

HARIJAN

Editor : MAHADEV DESAI

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[FIVE PICE

A COMPLETE VINDICATION

A most important item on the constructive programme of the Congress, ever since its adoption of non-cooperation in 1920, was total prohibition of intoxicating drugs and drinks. In pursuance of this programme, peaceful persuasion of addicts and peaceful picketing of liquor shops was undertaken by Congressmen and Congresswomen throughout India, and thousands suffered imprisonment and sustained physical injury in furtherance of the cause. Therefore when the Congress accepted office in 1937 the Working Committee were none too hasty in advising the Ministries that it was "incumbent on them to work to this end", and expected them "to bring about total prohibition in their respective provinces in three years." The Committee even appealed "to the ministers in other provinces and to the Indian States also to adopt this programme of moral and social uplift of the people."

Three provinces—Madras, Bombay, Bihar—took up the work in right earnest. The masses hailed the programme and legislation with delight. Madras was the first to begin, Rajaji bringing in a Bill within three months of assuming responsibility. Bombay followed the lead within a few months, making even a bolder experiment by introducing prohibition in the premier industrial cities of Bombay and Ahmedabad. There was strong opposition in Bombay by the vested interests, though the legislation was cautious to a degree, and was in no way as thoroughgoing as the prohibition legislation in the United States. There were permits for Europeans and addicts, and the whole objective was the moral and social uplift of the masses, especially the working classes.

Whereas Madras had an Act, Bombay took a short cut by issuing notifications under section 14 B (2) of the old Bombay Abkari Act of 1878. This Act already contained specific provisions authorising Government to prohibit entirely the possession of intoxicants by "a person or a class of persons". The notifications of 1938 applying prohibition to Ahmedabad and Bombay did not go beyond these provisions, excepting in the extent of their application.

There were prosecutions against those who infringed the law, an accused in Ahmedabad being convicted, and the accused in three cases in Bombay being acquitted. The Government filed appeals against these acquittals, and the convicted man filed an appeal against his conviction. All these appeals came in for hearing on the 10th of April

1940, and a special Bench consisting of five judges heard the appeal. The special Bench held that

1. The notifications were *ultra vires*;
2. Whereas the notification could be issued with respect to "a person or a class of persons", the Government had no power to apply it to the public generally;
3. Power to control or regulate the trade was conferred on the executive, but it was never intended to authorise "the introduction of total prohibition of intoxicants as a measure of social reform".

The judgment delivered by the Chief Justice went even further than the bare interpretation of the law. It was a specious plea for the vested interests. The Chief Justice observed that, if the words "any person or class of persons" were held to include "the public generally", the construction "would place it in the power of the Government of the day not only to bring the whole administration of the Abkari Act to an end, but by a stroke of the pen, without any warning or the provision of any compensation, to destroy the value of businesses built up, it may be, over many years and with the expenditure of much capital in reliance of the continuance of Government policy under the Abkari Act."

The Chief Justice used an argument which upheld a trade which, to use Gladstone's words, has wrought more ruin (he was talking of England) than war, famine and pestilence put together. It is common knowledge that those who had invested capital in the liquor trade had done so in spite of the warning of 20 years. If as a result of the 20 years' work there was voluntary abstinence from drink on a vast scale, whom would the liquor dealers or the Chief Justice have held to blame?

II

But the decision of the Bombay High Court went even further to undo the work of the Ministry as we shall presently see. In order to remedy the effect of the special Bench decision, the Bombay Government immediately brought in a remedying legislation, viz. the Bombay Abkari Act of 1940, validating the notification and removing all doubts as to the purpose of the legislation, viz. promoting, enforcing and carrying into effect the policy of prohibition. This Act, in its turn, soon came in for judicial interpretation. The Presidency Magistrate, before whom a person in possession of country liquor was brought for trial, referred two questions to the High Court: (1) Has the Provincial Legislature power under item 31 of List II of the

7th Schedule of the Government of India Act of 1935 to pass a law of which the object is to introduce a policy of total prohibition? (2) In the event of the question being answered in the affirmative, whether there is in existence any effective notification under section 14 B (2) of the Bombay Abkari Act of 1878 absolutely prohibiting the possession of intoxicants by persons generally in the city of Bombay.

The High Court on this reference held that the Amending Act went beyond the powers of the provincial legislature, and that it would not affect the notifications already declared invalid. The Government thereupon applied for a certificate under section 205 of the Government of India Act to enable the Government to appeal to the Federal Court. The High Court refused to grant this certificate on the ground that no question of law as to the interpretation of the Constitution Act was involved in the case.

