party has decided not to permit the emergence of such groups.

It is not generally recognised that such groups can achieve much good and help to create useful public opinion on various important problems and even give a lead to the Parties in the Legislature and the public outside concerning various public questions. But a careful study of the work of the Peasants group of M.L.As in the Central Legislative Assembly during the last two years will convince every one of the great utility of such Groups.

It is a truism that owing to the exigencies of Parliamentary life, tactics and pressure of work, the Legislatures all over the world are unable to spare enough time to discuss every problem that deserves public attention, to pass all the resolutions needed to focus the attention of Government upon the urgent needs of the people or pave the way for the emergence of new policies, or the creating of public opinion or the passing of Legislation by raising timely debates through adjournment motions or resolutions or cut motions. Therefore the need for extra-Partisan Parliamentary activities of various Legislators belonging to different parties but interested in common problems to form themselves into Groups to study such problems, sift their information, exchange their views and publish their concerted and convinced impressions, views and resolutions has assumed much importance and in many countries, has taken practical shape in the formation of various Groups. Thus are formed in the British House of Commons, the Lancashire M.P.'s Group, Indian M.P.'s Group and so on.

It is on the same lines and to serve about the same objects, the Peasants' Group of M.L.A's in the Central Assembly was first formed in September 1935, with Mr. Abdul Matin Chowdary as President. The formation of that Group has special significance for India in that our peasants have not yet developed a strong enough Parliamentary mentality nor have they succeeded in obliging the various Political Parties to pay sufficient heed to their needs. This Group has so far held four meetings and one informal discussion during the last five sessions and passed 29 resolutions on 20 separate subjects concerning the peasants. It has also published a very useful and comprehensive monograph, touching upon many of the peasants problems.

We have to consider the personal side of such Groups. Many legislators who may not hold very extreme views on various questions may yet be brought together in such Groups to discuss various matters and come to their conclusions, being the highest common measure of agreement. Such opportunities are very much to be prized and if exploited fully, will pave the way for the legislature concerned to take up some of their conclusions as the starting points for its own more formal motions for adjournment, resolution, cuts or even interpellations. Moreover many members who otherwise take very little trouble to study any problems, though of interest to them, are given a pleasant and convenient opportunity to think about them and personally appreciate the results of the studies made on their behalf. Not the least important advantage of such Groups is to bring together in more or less intimate contact with each other, irrespective of their different and often mutually far from friendly parties. Indeed many of the M.L.A's of the Central Assembly who normally would have

thought so little of the peasants were brought to think of them and speak for them. There is no doubt, whatsoever, that the contact they had with this Group for two years has come to colour the mental perspective (in the direction of the resolutions of the Group) of such Provincial Congress Parliamentarians like the Hon. Messrs. Khare, Sri Krishna Sinha, Dr. Khan Saheb, all Prime Ministers, Hon. Giri, the Labour Minister, Hon. Mr. B.K. Das, the Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly, Hon. Anugraha Narayan Sinha, the Finance Minister of Bihar.

Coming to the actual achievements of this Group in the Central Assembly, the first thing that strikes one is the latest recognition by the Finance Member of the principle that tax-burdens ought to be lived on the rich and less and less on the poor. In reply to the debate on Retrenchment in Central Expenditure held on 3-9-37, Sir James Grigg asked for the co-operation of the Congress party in this attempt to shift the burdens of taxation from the shoulders of the poor on to those of the rich. The next achievement of the Group is the tacit acceptance by the leaders of the Nationalist Parties of the main principle of the Group that protection could be given to industries only consistent with the interests of the nation and consumers and the protection for labour employed in such industries and also in other industries producing either competitive or joint products of the same industries.

The third equally welcome success is the new anxiety being displayed by the Finance Member to maintain that his new tax-proposals are not intended to tax the poor and the peasant. When in answer to this, it was explained during 1937 budget debates how the proposed increase in Sugar Excise

Duty was going to injure the peasants, the Finance Member had to come forward with his proposal of a Sugar Committee with Rs. five lakhs a year to meet us half way.

Fourthly the second instalment of the Rural Development Grant (Rs. 180 lakhs) in addition to the first one crore grant, the additional annual five lakhs grant being made since 1936-37 for developing rural postal facilities and the latest additional expenditure upon cattle-breeding etc. are all as much due to the influence of the Group as to the new orientation taking place in the Government's policy. Fifthly many temporary advantages, like special assistance for the flooded, and famine-ridden areas and rural reconstruction in Quetta villages after the earth-quake, the appointment of a special officer to study the problem of quinine supply after the inauguration of provincial autonomy in its bearings upon the fight against Malaria and the continued protection being given to the producers of rice and wheat also are due to the work of the Group.

We have said enough to indicate the kind of good work such Groups can turn out in our legislatures. To indicate to what extent they can also influence the deliberations of the Legislature, we need only say that the resolutions of the Legislature, on agricultural indebtedness and small Industries could not have been tabled and passed unanimously in the Central assembly but for the existence of this Group.

I therefore strongly urge the formation of such Groups in all our Legislatures to watch, protect and further the interests of our peasants and workers. Hence the resolution of the A.I.K.S. advocating their formation and functioning.

**Resolutions passed at the First meeting of
the Peasants Group of M.L.As (September 1935)**

I. (a) It shall be the primary object of this Group to do every thing possible to lower the tax-burdens laid directly or indirectly on peasants by the Central and Provincial Governments and to see that the expenditure of Government is so redistributed as to benefit the peasants to a much greater extent than at present.

(b) This Group urges upon Government the extreme necessity of giving preferential benefit of any budget surplus that may be realised (next year) to villagers, peasants and agricultural workers in view of the fact that ever since the economic depression has set in, ever fresh burdens of taxation — direct and indirect — have been piled upon peasants and workers while other classes have been given the benefit of budget surpluses

2. While recognising the need for affording adequate and timely protection to Indian Industries in order that such industries when properly and fully developed, may provide remunerative employment to the growing numbers of the unemployed, this Group is anxious to see that the masses are burdened by protective duties only for so long and to such an extent as will be demonstrably proved to be necessary.

3. This Group opines that the development of cottage industries is just as important and necessary for the economic solidarity and well being of peasants as that of big industries and will therefore strive its best to see that the interests of those millions who are employed in small industries are adequately

protected and that Government pays an increasing attention to their needs.

4. This Group urges upon Government the necessity and advisability of so amending the Civil Procedure Code Act (Section 60) as to exempt 5 acres of wet land or 10 acres of dry land of every peasant from attachment for civil decrees.

Resolutions Passed at the Second meeting in April 1936.

1. This Group deems it urgently necessary that the Government of India shall review the whole system of land revenue in different parts of India and develop a uniform scientific and dependable system in accordance with which the future autonomous local Governments can regulate their land revenue policy and as a result of which the incidence of land revenue can be lowered and the periodical settlements stopped.

2. This Group requests the Government of India to make an enquiry into the economic conditions of the tenants, of landlords who come under the permanent settlement and temporary settlement of U.P., Bihar, Orissa, C.P., Assam and Punjab with a view to devise ways and means for protecting and improving their conditions (vis-a-vis the landlords) before Provincial Autonomy is inaugurated.

3. In view of the great need for providing for the Harijans and other land-less agricultural classes with some cultivable land without the right of alienation this Group urges upon the Government of India to devise, in co-operation and consultation with the local governments and the Representatives of the agricultural workers the necessary ways and

means for settling the land-less agricultural workers upon the available cultivable but unoccupied government lands available in this country, and adapting those lands for profitable cultivation and providing adequate drinking water supplies and otherwise fitting them for human habitation.

4. It is necessary, if the peasants are to be genuinely helped that Government of India in consultation with Local Governments and the peasants' representatives shall take immediate and adequate steps to improve and extend road, and canal and inland water-way communications in addition to following a policy of progressive nationalisation of Railways, in order to provide the peasants with full and adequate cheap and serviceable system of communication.

5. This Group demands immediate legislation to abolish detention and arrest for civil decrees and to make 6% the maximum permissible rate of interest and pass a separate Rural Insolvency Law.

6. Immediate efforts must be made by the Government of India in consultation with the Provincial Governments, before the Reforms are actually inaugurated to remodel the services upon the limited resources of the peasants and to develop medical supplies, sanitary conveniences, transport facilities, education and industrial and agricultural research and developments at least in proportion to the contributions made by the peasants towards the public revenues.

7. This Group expresses its great dissatisfaction at this year's Budget in that it has failed to give any tax relief to the poor and the peasantry, in spite of their growing poverty and their unabated but burdensome contributions to the public

revenues, to provide for any recurring grant to the Rural Development Fund and to lower the charged on Post-cards and it has, on the other hand, continued the disastrous and unfair policy of reducing the taxes upon the rich and continuing to pay predepression salaries to the highly paid staffs and services and it proposes to make huge allotments for the rebuilding of Quetta under the unmanageable and undependable supervision of the Army.

