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**SOME BASIC PROBLEMS  
OF  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

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**MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

**SOME BASIC PROBLEMS  
OF  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

CD 181/2  
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[Text of the address by Shri S. K. Dey,  
Minister for Community Development, at the  
Seminar of the Principals and Directors of  
Training Centres held in Bombay in  
July 1957]

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**MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

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Dear Friends,

It has been my endeavour since the inception of the Community Development Programme to associate myself as closely as I humanly could with all our activities in the field, in seminars, conferences, office and elsewhere. Rarely have I missed a seminar sponsored by the C.P.A. It is, therefore, a great misfortune that circumstances should have contrived to prevent me from participating in this Seminar of the Principals and Directors of our Training Centres to which I have been looking forward for months. But man cannot order things always as he pleases. The present is a case in point. You will forgive me for my inability to be in midst of you and to enrich myself with the experiences which you have gathered to pool on the common programme. The loss is entirely mine and I am most unhappy about it.

For months I had been thinking of posing certain basic problems to you. These have been demanding urgent consideration if we were to prevent this programme from settling down to a state of dead routine. This is a matter in which you could be of the greatest assistance inasmuch as it is you who have been moulding the moulders of our programme for the field. As I cannot talk to you face to face, I am taking this opportunity of posing my thoughts to you through the medium of this paper. You will no doubt have considered most of these questions already. The notes compiled as agenda for the seminar present virtually all aspects of the problems we are facing today in the training of our workers. I would like at the very outset to give you the genesis in particular of the Social Education Organiser and the Block Development Officer with whom you are chiefly concerned in this Seminar. I am doing this in order to place our problems in the proper perspective.

### BLOCK AS UNIT

When we began the programme five years ago, we were faced with a situation where technical representatives of nation building departments extended at best up to the level of the Tehsil (three or four Blocks). In some States they did not extend beyond the level of the district. In a planned developmental economy for an under-developed and uneducated people such as the vast masses in India represent, it is but natural that initiative for development, at least in the early stages, will have to rest preponderantly on the government apparatus. Initiative has little meaning unless it



is supported by administrative and financial assistance and technical know-how to an intensive degree. This can only be achieved if developmental apparatus of Government extends nearer to the people. We may compare this for example, with the pupil-teacher ratio in a school for efficient instruction. The decision naturally followed that there should be decentralization of the Government apparatus from the Tehsil to lower levels. The Block with a population of about 66,000 became the unit of choice.

We took the decision to provide at the Block level one representative each of the following departments : (i) Agriculture, (ii) Animal Husbandry, (iii) Cooperation, (iv) Rural Engineering (Overseer), (v) Public Health, (vi) Village Industries. One functionary representing a technical department in its totality was not adequate to cover a population of 60 to 70 thousand in a Block if a reasonable impact was to be assured. Therefore came the concept of the multi-purpose Village Level Worker, the *Gram Sevak*, who would have received 'first-aid' training in all aspects of development and who would represent so far as the people are concerned, all aspects of the Government in his dealing with them. We provided ten *Gram Sevaks* in a Block, each catering to a population of six to seven thousand. The *Gram Sevak* needed regular guidance and technical supervision of his work which it was expected would be provided by the Block Level Extension Officers.

If the *Gram Sevak* was to be a multi-purpose representative of all departments of Government, it followed as a logical corollary that we should have an officer at the Block level to provide coordination between the various technical functionaries at that level. Besides providing coordination, this officer would also be expected to look after the general administrative needs of the Block so that the technical officers would be free from administrative routine, so as to be able to devote themselves fully to the efficient implementation of the programme relating to their respective specialities. We gave him the designation of Block Development Officer.

It was soon realised, however, that even though the Block Development Officer would function as an administrator for the programme at the Block level, he would need the services of one more specialist for introducing the programme as a whole to the village people in the first instance on behalf of all the specialists after which according to the needs felt by the people, the Extension Officers in the Block could deal more intensively with the subjects indicated. As our programme was designed primarily to build up self-reliance in our people and to enable them to plan



and implement their own programme of development, the programme grew naturally to be one of an extension of knowledge to people in different subjects of development. And that way, because we were dealing with adults, the entire programme took the shape primarily as one of Social Education—Social Education relating to all aspects of the life of the village people and encompassing necessarily the activities of all nation building departments. It was obvious that Social Education according to this concept could not be the charge of a single functionary. It was one of the whole team of our Block Officers.