Prohibition was thus given a decent burial, and an effective step was taken to prevent its resurrection.

III

Not so, however, in Bihar. The Bihar legislation was also on the lines of the Bombay legislation. Prohibition was introduced by a notification of March 26th 1939 issued under a sub-section of the old Bihar and Orissa Excise Act. There was a prosecution and conviction under this notification, as in Bombay; also an appeal to the High Court, and the decision by the High Court that the Provincial Government had no power to make a notification prohibiting the public generally from possessing intoxicating liquor. As in Bombay, again, the Governor of Bihar enacted a Governor's Act amending the preamble of the original Act, so as to bring in prohibition within its scope, and also amending section 19 (4) of the old Act so as to include, under "any person or class of persons", all persons in Bihar or in any specified area. There was a fresh notification in terms of this Governor's Act; a prosecution under it, an acquittal, but, unlike Bombay, a reversal of the order of acquittal by the High Court who held that "in view of the Amending Act the appellant had no defence in law."

It was against this order of the High Court that the convicted man appealed to the Federal Court. Chief Justice Sir Maurice Gwyer's judgment, delivered a short while ago, upheld the order of the High Court, and in the course of a lucid analysis of the whole question it discussed and disposed of effectively practically all the questions raised in the Bombay province, and completely vindicates the action of the Congress Ministries both in Bombay and Bihar. The Chief Justice, without expressing any opinion on the two judgments of the Bombay High Court and the Patna High Court which questioned the validity of the notifications, held that the Legislatures were competent to issue the notifications they did, and that the view which influenced both the courts that the old Acts were merely revenue or excise Acts and not meant for promot-

ing a policy of total or partial prohibition, was wrong:

"There is no reason in theory or principle why an Excise Act should not have a double object, the benefit of the revenue and the improvement of public health or morals by a greater control of the liquor trade; the Licensing Acts in England are an example. We find it not easy to understand the purpose or object of section 19 (4), if it were not intended for the purpose of promoting the cause of temperance, whether by means of the policy which used to be known as local option or by means of total prohibition; and its appearance on the statute book in so many provinces in the course of the same generation is a proof that temperance doctrines were, as indeed is common knowledge, attracting public notice at that period over a considerable part of India. The only novelty about more recent legislation is that it goes further and is more radical in character."

The Chief Justice also disposed of the argument about the loss resulting to the liquor dealers, which argument was only "faintly suggested" by the counsel for the Bihar appellant, but was made much of by the Chief Justice of Bombay:

"It was faintly suggested that, in the absence of any provision for compensating those whose livelihood might be taken away by the enactment of prohibition, it ought to be assumed that the Legislatures had not been given power to enact it. Where a statute is ambiguous, the presumption that a Legislature does not intend to interfere with vested rights is no doubt reinforced by the absence of provisions for compensation; but where the language is clear and there is no ambiguity, as we hold to be the case here, there is no room for such arguments."

One would have thought that there should have been no doubt about the interpretation of entry No. 31, which sets out the matters about which a Provincial Legislature is empowered to legislate:

"Intoxicating liquors and narcotic drugs, that is to say, the production, manufacture, possession, transport, purchase and sale of intoxicating liquors, opium and other narcotic drugs."

But much argument was expended to show that this gave no power to the provincial legislatures to introduce total or partial prohibition. On this point the Chief Justice, who characterised the argument as "bold", has clearly held that

"A power to legislate" with respect to intoxicating liquors "could not well be expressed in wider terms, and would, in our opinion, unless the meaning of the words used is restricted or controlled by the context or by other provisions in the Act, undoubtedly include the power to prohibit intoxicating liquors throughout the Province or in any specified part of the Province." Also: "A power to regulate does not include a power to prohibit, but since neither the word 'regulation' itself nor any other comparable

expression appears in entry No. 31, it does not appear necessary to pursue the argument further."