8. This Group warns the Government that its budgetary policy is suicidal for the country and ruinous for the peasantry and is calculated to create much discontent among the Peasants and Workers.

9. This Group protests against the refusal of His Excellency the Viceroy to give his sanction for introducing the Peasants Union Bills of Prof. Ranga in the Assembly.

Resolutions of the Third meeting of the Peasants Group of M.L.A's (October 1936)

1. This Peasants Group of M.L.A's protests against the refusal of Government to devalue the Rupee by an expansion of currency in circulation, a de-linking of the rupee from Pound Sterling and thus leaving rupee to find its own level in relation to the purchasing power parity by undertaking, an industrial and suitable campaign of economic reconstruction and expansion and thus place India in a better position to stand the competition with the rest of the world.

2. This Group views with great concern the daily increasing sufferings of the peasants and workers of the U.P.

Bihar, Bengal, Bombay and Andhra owing to the ravages of floods and famines and protests against the half-hearted attempts of the Provincial Governments to offer relief to the distressed and appeals to Government of India and the Provincial Governments to offer adequate relief to the sufferers.

3. This group requests Government of India to make the Rural Development grant an annual feature of the Central Budget and to constitute a Central Rural Reconstruction Board, on the lines of the Road Development Committee of the Central Legislature to supervise the allocation and utilisation of the Rural Development Grant and to advise and co-ordinate the attempts of Provincial Governments in effecting Rural Reconstruction.

4. This Group expresses its deep sympathy with Mahatma Gandhi and his disciples for having gone into the heart of the Malarial District in order to help the villagers to get out of their present depressed conditions even at the risk of suffering from Malaria and other fevers with which our villagers are infested and draws the attention of the Government and the public to the great necessity for immediately undertaking a national campaign against Malaria, and other enteric fevers of our countryside.

5. This Group is glad that the Central Railway Advisory Committee has recommended that at least one seat ought to be provided for the peasants' representative on every Local Railway Advisory Committee and that the Commerce Member has agreed to take the representative of the Indian Planters Association on to the Indian Tea Cess Committee, so soon as the Indian Planters organise themselves and appeals to all those interested in the welfare of peasants to develop their

regional and cropwari organisations as soon as possible and urges upon Government the need for giving representation to peasants organisation on all quasi-Governmental Committees which deal with peasants's problems.

This Group expresses its deep disappointment at the attitude of do-nothing on the Assembly's resolution on agricultural indebtedness and urges upon Government the immediate necessity for the declaration of triennial moratorium for all rural indebtedness, to suitably amend the usurious Loans Act, penalising a rate of interest higher than 12%, to exempt at least agriculturists from imprisonment for Civil Decrees, to exempt a minimum holding of peasants and minimum quantity of grain from attachment for Civil Decrees and to establish Debt Settlement Committees all over India to scale down rural debts in proportion to the fall in prices.

**Resolutions passed at the Fourth meeting of the
Peasants Group of M.L.As (September, 1937)**

1. This Group requests all Provincial Ministers to give the necessary assurance to Central Government, on the same lines as the Madras Government, so as to persuade it to restore the right of free manufacture of salt, obtained through the Gandhi-Irwin Pact to all those places from which it has been withdrawn by Government.

2. This Group protests against the attempts being made by Government of India to raise the general level of Railway fares and freights since the economic conditions of our agriculturists are still very much depressed and they are unable to bear any such fresh burdens as the threatened increase in the fares and freights.

3. a) This Group sincerely hopes that the Provincial Ministers will lose no time in declaring a state of Moratorium for agricultural indebtedness and requests Central Government to do everything possible to help Provincial Governments to make this programme of reducing agricultural indebtedness a success

4. This Group regrets the failure of Government of India to constitute a Central Board of Rural Reconstruction and of making a recurrent grant towards Rural Development and trusts that the Government will very soon respect the wishes of our peasants and establish an All India Rural Reconstruction Board with a recurring grant of at least a crore a year and in which not only the Provincial Governments but also the peasants Associations are represented.

5. This Group requests Governme of India to give the benefit of budget surplus that is likely to occur next-year mostly to peasants and workers in view of the fact a disproportionate part of tax-burden has been laid only on their shoulders and that very little relief from tax-burdens has been given to them for the last generation and trusts that the surcharge on salt will be abolished and the excise duty on matches and sugar will be reduced and that the grants for Rural Development Funds, the subsidy for Handloom Weaving Industry and for sugar-cane marketting and also for the development of Rural postal facilities will be increased.

6. This Group protests against the persistent failure of Government of india to provide for the representation for our peasants organisations on its various and growing number of Cess Committees such as the Tea Cess Committee, Coffee

Cess Committee, Land Cess Committee and Sub-Committees of the imperial Council of Agricultural Research and even on the newly formed Central Public Health Committee, Education Advisory Committee and the contemplated Sugar Committee, and the various Railway, Advisory Committees.

7. This Group insists upon the right of peasants to be consulted by Government on all important occasions in which peasants' interests are involved in the same way as the Commercial interests are consulted; and protest against the failure of Government to consult Kissan Sabhas in carrying on the Indo-British Trade Negotiations, though all other interests are being consulted.

8. This Group regrets the failure of Government to reorganise the land revenue system of Ajmer and thus save the peasants from the exploitation of Istimardars and protests against the re-settlement operations contemplated by Government, to be carried on in Baluchistan and trusts that Government will try to reduce the land revenue burdens in the centrally administered areas, especially as the Provincial governments are themselves trying to stop all resettlements.

9. This Group requests Government to establish an All India Crop-planning Committee with adequate funds, contributed by the Central and Provincial Governments and with powers to regulate the acreages under different crops in various provinces, to establish reliable and recognisable standards and grades; to get adequate number of granaries built by Provincial Governments and Co-operative Societies and to stabilise and develop the internal and external markets for our agricultural produce.

10. This Group welcomes the establishment of the All India Cattle Breeding Committee and the interest displayed in the improvement of our cattle by Mahatma Gandhi and Lord Linlithgow and trusts that the Central and Provincial Governments will do all in their power to increase the existing facilities for the growth and supply of cheaper fodder.

CHAPTER XX

CONGRESS IN POWER

A Review of the work of its Ministries

The experience of the Congress Ministries in the realm of finance and what can be done with the present revenues of the provinces goes to confirm our general conclusions expressed in the first half of this Chapter. To start with the Bombay Ministry, which has introduced its budget first, it had to bemoan its want of funds to undertake any bold constructive programme. Five lakhs for abolishing the grazing fees, five lakhs for remitting infinitesimally small portion of land revenue and 1.5 lakhs for cottage industries were all it would spare. The Orissa Ministry was even less fortunate but it gave first preference to the remission of a portion of land revenue. The Madras Ministry could only spare a couple of lakhs for handloom and hand spinning industries, thirty-five lakhs for irrigation including the supply of drinking water and drainage facilities. All that it could do was to accept the orders passed by the Interim Ministry, remitting land revenue up to Rs. 75 lakhs. Its proposal to spare 35 lakhs for the Ministry is bolder and also more fortunate in finding more money to spare. It has therefore allotted, 5.75 lakhs for seed and cattle

improvement, 3,87,000 for helping the Gur industry, 1 lakh for helping unemployed youths to build small industries, 80,000 to fight the evil of Malaria, 20,000 for rural libraries and 1,24,000 for the handloom industry.

The Bengal and Punjab Ministries have even more gloomy storeis to tell and the Sindh Ministry could spare only a few lakhs of rupees for remitting a bit of land revenue. The Bihar and N.W.F.P. Ministries are the most unfortunate in that they have had to present the budget prepared by their predecessors, with one or two unimportant alterations.

Such a situation is disappointing not only to the masses. For, even when we are given the most progressive Ministries with by far the most democratic programme under the present circumstances, so little has come to be done and so meagre are the relief of taxation given and the reform proposed in our social and economic structure.

Only on one major issue had the Congress Ministries made up their mind, and that is, thanks to the insistence of Mahatma Gandhi the question of prohibition. All the Congress Ministries have decided to bring about prohibition of all intoxicating drinks Madras Ministry has already inaguarated it in Salem District. Thus in few years, our Provincial Governments will have to discover vast sources of additional revenue to make good the heavy losses accuring from prohibition. It is wrong to think that our Kisans do not realise the advantages of or necessity for prohibition. They do want it. But they are only sorry that owing to the need for this their equally pressing need for a considerable reduction in land revenue and rent is not likely to be met as early as desired.

They find it difficult to stomach the homily of the Premier of Madras that they have to wait until his Government has found it possible to obtain additional funds. It is anyhow disheartening to be told that just because an equally good reform has to be achieved our pressing and crying need for relief has to be set aside for an indefinite period of time.

