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(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

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TWO ANNAS

BRIBERY

I read the other day the report of a speech by Shri Rajagopalachari in which he almost seemed to justify Government servants for receiving bribes and illegal gratifications. He appeared to defend them by saying that they were more to be pitied than blamed for their weakness. It was the wicked public who held temptation before them in order to get their ends served, and like all fallible beings, Government servants succumbed to it. After all, they too had to carry on their struggle for existence and make both ends meet in a hard world.

While every one will sympathize with the lower-rank public servants, who do not receive adequate salaries, for their economic difficulties, still their acceptance of illegal gratifications and bribes can never be justified by any one, far less by the Government itself. It is for the Government to see how they can be sufficiently remunerated. If they examine the matters squarely, they would see that the ratio between the salaries of their lowest- and highest-paid servants of several departments is as much as 1:75 to 90. This disproportion should be considerably modified. There is no justification for it. Secondly, after taking all matters into consideration, even the lowest-paid Government servant is better paid than a man doing similar type of work in private life. Most of them come from the class of peasants, menial servants and petty clerks. They prefer Government service, because it gives them better returns, the service is more secure, and they get some prestige in society. Government pays them on a better scale ostensibly for securing the most efficient men from amongst the people. That this end is not always achieved because of the nepotism or corruption of those authorized to employ them is a different matter. But that means that even inefficiency in Government service is better remunerated than efficiency in private employments. Hence, too, there is no justification for corruption.

Then, why should the public corrupt Government servants? Surely a bribe is not paid as charity as one pays *dakshina* to a Brahman or alms to a beggar, to achieve merit in the next world! And what is the justification for the corruption of those, whose salaries are anything between Rs 300 and Rs 2,500 per month, besides allowances on a munificent scale?

This is not to justify those among the public who bribe officers to get unjustifiable things done by them. Indeed, there is a class of unscrupulous people who hold out such big temptations that sometimes even an Honourable Minister is unable to resist them. But that is no defence for the receiver of the bribe.

Wardha, 13-8-'51

K. G. MASHRUWALA

A CRITIQUE OF THE FIVE YEAR PLAN

(By Principal S. N. Agarwal)

The Planning Commission has recently published the Draft Outline of the First Five Year Plan involving a total outlay of Rs. 1,793 crores on various sectors of national development. The plan is evidently a valuable document containing a fund of data and statistics regarding the different phases of reconstruction in India. It is the first attempt of its kind in this country and cannot be dealt with lightly in a spirit of indifference. The Draft Outline contains several hopeful and sound features of economic development and social evolution. Its emphasis on agriculture, rural uplift, small-scale and cottage industries, basic education, decentralization of political, economic and administrative power is indeed, to be welcomed. But there are several other features of the Plan which cannot be called satisfactory from the standpoint of India's national reconstruction.

The basic defect of the Five Year Plan is its failure to present a clean-cut picture of future economic development. This is partly understandable because the plan has been drawn by a Commission more or less committed to develop the economic policy of the present Government of India. But I have always strongly maintained that a plan must always be such as cannot be ignored by any Government that might come into existence; and in order to make the people enthusiastically co-operate with it, it should be one, which after being once set in motion, would be worked out by the people themselves as much as possible. We, therefore, expected that the Commission would try to present a bold and definite plan for Free India, a plan that would be in conformity with India's indigenous culture and traditions and, thus, catch the imagination of the people. The present Plan, I regret to say, is not capable of making the masses feel the glow of freedom and Swaraj. It is supposed to

believe in 'mixed economy'. Mixed economy is bound to be a hotch-potch of several principles of economic reconstruction, often contradictory and, therefore, making for confusion. In the modern world there are two main economic ideologies, namely, Capitalism and Communism. These two ideologies are at war with each other and threaten the very existence of humanity. In India, Gandhiji has shown a third ideology which beautifully combines the good points of the other two. It is now recognized by eminent thinkers that the only alternative to Communism can be Gandhism. The Gandhian way of life is not a "fad" but a sound and scientific pattern of socio-economic re-orientation. If the Plan had been able to envisage such a new order in our country it might have been possible to present an attractive but practical picture not only for India but for the whole world.

The other chief drawback of the Plan is its rejection of the aim of "full employment" which is the ideal of all modern economic planning. The Constitution of India also guarantees to every citizen the "right to work" and "the right to an adequate means of livelihood". I, therefore, honestly feel that the Planning Commission in laying emphasis merely on greater production rather than on full employment has gone against the fundamental directive of the Indian Constitution. In fact, any plan which does not try to provide employment for all citizens as the topmost priority cannot be called a plan at all. In order to achieve the objective of full employment in India, it is essential to organize decentralized cottage industries on the widest possible scale and as the very basis of economic planning. With the exception of the basic industries which ought to be owned and managed by the State, all the consumer-goods industries including cloth, oil, sugar, paper, rice and match have to be organized on a small scale in the rural areas so that the nation may have "fields, factories and workshops" for solving the problem of unemployment, and what is even more, under-employment. Obviously, the Plan has not been able to face this basic fact with courage and boldness.