There is another aspect which, it is gratifying to note, has not escaped the learned Chief Justice's attention. If the great Reforms introduced in 1935 which transferred certain departments to the Provincial Legislatures had any value, it was this that the people's representatives were given the fullest liberty to legislate for their moral and social well-being. Entry No. 31 could have no other meaning, and if it was held, as the Bombay High Court held, to have a narrow meaning, the little value that the Reforms had would be gone, and the Reforms would be reduced to a mockery. The Chief Justice did not say so in so many words, but his meaning is clear beyond the shadow of a doubt:

"We must again refer to the fundamental proposition enunciated in *The Queen v. Burah* that Indian Legislatures within their own sphere have plenary powers of legislation as large and of the same nature as those of Parliament itself. If that was true in 1878, it cannot be less true in 1942. Every intendment ought, therefore, to be made in favour of a Legislature which is exercising the powers conferred on it. Its enactments ought not to be subjected to the minute scrutiny which may be appropriate to an examination of the bye-laws of a body exercising only delegated powers, nor is the generality of its powers to legislate on a particular subject to be cut down by the arbitrary introduction of *far-fetched and impertinent limitations*." (Italics mine)

IV

This weighty judgment has far-reaching importance. It validates prohibition to the extent it was introduced in Bihar. But what about Bombay? In Bombay anarchy prevails. The Government of India cannot legislate on a provincial matter, and the Bombay High Court decisions which still stand have deprived the Governor and the legislature of the power to legislate in the matter of prohibition. Does the Federal Chief Justice's decision validate the Bombay Governor's Act of 1940 and resurrect prohibition? The criticism made by certain legal luminaries, after the Bombay High Court's decisions, that the Congress Governments had, in their zeal for reform, driven a coach and four through all principles of law, is now dispelled by the Federal Court's judgment. There must be a way found whereby the good work done by the Congress Government, which "by a stroke of the pen" was ruined by the Bombay High Court decisions, can be revived.

New Delhi, 29-3-42

M. D.

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A POSER

An esteemed friend writes:

"Recently, under the caption 'Criminal Assaults', Gandhiji advised women at the mercy of ravishers to use nails and teeth when non-violence had failed. In the current *Harijan* similar precepts are taught. If the non-violent way is not clear, Gandhiji recommends organisation for armed defence against robbers and dacoits. Again, the work has perforce to be done by the evacuees violently, non-violently, or both ways. Am I incurably stupid at some point in the reasoning? Can this be the deliberate teaching of the apostle of non-violence? Is *ahimsa* only the preferable of two legitimate courses, the one which has the right of prior trial but may properly be abandoned as soon as its inadequacy is perceptible? Time was when I understood *himsa* to be the antithesis of *ahimsa*, to be abhorred as much as the other was to be worshipped; the one was away from God, the other towards Him."

Himsa is certainly the antithesis of *ahimsa*, as much as untruth of truth; and for him or her who is wedded to *ahimsa* as a faith there is nothing higher than *ahimsa* which must be adhered to at all costs. For him or her *ahimsa* is the only way towards God, *himsa* away from Him.

The precept that my friend has facetiously tried to reduce to an absurdity is addressed not to those who have unflinching faith in *ahimsa* but to those who are vacillating or in doubt, or who would fain take to their heels in the name of *ahimsa*. To these Gandhiji has always said: *Ahimsa* or *himsa*, but no cowardice. Let me remind the friend that what Gandhiji has been saying now was said in identical language twenty years ago.

Having said this, I would invite the friend's attention to Hindu moral philosophy. In the ultimate analysis everything but Truth is relative, and the distinction between *ahimsa* and *himsa* is relative, not the absolute distinction between Truth and untruth. Hindu moral philosophy—Gita ethics—posits three *gunas*, *Sattwa*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, and declares that there is no being in the three worlds that is free from the three *gunas*—in a greater or less degree. A man of *sattwa* *guna* is predominantly *sattwika*, but he has a certain amount of *rajas* and *tamas* in him. The Gita goes even further and classifies even virtues like *tapas* (penance), *yajna* (sacrifice), *danam* (charity) into the three categories *sattwika*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Sattwika* has to be worshipped in preference to the *rajas* and *tamas* which last is to be abhorred, but everyone and everything earthly cannot but manifest in himself or itself the three *gunas* in a greater or less degree. The only one who transcends the three *gunas* is He. *Ahimsa* belongs to the *sattwika* category, *himsa* belongs to the *rajas* category, and cowardice belongs to the *tamas* category. Fearlessness, which may express itself in *ahimsa* or *himsa* according as a person is *sattwika* or *rajasa*, is the antithesis of cowardice. The one is the attribute of the brave, the other brings down man from man's estate. That is why cowardice has to be shunned at all costs.