MORATORIUM

If we pass from this very depressing survey of the budgetary position of the Provincial Ministries to their proposals for legislative and administrative reforms, we find ourselves in a worse quagmire. Pandit Jawaharlal assured the Kisans at the Delhi convention in March 1937 that an interim moratorium would be ordered, while the principles on which the proposals for settling the agrarian debts are being settled. Yet, excepting the U.P. Ministry, no other ministry has taken any definite step in this direction. Even U.P. Government has established a Moratorium only for arrears of rent. The Madras Ministry proposes to introduce its bill for one year's Moratorium in the November session, thus leaving the Kisans in the meanwhile to the tender mercies of the money lenders. The other Congress Ministries declared intention of bringing forward the necessary legislation for Moratorium, though well-intentioned it is doing positive harm to our Kisans, in that the landlords are hastening to collect their arrears of rent by exploiting all their usual coercive power and machinery and the Sahukars are utilising the machinery of courts and Civil Debtors Jails and other methods to recover their debts. But these additional troubles of our Kisans could have been avoided, if only Moratorium had been declared at the same time that the intention for doing so had been published. But

the Non-Congress Ministries of the Punjab and Bengal which were even louder in their protestations of affection for the Kisans have not so far even proposed to do anything drastic to solve this problem of rural indebtedness.

TENANTS

Coming next to the tenancy problem, the U.P. Bihar and Madras Ministries alone have reached the stage of appointing a committee of all parties to enquire into it and to suggest proposals for legislative reform with a view to bettering the Kisan's position. Most unfortunately the personell of the Madras Committee is very disappointing and does not contain even one accredited or trusted Kisan worker. The Orissa Ministry, which is headed by an erstwhile peasant leader has already published its bill to amend the tenancy Law. The next November and January Sessions of the Assemblies may see some bills but if one is to trust the present atmosphere, not very radical reforms can be expected, so anxious are the Congress Ministries not to frighten the Zamindars and so much more alert and powerful are the Zamindars.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

So far, excepting the U.P. Ministry which at least is encouragingly expressive of its intentions, no other Provincial Ministry has given any sign of its readiness and anxiety to start new industries under its own aegis and develop older industries through co-operative action, in order to improve its own finances and to minimise the middleman's profits.

Indeed our Provincial Governments are still thinking in terms of the Industrial Commission of 1916-18 and the

resultant State Aid to Industries Acts. The U.P. Government is constituting an Industrial Credit Company with a State subsidy of Rs. 1,25,000 to enable private enterprise to get cheaper credit at the cost of the public.

COTTAGE INDUSTRIES

Cottage Industries alone deserve the kind of help, subsidies and encouragement, recommended to be given by the Industrial Commission. There is a healthy desire on the part of almost every Provincial Ministry to help the poor millions of workers employed in them. The Madras Government is devoting two lakhs for handloom weaving and spinning and the U.P. Government Rs.1,24,000 and 387,000 Rs. grant for Gur industry. Much the most constructive proposal to resuscitate the hand-loom weaving industry comes from Madras and it seeks to impose a local cess on the products of foreign and home textile-mills to afford protection to the hand-looms. Technical education, introduction of better machinery, organisation of marketing and provision of cheaper credit are also needed for all the cottage industries.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Little or nothing is sought to be done to improve the medical facilities, sanitary arrangements or to mitigate the evils of Malaria. a few thousands or a lakh more for this or that and that expenditure too in a piece-meal fashion cannot go very far to improve the lot of our villagers. It is good that Madras Government proposes to spend considerable sums, nearly Rs.20 lakhs on rural water supply, the U.P. Government Rs. 1,50,000 on medical relief and that of Bombay ten

lakhs on water supply. But these sums are not at all enough. A systematic drive has to be organised against malaria, cholera, and venereal diseases and in favour of the provision of drinking water; latrines and sanitary arrangements for villagers and play-grounds and burial-grounds.

ANTI-CORRUPTION

Last but not the least important thing to do is to organise an anti-Corruption campaign. It is a pity that so far, barring the U.P. Government no other provincial Government has set its hand to this task, for by putting it down, we can easily stop a heavy drain from the public into the pockets of public functionaries and thus help the economic recovery of our people. The Andhra Provincial Congress Committee has taken up this campaign but the Madras Ministry has not shown any enthusiasm for it. The U.P. Premier has given a splendid lead by allotting Rs.10,000 "for a special officer to remedy the evil of corruption in Government services.

POLICY OF TAXATION

Much the most important consideration that ought to weigh with every Government is that its exaction from the public, instead of being an unhealthy tax and a wasting drain, ought to be made to subserve really productive and developmental purposes and needs of the masses. Tax-revenues, if spent upon mere law and order alone cannot but be a drain upon the public resources to a very large extent. But if the same tax-revenues, or at least a considerable portion of it is spent upon the reproductive services like education, public health, industries, agriculture and other social services, the

results therefrom will be much more beneficial and profitable than what is represented by the sums expended thereon. In fact, such expenditure, from out of general revenues result in much greater public good than what may result if incurred by individuals who contribute it to the State. Hence our appreciation of the healthy principle laid down by Pandit Govind Vallabh Pant, as quoted at the beginning of this chapter. It is consequently the duty of every Provincial government to minimise its expenditure on mere law and order and other skeleton departments and to maximise its outlay upon all the social, industrial and other developmental services. Measured from this view point, we find that so far only the U.P. Government has met with appreciable success in bringing down its expenditure upon administration (the expenditure on administration is retrenched by 4 lakhs, from what it was in 1936-37. While Madras Government has attempted the novel but salutary measure of commuting the pensionary charges, by paying out borrowed money and thus saving nearly 15.5 lakhs every year, this is clearly not enough.

The next best things to do, if the existing Civil servants are not prepared to agree to a voluntary reduction of their pay is to man every new Government service and jobs by patriotic young men and women whose salary, in the words of Pantji "would not be more than a maintenance wage". Equally good thing to do is to call upon like Pantji, all pensioners to undertake towards on and such low allowances in order to repay "to the masses from whom they were getting sustenance". He also proposes that "the services rendered in the cause of rural development would be taken into account in the appointment of Honorary Magistrates, Honorary Judicial officers and even in the matter of selection of candidates to Government services whether superior or inferior", Thus by tapping every

source whereby we can get cheaper and yet effective and efficient service our Ministries can certainly obtain for the public much greater good than is represented by the tax-revenues spent on such service; yet so the other Congress Ministries have not shown much zeal in this direction.

The great pity is that there is too little direction from the Working Committee which has not laid down any uniform, general and satisfactory policy of reform and relief to be pursued by all the Congress ministries with the necessary variations made to suit their special local circumstances or prepared a time-table based upon an annual or a five-year programme. Hence my resolution sent to the Calcutta meeting of the A.I.C.C. (29-11-37) given in the appendix. We cannot better conclude this review than by quoting Sir M. Visweswaraya's words, published in his latest five year plan for provinces "It is not considered safe for any country to regulate its economic affairs in these days without a coherently designed policy and a deliberate plan.

One is therefore obliged to conclude, after this brief and necessarily sketchy resume of the principles and programmes so far adopted by Provincial Governments, that the Congress Ministries are much more progressive than the other Ministries and have shown a better grasp of the needs of the public. But owing to want of previous administrative experience and an unduly exaggerated fear of the omniscience and omnipotency of the Civil Services, most of the Ministries and all but the U.P. Ministries are taking too much time to come to grips with many of the most important problems that cry for immediate solution. Let us sincerely hope that the whip of the Congress President, the pen of the Mahatma and the March of

the Kisans and the Strikes of the workers will serve as the driving force for our Congress Ministries in the first instance and other Ministries in the next, and oblige them to follow a more comprehensive, Nationalistic, Socio-economic programme and policy so as to relieve the Kisan and Muzdoor of their tax-burdens and confer on them greater and greater public benefits. Let it also be remembered that no amount of appealing either from Allahabad or from Wardha for patient and disciplined abstinence from criticism can avail if, through these Congress Ministries, only tinkering reforms are to be attempted, fundamental needs of the masses to be neglected or postponed and undue and undeserved encouragement to be given to private enterprise.

SECTION 2

KISAN SPEAKS AGAIN

CHAPTER XXI

CHAPTER XXI

1.Fund to help unorganised labour

Rangajee's speech on the Bill of Bala Saheb Vikhe
Patil M.P.(Maharashtra) for a Fund to help unorganised
labour on 24-2-1989 in Lok Sabha

Mr.Chairman, Sir, I am glad my hon.friend Mr. Patil has given this opportunity to this House to concentrate on the needs and the grievances of these unorganised labour. This is a very vast subject. Subject itself is unorganised. Millions and millions of people in each State are there who are unorganised so far as labour market is concerned. What is to be done in order to help them? One constructive effort that has been initiated in Maharashtra being followed by one or two other States is for the Government to take up the responsibility of providing employment at least for one adult in every family. How they are going to do it; how they are doing it and how they are financing it are all serious problems for which today we do not have sufficient information.