Yet, the programme of Social Education demands organised effort, because of its multi-facet character. Normally the Block Development Officer should have been the one to hold it under his charge. But situated as he is, he would have little time available to devote exclusively for this purpose. The need arose necessarily of providing an additional functionary to work as a staff officer attached to the Block Development Officer taking care of this responsibility on his behalf. We called him Social Education Organiser. As we have been working in the Block with men as well as women, we felt it imperative to provide two Social Education Organisers, one exclusively for the requirements of men and the other for women.

The Social Education Organizer cannot function in a vacuum. Extension Officers in other fields have their own institutions or forums through which they can irradiate their specialities, namely the agricultural seed farm, agricultural experiment station, demonstration farms and demonstration plots by the Agricultural Extension Officer, veterinary hospital, poultry farm, key village and artificial insemination centre by the Extension Officer Animal Husbandry; Cooperatives, Seed and implement stores, godowns etc. by the Cooperative Extension Officer, hospitals, maternity and child-welfare centres, etc. by the Extension Officer Public Health, and so on. Social Education Organizer could function only if there were at the Block, institutions such as Information and Community Centre, village libraries and reading rooms, recreation clubs, study circles, camps and seminars, etc. We, therefore, proposed the creation of these new institutions and activities as physical targets for the Social Education Organizers. It was obvious, however, that these institutions were but means for the propagation of the philosophy, the objectives and the know-how of the Community Development Programme and not as ends in the programme just as an agricultural demonstration plot, a veterinary centre, a hospital or a maternity centre, a school will be useless unless these grow to be centres of interest and activity by the village people for whom these are intended.



The next point that we come up in the programme is the mobilization of people as communities and institutions, which could provide the seed for progressive growth and permanence for the programmes of Community Development. It became necessary, therefore, that this new functionary, namely the Social Education Organizer, should also act as a specialist at the Block level in methods of group action and group mobilization. No one functionary in a Block can take upon himself the entire responsibility for group mobilization of a population of 60 to 70 thousand for himself. Therefore the Social Education Organizer was expected to work in close collaboration as a team with all the other specialists at the Block level (Extension Officers). At the village level he was expected to function with the *Gram Sevak* as other functionaries do.

With this background, now we have an opportunity to look back at our programme of training both for the S.E. Os. and the B.D. Os. The programme in the span of a short period of less than five years, has aroused the interest of the country as a whole and the world at large. Therefore, there is an obvious cause for a certain amount of rejoicing and congratulations for ourselves in the sense that we have not made a bad beginning. But simultaneously there are certain trends that have begun to develop on the wider canvas which demand close review of the programme by all concerned and a readjustment of our techniques of approach to the whole question.

In the early stages of the programme it was possible for the C.P.A. in the Centre and the Development Commissioner with his staff at the State level to provide virtually day to day guidance to the programme in the field. With the phenomenal expansion that has already taken place and the still faster rate at which we are now expanding, it is no longer possible to provide that degree of close and organised guidance to every Block under operation as we desire. There is need to compensate for this enforced dilution in guidance and supervision by an improvement in the content and quality of the training that we give to our workers. There is need also for special in-service training at frequent intervals. We have also to adopt measures which will ensure that our workers will develop the necessary aptitude and desire for assimilation of knowledge such as we provide through our growing volume of publications from the C.P.A. in the Centre and from the State organizations and other sources.

Of all the functionaries in our programme the Social Education Organizer has been the most misunderstood and the object of the greatest of controversies. That it is so is but natural



in the best of circumstances, especially because of the comprehensive character of the assignment which we have associated with him. Yet, I am not sure that we cannot take measures by which we can define and limit the responsibilities of this functionary within practical proportions and make him substantially more effective in the discharge of his function than he has been heretofore.

The B.D.O. has functioned relatively freer from controversies as regards his role in the programme. This is so because his position as an administrator of the programme at the Block level follows conventional patterns. In the discharge of his assignment, however, he has not been as effective as he should be. As I see it, it has happened so because he has not imbibed fully an understanding of the philosophy and the objectives of the programme and because of the environment around and natural gravitation to regulatory methods as against extension approach in regard especially to his colleagues at the Block level, to which he has been subjected. In other words, he is yet to assimilate the lessons of team work, the role that a leader should play in a team of equals. That the B.D.O. has failed by and large to have the urge to study and assimilate the continuous stream of literature pouring forth from the C.P.A. and the State Governments is proof enough, if proof was indicated at all, that in his dealing with his staff and in the handling of the programme in the field he is not generating basic issues which he would have otherwise had to face and solve through studies instead of resorting to the bait of grants-in-aid to the villager and the character roll for the staff at the Block level as he tends to rely on.