New Delhi, 29-3-42

M. D.

HARIJAN

Apr. 5

1942

A YOUNG CANADIAN'S QUESTION

(By M. K. Gandhi)

From my American post I pick up the following typical letter from Vancouver:

"I cannot truthfully say that I am an advocate of your 'India for the Indians' policy, but I have read your article in *Liberty* magazine and followed newspaper accounts of your illustrious life. I say 'illustrious' not in the sense of the mighty heads of Europe but of a man who is truly attempting to better his own people, not to perpetrate his personal fancies. I knew, of course, that your principles constitute a return of India to village industry and more international economic co-operation and goodwill towards men, but I should like to know just what stand your new democracy would take in world politics. The small countries of Europe thought that they would keep their finger out of the pie, as the saying goes, but look where they are now. I should like to know from the pen of the spiritual leader of India himself what the Government's attitude towards resident Britons would be and if British and other foreign trading firms would be allowed. Would the new Government of India follow the policies of Japan until Admiral Perry and the United States fleet entered the harbour of Yokohama in 1853? That is, would foreigners and foreign trade be excluded?"

I hope that you will pardon the intrusion of a young Canadian who wishes to more fully understand the problems of your country."

Denuded of the courtesies, the writer's straight question is, "Will there be room for Britishers and foreigners in free India?" The question should have nothing to do with my spirituality supposed or real. It does not arise for free America or free Britain. And it will not arise when India becomes really free. For, India will then be free to do what she likes, without let or hindrance from anybody. But it is pleasing to speculate what India would do if she becomes free, as she must sooner or later. If I have any influence over her policies, foreigners will be welcome, provided their presence is beneficial to the country. They will never be allowed to exploit and impoverish the country as they have done hitherto.

What free India will otherwise look like remains to be seen. She has nothing to fear from the contemplation of the helplessness of the small nations of Europe, if she continues to tread the non-violent course she has done with more or less perfection and with more or less success. For a non-violent State bigness is wholly unnecessary for its protection against aggression. Such a State will need spend nothing for protection against aggression from without. Whether such a State will ever come into being is a fair question to ask. Reason suggests no flaw in the theoretical conception of it. Whether human nature will respond to

what has been called an exacting call is another question. It has been known in individual cases to rise to unimaginable heights. There is nothing to prevent its multiplication by patient endeavour. Anyway I am not going to lose my faith and abandon the attempt because I can show no visible sign of such a response from India. One might as well abandon all hope, as some have done, for the attainment of India's unadulterated freedom. For they say, it will take centuries for India, which is largely and wholly unarmed, to become a military nation. I refuse to be prey to such despair. In the ringing words of Lokamanya, "Freedom is India's birthright, and she will have it cost what it may." Glory lies in the attempt to reach one's goal and not in reaching it. I passionately believe in the possibility of attainment through the perfection of the non-violent technique whose hidden resources no one has fathomed. We have only found a foothold. Perseverance opens up treasures which bring perennial joy. If the toil is great, so is the fruit thereof.

On the way to Delhi, 26-3-42

Notes

Scorched Earth

From the well-reasoned press statement of Shri Gaganvihari L. Mehta, President of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, I give below the following important extracts:

"It should be pointed out that economic relationships are so close, complex and delicate that it would be impossible to demolish important industries or plants without grave repercussions on the economic fabric and life of the country. For example, if industrial plants like those of jute, cotton or sugar are destroyed, they will take years to be rebuilt even after the war and, meanwhile, not merely the owners of the factories but also the cultivators of these commodities, the industrial workers as well as those engaged in ancillary and subsidiary industries, trades and occupations would all suffer. Such demolition of industries built up after years of struggle at large expense and often against heavy odds will cause economic dislocation and disorganisation altogether disproportionate to any benefits secured as a measure of war.

After the grossly discriminating treatment which has been admittedly meted out to Indian evacuees in Malaya and Burma, the Indian commercial community and the public naturally have apprehensions as to the manner in which such a vital policy as that of scorched earth would be carried out in practice. The representatives of the people of this country have had no voice whatever in the formulation and execution of the defence policy of the country so that the people have no means of determining whether the heavy sacrifices entailed in any policy such as that of scorched earth is justified in any particular situation."

Scorched earth policy is a self-defeating measure. Time will show how true this remark is.