I am glad my hon.friend Mr.Palika has drawn our attention to the constructive step taken by the Prime Minister in the light of his tours and the knowledge that he has gained

about the sufferings of these people. The Prime Minister has appointed a commission on Agricultural labour. Is it rural labour or agricultural labour ?

The Minister of Labour (Shri Bindeswari Dubey): Rural Labour.

Prof. N.G.Ranga: I hope that commission would pay special attention to all the points that have been made and those are likely to be made during this debate in addition to other points which were brought to their notice by various people in the country.

The most important thing is how to reach the people and in what areas of employment in the country ? These unorganised labourers who are going on with their work are suffering for want of proper protection because there is not enough of protection for many of these people. They are degraded to the level of bonded labour. There is the Minimum Wages Act. It is not being properly or effectively implemented in most of the States and even in regard to the very large sector of unorganised labour who are employed in agriculture.

Their urgent need is the provision of house sites; provision of minimum of civic facilities in the towns for the slum dwellers who are also unorganised, a large number of them and provision of house sites in the rural areas especially for the backward classes and the Harijans. Strong efforts, sincere efforts are being made by many of the State Governments; but that is not enough; in that direction also so much more needs to be done. Then there should be a provision

of protected house sites, and houses good enough, strong enough, so that these dwellers need not be afraid of outbreak of fire during summer season. My hon.friend, Mr. Rao, has drawn our attention to what is being done in Andhra Pradesh. When the Congress was in power, they tried to provide house sites. Now, our friends of the Telugu Desam have come forward to offer small houses also on a large scale; although earlier also efforts were being made to provide them houses in many places. Now all this is good, but that is not enough and so much more has got to be done. But even this effort is not being made in many States and has got to be taken up by those States also.

Then, the other thing is the provision of public lavatories. The least possible public convenience that we can provide for the poor people, especially these unorganised poor is to provide the public latrines, lavatories for men as well as women. In villages, we do not have them. But is it possible to provide them ? one might say. In those days, Gandhian days, altruistic days, as it was, we tried to provide them with the help of Village Panchayats. It is not impossible; it is being done even today in Rayalaseema by the Rayalaseema seva samiti on a large scale. Thousands of these lavatories are being constructed with the help of local people, with their cooperation, with the help of financial support from the local government and some social welfare organisations. These are what are known as minimum possible human facilities needed for these people in their unorganised conditions. They have also to be protected from their employers. Many of them are working under employers.

A large number of them are self-employed and we should increase this particular sector of self-employment.

They too have to be protected from the merchants who purchase their goods, from the bankers who provide them credit, from other people who provide them with inputs. All that has got to be studied. For instance, our attention has been drawn to the suffering of the handloom weavers. In the recent past, there are reports of hunger deaths in Andhra Pradesh and in Bihar especially. Now, something has got to be done for them. There is textile policy of the Government of India. Now that has not been enough; that has not initiated any welfare measures for the handloom weavers. On the other hand, it has helped power looms and the organised large scale textile industry. So far as handloom weavers are concerned, they have been at a very great disadvantage. And, the carpet making industry, and in all such industries, most of the workers are self-employed, but a good portion of them are unorganised employees; they are employed by the master weavers, other employers also and some cooperatives. These people have to be protected; they can be protected through the implementation of the Minimum Wages Act etc .,

Similarly, in agriculture, the most important thing is to prescribe a minimum wage and to get it enforced. Once you give the prescription of a minimum wage, that itself sets a standard; and slowly, in two or three years, the people will begin to pay at least a minimum wage. And these workers come to know that they are entitled to demand that minimum wage. Therefore, they would be able, to take advantage of that Act and go to the courts and the labour officers, so much so other workers also come to be benefited.

In many areas much more than the minimum wage is being paid today. And the minimum wage has got to be raised

from time to time in proportion to the rise in prices, rise in inflation.

Having done that, how are we going to tackle this unorganised labour and to help them? A serious study has to be made, and a serious thought has got to be given. I have myself given a suggestion to "unorganised labour advisory committee which was attached to the Labour Ministry . I used to be a member of that. There should be Labour Welfare Advisors, on an honorary basis to be appointed from out of those people who devote their time for the welfare of these people, who are themselves public workers, who are not political minded, and politically committed. Such people should be paid an honorarium of Rs. 500 a month. Some State Governments have taken up that suggestion. Gujarat, for instance, has gone ahead. Now, what is the function of these people ? I do not want to go into the details. Particularly it should be their duty to attend the meetings, village panchayats, mandals and the samithis or Zilla Parishads . They would be able to bring to the notice of those local authorities about the needs of these people and also the manner in which they should be helped. And it is only a beginning. Even that beginning for social welfare work and legislative activity have not been taken up by many States. Now something has got to be done by the Labour Ministry here at the Centre in order to alert the State Governments and see that something concrete is done in this direction. It should be the duty of these welfare officers or advisors, not only to advise these various institutions but also to encourage workers to bring to the notice of those various panchayat Raj organisations, about their disabilities, about the manner in which they are being exploited, their sufferings and what they

would like to be done for their welfare. Some venue, some opportunity, some organisational method, some ways and means have got to be created for those people to get into contact with labour organisations and Labour Departments of the respective State Governments and ultimately of the Union Government also. Till today, so little has been done.

In England an effort was made long time ago, more than 80 years ago. Mrs. Anne Besant started this work in London for tailoring workers. So many other people also followed suit. Thus there came into existence what were known as Trade Boards. On them there were representatives of workers, Government employers. These boards used to prescribe the minimum wages, the conditions of employment, welfare activity and all the rest of it. Now, through them, though they could not organise themselves in the regular trade union fashion, they used to find protection in an effective manner. It was in the light of this knowledge of their working I made my suggestion of appointing Hon. Labour Advisers as a very small beginning. Even in this direction, many Governments have not been able to follow this precedent, which has already been established by the Gujarat Government. Some such constructive effort has got to be made.

Some fund has got to be built up. The State Governments as well as the Central Government such fund in order to ensure minimum social civic facilities and opportunities for the unorganised labour.

It is a very big question which needs a very careful consideration and I hope the Agricultural Labour Commission

which was appointed at the instance of our Prime Minister will go into these matters in great detail and come out with concrete suggestions. In anticipation of it, let the Labour Ministry here be in touch with the Labour Ministries in the States and collect necessary information including census reports about bidi workers, those employed in fire works, carpet workers, agriculture workers, but also so many employers as to how many are there and to what extent. Let Government give serious consideration for implementing the recommendations to be made by the Agricultural Labour Commission.

2. PROTECT THE SELF-EMPLOYED MASSES

Speech in Lok Sabha by Prof.N.G.Ranga, M.P. and deputy leader Congress(I) party in Parliament on 19-4-1989.

[it is indeed, a happy day for Rangajee that the issue of and plea for parity between agriculturists and non-agriculturists, between agricultural prices and non-agricultural prices and services which is the kernel and ethos of his political and economic philosophy has come to be accepted by all parties in parliament and a national consensus has been voiced. It is for its acceptance and implementation that he has been labouring in parliament and outside during the past six decades. It is noteworthy that leaders of all parties including Rajiv Gandhi and V.P.Singh have begun to offer to the electorate to work for fulfilment of the kernel of the thesis propounded so long ago and repeated once again in these memorable speeches in the budget session of 1989. Ed]

Prof. N.G.Ranga:(Guntur): Mr Chairman, Sir, I find myself in agreement with almost all the points that are made by the Members of this House from all sides and this has been the experience during every debate on agriculture. Yet the farmers' condition does not seem to be improving as much as we would wish. I am also glad that opposition parties have now come forward, for the first time, to ask for parity between agriculturists and non-agriculturalists, between agricultural prices and non-agricultural prices. Today there is unanimity among all members of parliament as well as all political parties. It may be because the elections are coming very soon and they have to go back to the people. Therefore, they must speak in the interest of the people in order to get their support.

Once they come back here, what will happen ? Even some of the members on the Treasury Benches have to be at the mercy of the bureaucracy, banks and other forces which are behind them, with the result that the farmers' condition seems not to improve as much as the private members on the ruling side themselves wish for. Even in those days, when Choudary Charan Singh became the Finance Minister and later the Prime Minister and when the Janata Party was in power, the position was just the same.

For a very long time, I have been asking for agricultural prices to be fixed by the Government and for the appointment of Commission to fix these prices. As Mr. Rathod has informed the House just now, at long last the Agricultural Prices Commission came to be established, but there were no non-official members in it. With great difficulty, we were able to make the Government and the bureaucracy agree to appoint one non-official member, afterwards to increase the number to two and now at long last, to three. Then we also wanted at least one of the members to represent agricultural labour. Till today, it has not been acceded to. Even when Indira Gandhiji was about to go to SWARG they tried to resist her decision to have the name changed from Agricultural Prices Commission. After the present Prime Minister came in, we are able to see that the name continues to be the same, that is, Agricultural Costs and Prices Commission (ACPC). One might say what is there in name. But once the word 'costs' is included in the name, you have got to take into consideration the costs of cultivation of the agricultural produce and thereafter the prices which could be paid by the consumer, so that there will be some balance between the two and justice is done to all. Therefore, it must be the Agricultural Costs and Prices

Commission only. Even then, who are the Members and how do they function? It is the same bureaucracy which prepares the base. The non-official members only suggest certain things or give their minutes of dissent or what may be called 'notes'. Well, the notes take care of themselves and the Minister need not bother. Whatever the official members decide upon, is being accepted and acted upon. After the new Ministers have come in there have been some slight change. But it is more a matter of courtesy.