If we are to find an adequate answer to these problems, it seems essential that our staff in the training centres develop that students' outlook to the programme and team spirit between themselves. The programme is growing. The staff of our training centres should grow equally and remain abreast of the movement. The best of our instructors in the training centres even in an ideal set up would have a tendency to stagnate with the repetitive courses which we are inflicting on them at close intervals throughout the year. We should adopt special measures to counter this trend. I am also not sure that we have not made something of a fetish of the "Job and problem oriented" approach in the pursuit of our curriculum in class rooms. "Job and problem orientation", if it is to come into the picture at all, should be faced in the actual implementation of the programme in the villages around the training centres. The field problems should be discussed in seminars of trainees which should form an integral feature of the training programme both for S. E. Os. and B. D. Os.



While it is not possible to whittle down the role that a B.D.O. should play as the administrator for the Block, we should limit the physical responsibilities of the S.E.O. by confining his activities to the *organization* of village leaders seminars, school teachers training programme, *organization* of *Shramdan* movement in the villages, opening of information and community centres, reading rooms and libraries, recreation clubs, youth clubs and *Balmangal Samities*, and ensuring that these institutions do become the means for propagation of the philosophy and objectives of the programme and not an end in themselves. The teaching of social sciences including psychology during the limited five months course of training for the S. E. Os. should be limited to a mere acquaintance with the subject and an interest for later studies of texts and reference books. The teaching of theory in the training centre both for B.D.Os. as well as S.E.Os. should, in my opinion, be confined to the maximum extent possible to the study of the philosophy and objectives of the programme as set out in the publications from the C.P.A. and the State Governments and the various Reports published on the working of the programme such as those issued by the Programme Valuation Organization, the U.N. Organization and by visitors like Dr. Carl Taylor, Wilson and others.

### THE STAFF

If the staff of the training centres are to retain the vitality expected of them and to be in tune with the current development of the programme, it is of the utmost importance that they participate actively in the implementation of the programme of extension in the Block around the training centre. It is also necessary that they participate in study circles along with their trainees on the entire volume of literature issued by the C. P. A. and the State Governments. Furthermore, there should be injection of fresh blood with field experience at periodic intervals. There can also be interchange of staff between various training centres. Simultaneously arrangements should be made for the remaining staff of the training centres to revitalise themselves by close association with work in the field in a Block under current operation some distance away from the direct environment of the training centre. The period of such refresher's training for the staff of the training centres should be long enough to give them the field contact which is vital for their work in the training centre. It is also necessary that the trainees as well as the staff of both the B. D. O. and S. E. O. training centres should participate actively in the organization of village leaders training camps which we are launching on a mass scale beginning October, 2, 1957.



## IN-SERVICE TRAINING

The Inservice training for B. D. Os. and S. E. Os. at an interval of about three years will have soon to be taken up on an all-India pattern. This Inservice training will have to follow more or less the pattern of seminars such as we visualise for the Central Institute of Study and Research for Community Development. The logical venue for this will be these training centres. It is clear, therefore, that our training centres which have so far been responsible only for imparting initial training to our workers will soon have to prepare themselves for taking up a fresh task of conducting Inservice training for the trainees who return to them after having had some experience in the field. The next stage for these centres will be to take up a certain amount of research work in the field of Extension. Our training centres both B. D. Os. as well as S. E. Os. have necessarily to develop themselves with that wider perspective in mind. I do not see how we can prevent stagnation setting in the centres and the routinization of instructions they impart to the trainees unless these training centres grow to be organic units developing with their own momentum in tune with the momentum of the programme as a whole.

For obvious reasons it has not been possible for me to discuss this subject as elaborately as I would have desired. Time and other circumstances have been the limiting factor. I would ask the forgiveness of you all. I do hope you will bear the problems I have posed, and the possible lines of approach I have indicated as an answer, when you go back. I hope you will have enjoyed and benefited from your participation in this seminar. I regret once again that I had to deprive myself of it. I shall look forward to meeting you in the seminar next year. (*Cheers.*)