New Delhi, 30-3-42

Caveeshar

Lala Dunichand of Amballa writes:

"I have been asked by the dear and near ones of S. Sardul Singh Caveeshar, who is being detained

without trial, to write this letter to you. Since his arrest about a fortnight ago, he is being detained inside the Lahore Fort, and he is not being allowed to have any kind of contact with his relations and friends. Authorities have been repeatedly approached for an interview with him, but the request has been flatly refused. I and a few other M. L. A.s wanted to see Mr. Wace, D. I. G. Police (C. I. D.), with a view to put his case before him for proper treatment, but he peremptorily refused to see us in this connection. I am reliably informed that S. Caveeshar is being kept by himself in a cell, and this amounts to solitary confinement. He is not being allowed even those few facilities such as newspapers, correspondence, etc., which other detainees enjoy. The fact that he had been suffering from fever for a long time at the time of his arrest adds poignancy to his case. Other detainees of similar position such as Babu Sarat Chandra Bose and others are being treated properly."

One can understand detention, in these times, of persons who are suspected of complicity with the Japanese. Therefore, in spite of my having receiving angry letters, I have observed silence about Sarat Babu's detention though I have felt keenly about it. There was no question of his ill-treatment. Sardar Sardul Singh's is a different case, if what Lala Dunichand says is true. There can be no cause for the ill-treatment of any prisoner, no matter what his offence is. Caveeshar is detained on mere suspicion. The public know nothing about the evidence against him. In war times it is difficult to demand an open trial or even disclosure of evidence in certain cases. All the greater, therefore, is the reason for the special treatment of such prisoners. I hope that Caveeshar's case will receive the attention of the authorities concerned and all cause for complaint will be removed.

New Delhi, 29-3-42

Praja Mandals and Congress

Thus writes a correspondent from an Indian State:

"On page 67 of *Harijan* (of March 8, 1942) there is a question which is of great interest and importance to Praja Mandals in Indian States. The latter part of the question is, 'Who should be responsible for political policies there (in States)?' I am afraid that the answer does not sufficiently clear the position. From what appeared in this connection in *Harijan* before, and from the present answer, in an indirect way, it seems that you wish the Praja Mandals to be responsible for the political policy in the States concerned. It would follow that the local branch of the Congress would not independently initiate any political policy or come into conflict with the policy of the local Praja Mandal."

I think there was no confusion about my answer. The Congress organisation has its centre and chief work in British India. It has branches in some States. They are not expected to dabble in local politics. They are, therefore, advised to confine themselves to constructive work. But Praja Mandals have to do constructive work always, and political work properly so called wherever it is allowed or where there are brave and able enough men to

carry on the political struggle. It is thus purely a question of local ability and opportunity. At the present moment when everything is in the melting pot, no heroics in politics are called for in the States.

Stopping Animal Sacrifice

A Belgaum correspondent writes:

"The Marikamba Fair which is being generally held at Sirsi is one of the biggest in the Bombay Province. The Sirsi temple is well known in this part and has a huge income which is utilised for various purposes by donating a high school, a maternity hospital, etc. This was the first temple in the Province which opened its doors to Harijans when your Harijan campaign began. You asked the people not to kill the buffalo, sheep or hens in the name of religion, and had said that such a temple did not deserve support. Your speech had its effect on the public. Shri S. N. Keshwain, M. L. A., President Canara District Harijan Sevak Sangh and one of the trustees of the temple, was responsible for stopping the killing of buffaloes a few years back. This year he was responsible for stopping the killing of sheep and hens at the recent Mari Fair. Thus the lives of about ten thousand sheep and fifteen thousand hens were saved, for which the whole district is grateful to him for his courageously coming forward at the proper time without heeding a few resenting voices."

This is indeed good news. Shri Keshwain deserves congratulations for his humanitarian spirit. Those who wish to may eat what meats they like, but it is defaming God to offer animal sacrifices in temples. What God wants, if He can be said to want anything, is the sacrifice made by a humble and contrite heart.

On the way to Delhi, 26-3-42

Literary v. Craft Work

Shri Narhari Parikh writes:

"I feel that in many of our khadi and other schools the emphasis laid on literary training is wholly wrong. Certain hours are assigned to craft work and certain to literary work, but it is believed that knowledge can only be imbibed through book reading. I hold that more intellectual progress is possible for our students through craft work than books. I shall be grateful if you will give your opinion on this issue."