A lot has been said by so many of our members. They say "Should not the farmers be paid remunerative prices? Not only that; should they not get a living wage and a living which would be honourable and satisfactory?" But today it is not so. Something has got to be done very quickly so that people would not accuse us of saying it only for the sake of elections.

Then, how are we going to achieve this parity? Just now our friends have referred to it. And again, we have been repeating it.

A farmer's son is willing to go even as a peon, as a sewer for stitching the sacks of wheat and rice. He prefers that work. Why? Because, he is paid much more. He is looked after in every possible manner. There are insurance schemes for him. Credit also is being offered to him at a concessional rate. How long do you think that the farmers would be able to carry on their work or put up with this kind of miserable existence? All of us agree on the need for parity. But when it comes to doing it, we are not able to carry conviction with the bureaucracy. Who are the bureaucrats? They are our own sons and daughters. Once they go into it they begin to think

in different terms. So, the scales have got to be settled properly. How to do it ? We wanted credit to be made available to our farmers. Then come various gradations, concessions on loans, here and there . But at what rate of interest ? Without taking into consideration the rate of inflation, whether the loan amount is 5,000 to 10,000, 20,000 and so on, the concessions are given. After that, they seem to think that the farmer will become a rich man if he is not charged interest at the rate of 15 or 16 percent. Mr Rathod has told just now that if we have a Jhopadi even the zinc sheets are to be auctioned in order to repay the loans.

Recently, we have had to plead with the Government for the abolition of penal rate of interest. In the end, they went back again to the ancient practice in a desperate manner that payment of interest should not be more than 100 percent at any rate. But in the meanwhile, the compound interest is being charged. All these things have got to go. Simple interest has got to be as reasonably low as possible. That is not being done.

We have been able to abolish civil debtors' jails but at the same-time the decrees are being taken against our farmers and their properties are being auctioned. We have to decide that agricultural lands and property ought not to be auctioned for repayment of crop loans or for old loans which are pending because of bad seasons and those clear or definite decisions have to be imposed.

Then, there are cooperatives. The elections must be held but they should be free and fair. Once the elections are held and cooperatives come into action, then there should not be any official oppression or official control over them --

whoever may be the Minister, whichever party he may belong to. That is not the position today.

Once you fix the prices, where is the guarantee that it would be sold at that price and there would not be any distress sales? Therefore, I plead for a Joint Committee of the Cabinet under the Chairmanship of the Minister for Agriculture including the representatives of the Ministries of Irrigation, Finance and Commerce, Power etc.,

Today, there is the trouble for tobacco growers in Andhra Pradesh. A minimum price was fixed and agreed upon by all concerned in the presence of the minister with the consent of the traders at Rs.22 per kg. But the merchants bid only for Rs. 15/- and not more. It was supposed to be an open market. There was nobody else to buy and the farmers were obliged to sell because they were badly in need of money not only for their own maintenance but for the repayment of crop loans and so on. Therefore, they are in distress. So is the case with the people who are growing coconut, cotton, Jute, Cane onion and potato and various other commodities. You take the case of potatoes in Himachal Pradesh then onions in Maharashtra. It goes on like that.

Therefore, there must be a complete harmonious working, understanding among the Agriculture Ministry, the Finance Ministry and the Commerce Ministry so that the moment a serious complaint come of any distress sale or the failure of the market to pay the minimum price fixed by the Government, then this sub-committee of the Cabinet should go into action and they should direct the State Trading Corporation to go into the market and offer to purchase these things

at the support prices. Only that kind of an arrangement will work in favour of the farmer and against these traders.

Similarly, in regard to water and power, for instance, more and more irrigation is needed for larger area. Now, the irrigation Ministry is going in its own way. The processing industries are coming in. Therefore that sub-Committee of the Cabinet has got to be there under the leadership of the Agriculture Ministry, just as you have brought a number of Ministries under Human Resources Ministry. There should be such reorganisation of our Cabinet system so that the Agriculture Minister would become the Centre of that fulcrum.

How to get remunerative prices to be fixed up and then to be paid ? These urban people refuse to pay anything more. Only the other day, the bank people who are already so highly paid threatened to go on strike. Higher salaries were granted to them. Every one else is being given higher salaries. At whose cost ? They were given at the cost of agriculturists. This imbalance has got to be corrected.

I am glad that our Prime Minister, has been educating himself about the sufferings (during the last four years,) about the kind of life our farmers are carrying on. Therefore, he has come to be quite alive to their needs. So, he has been turning the scales more and more in favour of agriculturists, but it is not enough. He has got to assert himself; he cannot do it by himself. The whole of the party has got to assert itself. A new orientation is needed. Unless that kind of a new orientation comes to be exhibited in actual evidence long before the elections, indeed half way between one election and another, it would not be possible for us to get any kind of justice done to our farmers.

My hon. friend, a communist member also made a suggestion that there should be a minimum wage fixed for agricultural workers; that is very badly needed. I have been pleading for it for so long. When you cannot implement a minimum price, how is it possible for you to implement the minimum wage? But how can there be any minimum wage at all unless a labour representative is there on the agricultural Costs and Prices Commission? I therefore wanted all the time to have a representative on behalf of the agricultural workers on this Commission so that these official members would be made aware of the demands of agricultural workers. Based upon that, a minimum wage and remunerative price for the farmer should be fixed; allowance for the farmer's labour and contribution for his own supervision should be fixed; then for both of them (that is and labour, farmer) employment insurance scheme should also be there; complete employment for the whole year for one male member at least in every family should be there. One who owns the land; one who does not own the land but yet works on the land; these three calculations have got to go into the making of the figure for agricultural costs; and once you reach that agricultural cost, you have got to ask the society as a whole on behalf of the Government: "Are you willing to pay for it or not? If you are not will to pay for it, if you want any reduction, are you agreeable for any reduction in your emoluments, in your salaries, allowances, pension, and all the rest?" If you are not willing, then agree to this estimated price list for food grains. That is the only way in which we can argue with these urban people, with these professional people, with this bureaucracy and the rest of them. Now, are we going to do it? The time has come when we have got to do it, and I hope under the leadership of our Prime Minister and our Ministers in charge

of Agriculture, and all those others who will be associated with them in the Cabinet sub-committee to our urban masses.

We need more fertilizers and more insecticides. They are a must for the protection of the crops. Plant protection and discovery of new plants are to be developed. We have yet to construct sufficient number of warehouses to store these things to minimise the losses incurred through bad management or through the effect of bad seasons on our warehousing and grain storage. Then we have also to improve the processing side and the preparation of our agricultural products for the market. We also need more power and pumpsets. In all these directions, the Government is moving, but not fast enough, the Government is moving rightly but not spiritedly. I would like them to move much faster and more spiritedly. We want green revolution. We have been able to achieve a part of it. So much more of it has got to be achieved. And in that direction, we want the fulfilment of the conception of Dr. K.L. Rao and various other people for taking the Ganga water right down to the Cauveri. Thousands of crores of rupees would be needed for this. We are now borrowing from other countries and we are raising it in our own country also. With the cooperation of our farmers and other people, we should be able to raise those funds not through taxation alone, through efficient management at the Government level and from the savings of our own people. Farmers themselves could be persuaded to set apart one percent of the sale price which they are able to obtain in order to build up necessary funds for taking water right down to villages and preventing all surplus river water and flood water from going into the sea on one side and preventing it from destroying our crops on the other side. And in that way, we can increase the total percentage of the

irrigated land in our country. We can also make the conception of our Prime Minister a much greater success so that the water table could be raised by the construction of lakhs of tanks all over India.

Then I would like to take up the points on which there seems to be some disagreement. My hon. friend from Bihar was talking of big landlords. Where are the big landlords with the ceiling law? Is not Mitakshari law applicable the? If a farmer has got three sons, is not the farm being split up into four holdings? Then within just two generations, in forty years, does not the size of holding come down? Has it not come down? If it has not come down, there is something wrong between their administration and those people who are in power there, in their implementation of ceiling legislations and behind the Ministers and so on, otherwise the ceiling law and the Mitakshari law, both of them are bound to bring down the extent of land that a farmer owns and cultivates.