The writer's complaint is justified. Literary training does not always mean expansion of the intellect. Primarily it is a matter of memorising. A letter is imprinted on the brain in the same way as any other picture. But literary training is more than mere reading. The same thing is true of handicrafts. A knowledge of handicrafts is not limited to the mere craft. It includes a knowledge of its science. Then the expansion of the intellect is much greater and quicker than in the high schools and colleges. Therefore, to run down craft work or give it a secondary place in the school programme is greatly to be deplored. Students thus underrate the value and place of craft knowledge in the expansion of the intellect. Book learning damages the eyes and cramps thought and originality. There is no such danger in learning crafts and their science. This too involves some study of books.

But that study is related to crafts and, therefore, requires the exertion of the intellect. This is what I mean by basic training. It must, in time, come into its own, for it is so true. But meanwhile let there be no differentiation made between book learning and craft work. The latter must be looked upon as an integral part of education and must have the same status as any other subject. This obvious truth should be recognised at least in national schools. (Adapted from *Harijanbandhu*)
Sevagram, 25-3-42 M. K. G.

TRAGEDY OF THE ENGLISH MEDIUM

(By Shriman Narayan Agarwal)

Gandhiji's trenchant criticism of the English medium of instruction on the occasion of the Benares Hindu University's Silver Jubilee celebrations has once more roused Indian educationists from their mental torpor. Whether it will stir them into fruitful activity is, however, quite doubtful. But if our educationists fail to do their duty, time cannot wait endlessly to restore the balance. Indian youth is restive under the yoke of a foreign language, and the English medium is, assuredly, on its last legs.

Apart from other baneful effects, the greatest tragedy of the English medium is its crippling influence on the intellect. It is now patent that the students who learn through the mother-tongue show a better grasp of subjects and develop a healthier intellect than those who study through English. Authentic and weighty evidence in favour of this statement is, indeed, overwhelming. Messrs Abbott and Wood in their educational report of 1937 observed:

"It is not possible accurately to assess the mental dislocation and the inhibitions which boys suffer from being required to give and receive information, to formulate ideas, to record their experiences, and to express their sense of values in a language other than which they use and have always been in the habit of using in domestic and social life. . . . They are hampered at every turn by having to handle an instrument which comes between them and spontaneity."

Dr. Mackenzie, the late Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Osmania University, also confessed that students learning through an Indian language showed better progress than those learning through a foreign medium. One language only holds the key to our emotions, one language only conveys to us, surely and instinctively, the subtler overtones of suggestion which its words possess. That is the language that we use at our mothers' knees; the language of our first prayers and our first spontaneous outbursts of joy or grief. To make any other the vehicle of education is not merely to add immeasurably to the pupil's labours; it is to lame his mind in its freedom of movement, remarks Mr. H. N. Brailsford, the renowned English thinker.

This fact is also corroborated by the Hartog Committee which reported:

"Many witnesses have told us that the boy who has received a vernacular schooling, though he may be

handicapped at first by his weakness in English, very often outstrips the Anglo-vernacular boy in the long run in consequence of his better grasp of those general subjects which he learns through the vernacular."

The Government of India Resolution of 1913 also stated:

"There is much evidence to the effect that scholars who have been through a complete vernacular course are exceptionally efficient mentally."

The Rev. W. E. S. Holland, who was the Principal of St. Paul's Cathedral College, Calcutta, and later the Principal of St. John's College, Agra, replying to the questionnaire issued by the Sadler Commission, observed:

"A large part of college teaching and learning is concerned with understanding the meaning of the English words in which the subject is being studied. There is less time and strength for the attainment of high standards in the subject itself. I consider that the large number of failures at each successive stage in the University course is due to the same cause Further, freshness and keenness of interest in a particular subject evaporate when the medium through which it is studied interposes such difficulty Enquiries from staff and students alike have revealed the fact that they do almost all their thinking in the vernacular. To be educated in a language which is not the vehicle of thought must cramp intellectual development in all kinds of ways. The foreignness of our whole curricula sterilises our best Indian minds . . . There will be a new outburst of intellectual life in Bengal when throughout their education they think and express themselves in the vernacular."

Mr. W. C. Wordsworth, for some time Principal of the Presidency College, went a step further and wrote:

"I believe that students should be permitted to use their own vernaculars in all University examinations. . . . I think that the teaching of English would be improved if schools were permitted to make it a second language, and not the medium of instruction in the higher classes."

Miss A. L. Janau, Principal of the Bethune College, Calcutta, also eloquently advocated the introduction of the vernacular medium and wrote to the Sadler Commission:

"There is no excuse for imposing English as the language of teaching or of examination, and so to impose it is to lay a burden on the Indian pupil which is likely to kill any originality of thought individuals may possess and is sure to kill the genius of Indians as a race."