Then secondly, we have learnt in those days when there were zamindari systems, when I was leading all our friends, also communists, against the Zamindari system and we were fighting against landlordism. That landlordism has gone. Today it is all small holdings and below the ceiling. Then, as far as these people are concerned, look at Russia. All those Communist friends were so very angry with me when I was standing up for our farmers when I fought against their support for the 17th Amendment to the Constitution introduced in Parliament in 1964 by Congress government which aimed against our peasants that was being proposed at that time from this side (ruling Congress) and I had to part company with my friends on this side and go there and be the

head of the opposition party (Swatantra) in order to fight against that 17th Amendment. We fought it. Thanks to Jawaharlal Nehru's loyalty to the conception of democracy, in the end, he said "All right, we have fought enough. Let us come to an agreement: We reached an (a consensus, compromise) agreement and we saved our self-employed farmers here in our country whereas there in Soviet Russia their Motherland, God only knows fully what all happened to peasants. Soviet Russia witnessed the butchery of millions of farmers, our brethren. Now their collective graves are being opened up and they find in them the skeletons of millions of peasants. In India, our democracy has saved us from that, (that miserable and cruel destruction of peasantry). We have been able to triumph against that fate. Our farmers are saved from that and they are assured of their holdings. But they are not so sure of the continuance of their holdings, so long as these banks are given the power to put their lands to auction and threaten them with the loss of their land holdings, and that is why the relations between the banks on one side and the farmers on the other have got to be put on a more rational basis and I hope that our friends in charge of the Ministry, would be able to succeed.

3. PANCHAYAT RAJ AND DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL WEALTH THROUGH PROVIDING WORK AND INSURANCE FOR THE UNEMPLOYED.

Speech made in Lok Sabha on 2-5-1989 by Prof.
N.G.Ranga, M.P. and deputy leader, Congress(I) party in Parlia-
ment.

[In this speech Prof. N.G.Ranga cogently unfolded the nationally important problem of unorganised labour and the ways and means of developing democratic institution in our age old village panchayats for providing employment opportunities to our unorganised labour specially agricultural labour. Rangajee sees clearly in the village panchayats immense potentialities for creating social wealth and social amenities and vast scope for the development of rural leadership through panchayat governance. Once the panchayats are trained in self governance of their villages and allowed to function unhindered, there will soon be emerging enlightened and well trained rural leaders. They would then demand boldly parity between agriculture and industry, agriculturists and urban and professional people and counter the mischief of the exploiting capitalists and the national and world markets. These are the arguments he has been advancing for the protection of peasants and agricultural labourers ever since he started his public service some six decades back. (Please read the outlines of national revolutionary path and the Crado of world peasantry) It is Rangajee who along with his colleagues pleaded in constituent assembly in 1947 for this basic tier of governance, that is, panchayat governance. It is he who with great force of argument, succeeded in getting panchayat governance included as one of the items in the directive principles. (31 A).Ed.

At long last the unorganised labour has come to be accepted as a national problem and issue and the ruling party the Congress(I), has accepted the responsibility of shouldering the challenge. It is a great triumph for the unorganised labour and Rangajee and for those of K.M.P.Raj persuasion who have been consistently expounding the cause of the unorganised labour. It appeared in 1935-36 as a hopeless

cause when Rangajee demanded the International Labour office and conference to begin to study their problems. It is indeed heartening to Rangajee and his followers that the young Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi has taken up this issue and urged the I.L.O. to study their needs and ways and means of alleviating their conditions.

It may be recalled that it was at the initiative of Rangajee that Indiraji's government had adopted his suggestion to organise honorary (rural) Labour organisers on an honorarium of Rupees 500/- for mensem plus T.A to organise unorganised specially agricultural labour and artisans and protect their interests by being ex-officio members of the panchayats, Zilla Boards and their development and NREP, NRBP etc., wings. Ed.]

Mr. Deputy speaker, sir, The Finance Minister is today only one of the many Ministers. All the Ministers are subjected to the overall control or supervision or guidance and overlook of the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission deals with these Ministers one by one, sometimes by groups and afterwards the money is being allotted

We can see now more from the tenour of the debate in this House on the Budget as well as the Finance Bill that the limits have been almost reached for raising any more money through taxation, through this Government and also from the State Governments. The State Governments are not willing to raise any money through taxes either because they are afraid of the public opinion or because they do sincerely feel that the people cannot bear any more taxes on the lines and in a manner in which they are empowered to levy taxes.

Where from are we going to get the resources ? You can get the resources, if you employ all the labour that is being wasted today. Is it not going waste ? Millions and millions of people are

unemployed. They are willing to work, but they are not being employed by anybody. The question is, how can they be employed and through whom? Some people say, that through millionaires and some others say, through the Government directly. But anyhow, it is not being done. They can be helped to employ themselves through their own resolutions and through their own decisions - decisions in favour of what ? resolutions for what purpose ? In order to provide themselves services and any number of social utilities which are not available today. Collective utilities like roads, houses, school buildings, bridges, culverts, tanks, small irrigation projects, etc.,

Once a village in England was washed away because of a disaster. It was calculated that the total net social wealth that the village had before that disaster was worth more than one hundred million pounds because the village was connected with the rest of England by roads, culverts, and various other social amenities. They are not available today in our country. They have got to be constructed; they have got to be provided to the people. Who is going to do it? Our people expected that the State Governments would raise money in order to help them to do these things. But they could not do it. Many of us have been suggesting that there should be Panchayats in every village and they should be empowered to raise funds locally for local purposes with the cooperation of the local people. But then Panchayats were not given so much of encouragement.

At the time of the Constituent Assembly, a number of us including myself, pleaded for another tier of governance, i.e., Panchayat governance. With great difficulty, we were able to get it included as one of the items in the directive principles. The Central and the State Governments at the most were prepared to go right upto the District Board, but they would not like to go

beyond that. Could these three tiers of governance be enough to raise necessary funds and provide all social amenities. We did not find it possible. Therefore, a little later, my good old friend Shri Jaiprakash Narayan, a socialist, thought of the Panchayati Raj and he wanted to develop that. He created an atmosphere within the socialist party in favour of Panchayati Raj. Jawaharlal Nehru who saw centuries ahead therefore, tried to initiate the Panchayati Raj system. So they organised it in Rajasthan to start with and then in Gujarat and Andhra also. We did not make much progress. In the meanwhile, people began to demand more and more facilities for social amenities.

And also the need arose for more and more employment. Millions and millions of people began to cry against their own poverty in this country. Indeed after Swaraj we have been obliged also to reduce the impact of poverty in our country. But the poverty that they had to suffer from the unemployment to which they were condemned, became more and more unbearable because of the rising tempo of social and political consciousness. It was at that stage that Indira Gandhi inaugurated the scheme of 'Garibi Hatao'. A number of our people in the opposition at that time said that this was only a gimmick, an election stunt. But by now it has become a national programme. In between Janata Party came to power. For three years they ran the show. They had the opportunity of implementing the programmes of their leader by whom they began to swear just as passionately as we have been swearing by Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and the rest of them. But were they able to succeed? They did not. Was it an election stunt? It was not. But they were simply not very keen on it. Later on, we have become more and more keen. Then Maharashtra took the lead. They instituted the programme of providing work, full employment for at least one adult person in

every family - full employment in the sense including the number of days on which they themselves find employment through their own self-employment either in agriculture or in various arts and crafts, handloom weaving, carpentry, masonry, pottery and the rest of it. Society has to find employment for those days for which they could not find employment. According to the (Labour) register that they would be keeping, the village panchayat would be able to say that so and so is entitled for 100 days of employment because he remained unemployed for 100 days and, therefore, he should be provided necessary maintenance. They instituted that system. But they could not achieve much success. Nevertheless, the scheme was there. Fortunately for us, the present Government has taken up that responsibility of providing employment in some such manner not only for one state but for the whole of India. They wished to name it after Jawaharlal Nehru. I am all in favour of dedicating the scheme to Jawaharlal Nehru. But at the same time, we must also be prepared to know how it is to be done, how it can be done.

Our friend has just now said that you go the wrong way regarding weavers. There are millions of handloom weavers who are unemployed. Some of them are even starving. Some died out of starvation the other day. And yet we go the wrong way of encouraging powerlooms in the name of scientific efficiency and thus create conditions for more and more unemployment among the handloom weavers. Therefore, thought has got to be given as to how to reconcile these growing demands of our nation. One is employment for all those people who are already self-employed and also the need for scientific upgradation of our large scale industries where smaller number of people are employed producing so much wealth which is needed, but nevertheless, they have got to be controlled. Now who is to do it? Finance Minister or the

Textile Minister ? These are the things which have got to be reconciled in some way or the other with the cooperation of the concerned Ministers but at the level of planning. The next five-year plan is going to be made. Therefore, at that stage, serious thought has got to be given and the thoughts that we are placing here from all sides of the House, have got to be properly weighed and then co-related.