I have purposely cited the evidence of only English educationists to lend added weight to my argument. I have no quarrel with the English language as such. It is a rich and well-developed language and has gained international importance. It can very well remain a compulsory second language in high schools and colleges. But I see no justification for making it the vehicle of instruction.

Will University Vice-Chancellors and Directors of Public Instruction care to check the colossal waste of national energy without further delay?

Wardha, 22-3-42

VACATION WORK

(By M. K. Gandhi)

A Poona correspondent writes :

"Students are now going on long leave for their summer vacation. Most of them will leave the cities and go to their native places. Looking to the urgent exigencies in the country due to the war situation, and its consequent responsibilities on the people of India, will it not be useful if a message is sent to the student world reminding them of their responsibility and duty at this critical juncture? May I therefore request you to kindly issue an appeal at the earliest to the students calling them for some action during the vacation and after? My humble suggestions are as follows :

1. Reading out the news to the villagers about the War and the Indian political situation and special articles from *Harijan*.

2. Explaining to them the present emergency and possible events.

3. Organising Nagarik Samrakshana Dals.

4. Propagating and organising the idea of self-sufficiency in villages, so far as food and clothing is concerned.

5. A persistent campaign against untouchability. It is possible that the students, some of whom are under the fanatic influence of communal organisations, might harm rather than help the cause in view. But we have to take the chances with the students as they are, and hence I have deliberately dropped, out of the above list, items of communal unity and Congress ideology and mentioned only such items as would give least scope for either communal or ideological differences."

I have no difficulty in endorsing the suggestions made by the correspondent.

Self-sufficiency is a big word. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has adopted that and self-reliance as slogans in his U. P. speeches. They should prove catching at this juncture. Villages will be swept away, if they are not self-sufficient as to their primary wants and self-reliant as to their protection against internal disruption by dissensions and disease and external danger from thieves and dacoits. Self-sufficiency, therefore, means all the cotton processes and growing of seasonal food crops and fodder for cattle. Unless this is done there will be starvation. And self-reliance means corporate organisation ensuring adjustment of internal differences through arbitration by the wise men of villages and cleanliness by corporate attention to sanitation and common diseases. No mere individual effort is going to suffice. And above all villagers must be taught to feel their own strength by combined effort to make their villages proof against thieves and dacoits. This is best done by corporate non-violence. But if the way to non-violence does not seem clear to workers, they will not hesitate to organise corporate defence through violence. I am not having in mind Congressmen who have adopted non-violence as their final creed and so have no choice in the matter.

Thus the students, if they will, can have a strenuous vacation. Who knows that the vacation may not prove even indefinite? But if it is not, two

months are good enough time for laying down a good foundation for self-sufficiency and self-reliance.

My correspondent is timid. There is no cause to fear communal strife. Students who take up village reorganisation cannot afford to be communal. Communalism is an urban product fated to flourish only on urban soil. In rural areas the people are too poor and too interdependent to find time for communal quarrels. Be that as it may, student workers are assumed, for this note, to be free from the virus.

On the way to Delhi, 26-3-42

FROM UNOFFICIAL NOTES

(By M. K. Gandhi)

I extract the following useful information from the unofficial notes published from time to time by the Principal Information Officer of the Government of India, which sometimes make interesting and instructive reading :

Medicinal Plants

Research on Indian medicinal drugs has been undertaken to assist the local manufacture of drugs. By chemical and biological tests it has been established that pyrethrum cultivated in the hills of Northern India compares favourably with the imported commodity. Another investigation establishes that antrypol, a British product, is a good substitute for Naganol, a German product extensively used for veterinary medicine. A detailed distribution of medicinal plants growing in India is now being worked out. It will help in the supply of good vegetable products and stimulate the cultivation of medicinal plants.

The question of producing a fish liver oil containing vitamin 'A' and 'D' for both military and medicinal purposes has been examined. In the different fish curing yards of the Madras Fisheries Department, an oil of very high potency is extracted from the livers of sharks and saw-fishes. To develop this a proper organisation is necessary to work along the entire coastline of India.

Manuring of Paddy

Varieties of rice evolved at the Council's research stations have been multiplied and distributed to cultivators. Further experiments to find out the economics of manuring of paddy with oil cakes on the basis of their nitrogen content have been recommended.

Cheap synthetic manure from town refuse and other waste materials prepared in Mysore has been found to be effective in quality and to possess high manurial value for rice, millets, tomatoes and other crops.

Registration of Cattle

The Council initiated a scheme for Central Herd Books for the registration of Sahiwal, Sindhi and Haryana cattle and Murrah buffaloes. It has been found that 'berseem' makes a good substitute for concentrates up to three-fourths of the usual ration of dairy cattle.

Owing to increasing menace of adulteration of ghee, the Council sanctioned research on the detection of the adulterants at the Imperial Dairy Institute, Bangalore.

On the way to Delhi, 26-3-42

QUESTION BOX

(By M. K. Gandhi)

Weakening Non-violence ?

Q. In the instructions issued by the Working Committee of the Congress in the matter of organising Congress volunteers it has been clearly stated that the organisation should be based on "strictly non-violent basis". In the pledge forms prepared in this behalf by some Congress committees, however, it is stated that volunteers when on duty only should observe non-violence. The Karnatak P. C. C. has prepared the volunteers' pledge in this form. The Chief Organiser of volunteers in the Province appointed by the K. P. C. C. declared in a public meeting held for the purpose of enrolling volunteers that a Congress volunteer even on duty might exercise the right of private defence by resorting to violence in an emergency, and further that such an action on his part did not contravene the instructions of the Working Committee. All this is creating confusion. If the instructions of the Working Committee are not to be strictly carried out, it would be better that the condition of non-violence were dropped altogether rather than were allowed to be diluted to suit individual ideas. What is your opinion in the matter?

A. My answers must not be taken as authentic in questions the answers to which require the *imprimatur* of the Congress as this one does. My personal opinion is decisive. Violence in self-defence has no place in any corps organised by or in the name of the Congress. There can be no laxity in the enforcement of this rule without risking a breakdown of the whole non-violent structure in the Congress. Use of violence in private self-defence is said to be permitted by the Congress because the Congress does not and cannot regulate the personal and private life of individual Congressmen. The individual in his private life is unfettered by the rules of the Congress. He is dominated by his own ethical code, if any.

Full Faith in Non-violence

Q. There are some Congressmen, though their number is very small, who have full faith in non-violence and who desire to organise on that basis. Should not Congress committees organise such men? Or should not Congress committees allow such men to form their corps under the auspices of the Congress?

A. Congress committees cannot organise sections. The Congress can have only one policy. Today it is pure non-violence so far as internal affairs are concerned. Therefore I see no reason for separate peace committees. Purists, if they are humble and not self-opinionated, will act as a leaven in bodies which may contain men and women even of doubtful faith, as there must be in democratic organisations.

Bewildering Conflict

Q. There is a bewildering conflict of opinion among Congress leaders. Sardar speaks with one

voice, Rajaji with another, Maulana with a third, and Jawaharlalji with a fourth — not to speak of the lesser lights. Whom is one to follow, who is to be regarded as the sole authority to interpret the Congress policy and resolutions?

A. Legally and constitutionally the President is the sole authority. If there is a conflict of opinion between the majority of the Working Committee and the President, as was once the case in the early stages, the majority view would supersede the President's. But on critical occasions legal opinion is not of much value. People have their favourite heroes, and they will follow the heroes even blindly. My advice, therefore, is that in the ticklish question of ahimsa each one should be his own authority not on the law but on interpretation. If all the four distinguished leaders whom you have mentioned were to sit together, they would probably give the same interpretation, but in the course of their speeches each would put his special emphasis on one aspect or another of the same matter.

On the way to Delhi, 26-3-1942

Spinning in Midnapore

Sutabata Thana has, according to a letter from Dr. P. C. Ghosh, a population of 85,000 and can boast of 494 self-spinners today as against 60 charkhas plying there in 1940. The improvement is due in large measure to the efforts of satyagrahis who were not arrested. 371 spinners held a demonstration there last February, some of whom had walked 10 or 12 miles. Out of these 152 were habitual wearers of khadi, and in six months all should have sufficient cloth for themselves from their own yarn. 500 more charkhas and 1,000 dhanush taklis are to be introduced this year. One of the workers is being trained at the Khadi Vidyalaya, Sevagram. Spinners used to be supplied with slivers or carded cotton, but now people are being trained to card for themselves. Spinners have begun to stock their own cotton, and all the yarn is woven into cloth in the Thana.

Sevagram, 21-3-42

A. K.

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