Unorganised Labour:

Then, Sir, I wish to congratulate the Prime Minister on the latest declaration he has made. In a very brave manner, he has tried to pay special attention to the needs and the demands of the unorganised labour. Till now we have paid much attention to organised labour. We have tried to give them sufficient protection too. There are areas where we have not succeeded. As our friend from Assam has just now said, in regard to plantation labour they have passed laws but they have not been able to implement them because of their inefficient ways of doing things. Now, what do we mean by unorganised labour ? Unorganised labour means all those apart from those who are employed in our villages in various arts and crafts headed by the handloom weavers themselves. They have to be given priority. This is what the prime Minister has now begun to call the attention of the nation to. Lo and behold, here comes the short sighted criticism from one of the opposition leaders saying it is only an election stunt. The same charge was made when 'garibi hatao' programme was there which Indiraji inaugurated in 1971. By now all the parties have accepted the 'garibi hatao' programme. So far as unorganised labour is concerned, I have been pleading for them for almost sixty years, and now at long last, from the high pedestal of the Prime Ministership of India, attention is being concentrated on the plight of these people, on their demands, their needs and the manner in which they and their labour can be made use of for national development.

In Japan , the workers go on working and the European Continental labour leaders are wondering why Japanese workers do not go on more and more holidays so that there will be less and less production in Japan, with the result that there will be less competition from Japanese goods and services against the European goods and services. That means that more and more Japanese workers are producing more and more goods which again creates more and more competition for the European producers and so on. So, they want the Japanese workers to go slow. We want the tens of crores of our unorganised labour to come to be employed so that we can produce more and more social wealth, and that is exactly the slogan that the Prime Minister is placing today before the country and I give him all praise for it. But how is it to be done?.

Panchayat Raj:

I stated in the beginning that there were only three tiers. Now there is to be a fourth one. Jai Praakash Narayan started his movement in Bihar although he was not very successful. Now the present Government wants to make it a success. The present Government may not be able to succeed within the gamut of one year but certainly it is a kind of a challenge to the Opposition also, to all parties in this country. Let them also say, yes, we want this Panchayat Raj, we want more and more power to be given to Panchayats so that they would be able to raise, not taxes , not corvee, but contributions from every one. What happens then? Suppose there is a tank. It has got to be expanded, it has got to be improved. Therefore, so much money is needed, money in terms of labour, money in terms of supply of carts and other kinds of services. How would they get it ? Now the agricultural workers want unemployment insurance for hundred days of unemployment. From them contribution of manual and other types of work would be paid for three hundred days. That means, with the

minimum wage level of Rs. 10 per day per worker. Then the rich people, the well-to-do people and all those who are above the poverty line, who would not like to go and work; manual work is not yet fashionable enough. In spite of all the campaigns that we have been carrying on from the days of Mahatma Gandhi, it is still unpopular, they do not want to go and work with their spades etc., let them pay for 10 days, that is Rs. 100/- per adult person in their families.

All this will be the fund with which you would be able to construct or reconstruct or keeping in good condition or repair all these social wealth in terms of houses for the poor, school buildings, roads, culverts etc., Now that power to levy contributions in labour or cash has got to be given. To whom? Not to the district board alone, Zilla Parishad as it is called, but also to the village panchayat. Thus you start with village panchayat; then come to the District Boards, then from there you reach upto the level of the State. The authority for levying and collecting some such local levy has to be given to panchayat. I have indicated only the process.

Now, the states are not able to raise any more taxes and yet they have got to make provision for all these development works. But they are not able to implement their projects also. You now plan for Rs. 10 crores, But even in 10 years time you are not able to complete it. So you are obliged to spend Rs. 10 or Rs. 40 crores because of inflation. But if on the other hand you start from the villages, you give them certain responsibilities and then certain other responsibilities with the District Boards; if then you come to the State, it would be easier to (raise funds and) administer. It is an experiment; it is an experience which has go to be gained. It is a kind of challenge from the national point of view. That is where

the Prime Minister has taken his courage in both his hands. All that the opposition say is that it is an election stunt. All right. We are going to pass a law to amend the Constitution. Thereafter, if the people do not want it, they will throw this party out. If on the other hand, the people want it, we will come back. When the State Governments themselves are powerless, we would have to be satisfied with the District Boards which are also playing as honourable a role, as important a role in the national development of our country, as a State Government. Today, there is jealousy, between States and Central Governments. Sarkaria commission is there and all kinds of complaints are there. Why ? Because they are themselves helpless. We want to supplement their capacity by raising or invoking the power of the village Panchayats. With their support, we can develop social reconstruction more effectively. I do not know why States should be jealous about Panchayats. The Prime Minister had paid a very good compliment to these friends in the Communist Party in West Bengal and they are supposed to be doing this work much more satisfactorily. But the other State Governments seem to be jealous of it. These are the two great challenges that the Prime Minister has placed before us. Now how is it to be completed ? Not because he is an experienced politician. Here is our Finance Minister Mr.Chawan. He is a politician, he was the Chief Minister in Maharashtra and now he is the Finance Minister here. As Chief Minister there, he wanted more and more from the Finance Minister, here from the Government of India and then after having come here, he finds there is not enough to be distributed. He is not able to raise the funds, he is in the happy position of understanding this problem from both sides. Therefore, Sir, the State Governments on that side and the Governments of India here, have reached the tether (end) of their resources so far as the taxation and control of the black money is concerned. Here is now in the shape of un-used labour, unemployed labour of workers crores, of them willing to work, crying for more and more

work and unable to work just because there is nobody to provide the necessary leadership, you call it employment, so that they can all be made to work in a constructive manner. I have had the honour, Sir, of having a large number of workers working under my leadership, under my supervision, and we organised village panchayats in more than 700 villages out of 960 villages of Guntur District, which is my own district. When the British were there, when Swaraj had not yet come, we began to develop such social wealth. We should be able to do it now in a larger way, greater way, more effectively and more successfully also, if only we all put our heads together. Therefore, for God's sake, my dear friends in the Opposition, just as you all have come to accept our slogans of (achieving) parity between rural and urban people, parity between agriculture and industries, parity between urban workers and rural workers, so also come and join us all in hailing these two leads that are given. You need not call them after the name of Rajiv Gandhi or anybody, but these are the two leads — one to look after the unorganised labour, from the village upwards, the other one to develop themselves their own Panchayat democracy, make it strong, strengthen its roots from the village upwards and let there be real Panchayati Raj of Mahatma Gandhi's conception and coming from Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Jaiprakash Narayan and so many of (Panchayati Raj Builders) of the earlier generation, you come and join hands with us. Let us march in step one with the other. It is a competition here — you do your best and we do our best. Whosoever will please the people, will come back again here.

[Rangajee is hoping that panchayats will be entitled to levy in terms of labour, bullock carts and other services from villagers in order to construct local developmental works like wells, repairs to the tanks, irrigation channels, canals, culverts, small bridges, school buildings, libraries, rest houses, houses for indigent labour, old people, orphanages etc., and thus raise collective environmental wealth by supplementing whatever the state and union government would be glad to offer or grant.

In this direction Rangajee was able to work with the help of Panguluri Narasimha Rao of Guntur, Narasimhadevara Satyanarayana of East Godavari, K. Ganga Raju and Sanivarapu Subbarao of West Godavari, Kavuri Venkaiah, Nalla Venkaiah of Guntur, Nellori Venkata Ramanaidu of Nellore through Rayalasema seva Sangh and its dynamic leader Sri.P.Rajagopala Naidu and Muni Ratnam and later, on a large scale and in a more systematic manner, with state and International assistance. Among the many facets of public service (which are far and wide, deep and meticulous) of Rangajee, Mention should be made of his contribution to the developments of Bharat Sevak Samaj. It was Rangajee and Gulzarilal Nandajee who hoped to achieve social developments through the Bharat Sevak Samaj with blessings of Sri Jawaharlal Nehru, its president. Unfortunately the villagers could not rise to the occasion and seize the opportunity for self-development and thus failed to fulfil the hopes of Rangajee of contributing upto 50% of the cost of developmental works planned.

Now that the panchayats are going to be statutorily empowered to levy the needed contributions from the villagers, from the propertied and propertyless, we hope along with the great optimist that is Rangajee that the real developmental works would be taken up in a planned and vigorous manner and the labour of our unemployed crores of people would be harnessed to the plan of national employment and social development.

In this way which is hundred percent democratic as, the panchayat raj is organised by the free volition of all the sections of the self employed in villages, without coercion and fraudulent propaganda, but through non-violent and Gandhian democracy, Prof.N.G.Ranga and all those K.M.P.Raj votaries are hopeful of achieving more and genuine development than what USSR and communist China have achieved.Ed.]

CHAPTER XXII

I A BUNCH OF TRIBUTES TO PROF.RANGA.

Rangajee has been striving valiently and sincerely during the past half a century since the publication of his two Economic and Political books (i) "the Modern Indian Peasant" and (ii) The "Kisan Speaks", for the protection and advancement of the self-employed peasants and artisans. He has championed their rights for equal partnership in democracy, for ownership over their land holdings and instruments of production. He stood for cooperative common wealth and made several experiments in furthering the growth of different types of cooperatives from banking, sales and marketing, even production and supplies of inputs for production.

He found among the growing ranks of democratic politicals too much impatience for power and too great greed and intolerance of minority rights. So he has been pleading for the spread of Swiss type of consensus-based democracy in preference to mere British type of majority versus minority conflicts and the dictatorial majority rule.

He has won the respect of the leaders of different parties for his eloquent championship of social democracy in which peasant proprietorship of holdings and their self-employment and all other rural folk would and should have at least parity in political, economic and cooperative activities and powers with the increasing ranks of urban professionals and industrialists. Even Jawaharlaljee the Webbsonian Socialist had to exclaim with admiration in Parliament, "how can we forget the peasants, while Prof. Ranga is in Parliament". Successive Prime Ministers, Indirajee and Rajiv Gandhi have come to appreciate his sage advice and championship of the peasant economy, its basic democratic freedom content, that is, self-employment buttressed by cooperative servicing.

Of all the Western Socialists, champions of Social Welfare of this century, only Sidney and Beatrice Webbs of England can be compared with Prof.Ranga and his wife Bharati Devi for their consistent and successful decades long services for the toiling masses. While Webbs worked for State Socialism Ranga has stood for socialist democracy of all the self employed peoples. Both stood for social democracy and welfare economy.

We have ventured to add a few such tributes and evaluations indicating how he is the vanguard of the contemporaneous Kisans march toward democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj ideal.

MAHATMA'S MESSAGE

6-10-1941

" my Dear Ranga,

I was delighted to hear from you and to learn that you were keeping well and that your faith in nonviolence was daily growing.

Love
Sd. Babu
(m.k.Gandhi)

**INDIRAJEE, PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE
RANGAJI'S HALF CENTURY AS PARLIAMEN-
TARIAN**

In her message to the Felicitation Meeting on 26th December, 1981, Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi said "Not many can claim the distinction of a Parliamentary career spanning half a century. For Mr N.G.Ranga this is only a part of his dedicated life of service. His ceaseless campaign for the betterment of farmers and landless rural workers has earned him universal praise. His integrity and energy are worth emulating".

-Indian Express
27-12-1981

GRAND OLD MEN

Referring to Prof. Ranga's TV interview in Delhi with Lord Fenner Brockway *, Smt. Indira Gandhi wrote to him that she "enjoyed the programme. It was good to see two grand old men together. You were in a specially good mood".
16-8-84.

* Lord Fenner Brockway had been the President of Independent Labour Party of England and Cooperated with Rangajee on the Colonial and Coloured Peoples League etc. since 1930. They met again in India in 1984-85 and in London in 1986. (ED)

HOUSE OF LORDS, WESTMINSTER

FENNER BROCKWAY, 26-09-1974

Dear Mr Butchaiah*,

I am glad to associate myself with a host of others in a message of goodwill to Professor Ranga on his 75th birthday and to take the opportunity to thank him for all he has done for the people of India during these years.

He has followed the Gandhi traditions of identifying himself with those who suffer most in our society of inequalities, the Harijans and the peasants. He struggled nobly for India's political independence, but saw that national freedom was not enough. The freedom of people from grinding poverty and the winning of equality of status for the lowest were needed for true emancipation. He has devoted himself unstintingly to these purposes over a long life, and even now is giving himself to the cause of democratic socialism to be achieved without violence. That is a Himalian task and lesser souls would have shrunk from it. It is a measure of Ranga's greatness that still in his 75th year he should dedicate himself to it.

(Sd) FENNER BROCKWAY

* Sri Kandimalla Butchaiah, Ex-M.L.A. was the chairman of Rangajee's Birthday Celebrations in Chilakalurpet in 1975. (Ed)

NEW DELHI - 110 001

August 22, 1987

Dear Rangaji,

Thank you for your kind letter of August 20, 1987.

You may not know that I was one of your admirers and always read yours and Satyamurthi's speeches in the Central Assembly. Your Oxford account used to thrill us all.

I wish you the best of health and happiness.

With personal regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Sd.) R. VENKATARAMAN

During the debate on the bill of Electoral Reforms supported by Rangajee which sought to prescribe a way of faith in socialism, democracy and secularism by political parties seeking registration and recognition for setting up candidates, the following interesting tete-a-tete took place between PROF.N.G. RANGA and PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE on 15th December, 1988.

Shri Indrajit Gupta : Intervening during the speech of Sri Jagannath Kaushal said "the point I was making was, suppose there are some people who say and do not hide the fact that they didn't approve of socialism and they want a capitalist system. Do you want them by law to be excluded from the election process ? We had a party here, again I must remind you, of which the leader at that time was my distinguished friend Mr. Ranga.

Prof. N.G. Ranga : My friend who came from Assam Sri Goswami was making this allegation against Swatantra Party. There are different kinds of socialism - Guild Socialism, State Socialism and the Communist Socialism also. I believed in agrarian socialism of self-employed peasantry and artisans, I believe in it even now. At that time neither Rajaji nor anybody else took any exception to it. Why do you make that allegation now?

Prof. Ranga told Swatantra Party's General Council in 1969 that his faith in Gandhian Socialism, consistent with freedom, had come to be strengthened by his active involvement in the celebrations in 1969 of Gandhi Centenary. He was then the president of the Swatantra Party. See also his writings "Self employment sector" 1958, "Panchayat Land Lordism" "protect self-employed peasants" in 1987 and "Bapu Blesses" 1970." (ED)

Prof. Madhu Dandavate : Prof. Ranga, after your observation I went back and checked the constitution of Swatantra Party. There is no reference to socialism even in an indirect manner.

Prof N.G. Ranga : There is no reference to capitalism either, that shows you are only a professor.

Prof. Madhu Dandavate : I was fighting the Swatantra Party at that time. There is always a reference to private property and free enterprise. Read your constitution.

Prof. N.G. Ranga : You have not understood the Socialism then.

Prof. Madhu Dandavate : Sir, after leaving Swatantra Party, he has given up the manifesto with retrospective effect. What can I do ?

Prof. N.G. Ranga : At that time you were one of my students in Bombay.

"In Bombay's Citizenship college 1944-45, when Prof. Ranga was expounding the socialistic and freedom contents and significance of the democratic K.M.P. Raj ideal which was blessed by Gandhijee, he was then contrasting that approach with the Marxist Communist ideal of Dictatorship of the proletariat". (ED)

Prof. Madhu Dandavate : At that time he had not joined the Swatantra Party. He was a Congressman. He left the congress and joined the Swatantra Party.

Prof. N.G. Ranga : We fought against the Congress move towards Indrajit Gupta and collectivism of agriculture. I have won in the end. Pandit Nehru had to yield and we achieved both of us together, a consensus to protect the peasants.

"According to the proposed Seventeenth Amendment to the constitution as conceived by Jawaharlaljee, all land holdings, even cattle-sheds and house-sites etc. were liable to be taken over by the state, in the same manner as Zamindaris (Estates). It was because of the nation-wide intensive opposition organised by Rangajee, through Kisan movement, the large scale petitions to Parliament supported by Swatantra Party in and outside parliament the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee confined the definition of the term "Estate" to holdings above the "Ceilings" prescribed by legislature and thus exempted all the peasants' holdings below the "ceilings" from the confiscatory mischief of the definition of the "Estate". By this salutary and satisfactory change, peasants ownership over their holdings below the ceiling limits have come to be safeguarded, a triumph for the Kisans; It is this triumph of parliamentary democratic spirit of compromise between him and Jawaharlaljee that Rangajee has referred to" (ED).

Prof. Madhu Dandavate : You did not win Jawaharlal, Jawaharlal won you over.

Shri Jagan Nath Kaushal : I am thankful to the Hon'ble Members who had intervened. They have made the discussion very lively. They have made the discussion meaningful also.

Prof. Madhu Dandavate : The Manifesto of Swatantra Party said "the brand of socialism which the Congress party has been trying to implement will bring India closer to a Communist polity where economic and political freedom will well nigh cease to exist. This dominant concept of socialism is irreconcilable with freedom and independence of the people, with their capacity to develop their personality and prosperity".

Prof. N.G. Ranga : The Congress socialism of those days is different from the congress socialism of these days.

INTERRUPTIONS

Prof. f N.G. Ranga: Today they are in favour of "perestroike" 'Glasnost' and all that.

"It is because Rangajee and Swatantra movement fought against communist inspired regimes of war time Nehru food controls, which he had resisted and the licence quota permit Raj (to quote Rajajee's apt phrase that the present government has come to realise the need for liberalising its approach towards industries and hence its appreciation of similar Soviet liberalisation, as indicated by Perestroika" (ED.)

Prof. Madhu Dandavate : I do agree with you. I don't want things to be static. I want more than Gorbachev I stand for "Perestroka" 'Glasnost' and everything. But what I am trying to point out is at any stage of political life there can be parties who can have difference"