As regards the details of expenditure in the different sectors of national economy, the Plan has attached too much importance to "grandiose" schemes of multi-purpose river projects and development of transport and communications. Out of the total outlay of 1,493 crores of rupees in the first part of the Five Year Plan, the power and irrigation projects will consume Rs 450.26 crores. While the importance of irrigation facilities and cheap power supply cannot be under-rated in any plan of economic development, the fact remains that the nation cannot afford to rely on long-term and centralized projects which might ultimately prove to be "white elephants" for the poor cultivator and artisan in India. A decentralized plan of irrigation with a countrywide network of village

wells, tube-wells, small canals, tanks, reservoirs and similar other devices would have been more practical and useful. Improvement of railways, roads, shipping, and civil aviation, according to the Plan, will involve an expenditure of Rs 388.20 crores. This huge amount could also be reduced by about Rs 100 crores which could, instead, be more profitably spent for providing better social services.

Rs 100.99 crores have been earmarked for the development of large-scale, small-scale and cottage industries. Out of this amount, only Rs 16 crores are to be utilized for small-scale and cottage industries. Moreover, the Commission maintains that "programmes for cottage and small-scale industries cannot be viewed in isolation from programmes relating to the corresponding large-scale industries. The Plan, therefore, recommends 'common production programmes'." This clearly shows that the planners do not visualize a decentralized type of economy for its own sake; they favour cottage industries only for the sake of certain immediate advantages and expediences, particularly relating to capital and investment.

Social services, including education, health, housing and social welfare, have been allotted Rs 254.08 crores in the first part of the Plan. This is, surely, inadequate in a country which is proverbially poor and which desires to grow into a Welfare State. The chapter on education is, unfortunately, the least satisfactory. No lasting socio-economic reconstruction is possible without a radical change in the educational system. It is, therefore, surprising that the Planning Commission should have dismissed the vital problem of education in such general terms. It is necessary that the country should be given a comprehensive picture of the future educational structure in the Five Year Plan.

The sources of finance envisaged in the Plan are by no means very certain. The Plan also admits that the items of public loans, small savings and additional revenue due to fresh taxation are "a matter of speculation". Under the prevailing money-market conditions it is very doubtful whether the expectations of the Commission are reasonable. Even if these expectations are realized, there will still be a gap of Rs 375 crores over five years. The Commission has indicated the possibility of "deficit financing" to the extent of Rs 290 crores. This would "impose a definite strain on the economy" of India by setting into motion the inflationary tendencies. The Plan further mentions that "if foreign aid is available for financing development expenditure, the sterling balances can be used for importing consumption goods and thus bringing down domestic prices." The use of sterling balances in the manner mentioned above appears to be highly unsatisfactory.

The Plan does not present the problem of controls in a convincing manner. Curiously enough, the Commission thinks that if—and this

is a big 'if'—the controls are efficiently worked, they can "raise the moral standards of the community". Can we expect any such miracle from the existing administrative machinery? In regard to the Food Policy, the Commission urges that during the next few years annual imports of food-grains to the tune of 3 million tons should be planned for, and adds that in exceptional years imports may have to be larger. So, this is the brilliant picture of the much-boasted national self-sufficiency programme!

There are several other aspects of the Plan which could be discussed here in detail. But consideration of space in these columns prevents me from dealing with them. There is, however, one basic question that must be answered. What is the future of the Plan? The Commission have so far been able to publish one Draft Outline which is to be finalized only after "further consultations" with the Central Ministries, State Governments and its own Advisory Board and Panels, and Members of Parliament. This procedure will easily take several months. By that time, the country will be in the grip of election fever. After the general elections the altered strength of different political parties at the Centre and in the States might necessitate a change in the personnel of the Commission. This would mean a further revision of the Plan and a fresh chain of consultations. So, unfortunately, the Plan bids fair to remain only a paper Plan for endless discussions. It would have made a world of difference if the Plan, after receiving final touches, had been launched in all seriousness on the 15th August, the fourth Anniversary of India's Independence.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE SITUATION

A President of a District Congress Committee in Andhra seems to be very much worried over the illicit distillation of liquor in his district and elsewhere and after describing it in a long statement he goes to the length of saying that "simply because it is a fad of Mahatma we should not be blind to the practicability of the experiment and overlook the realities. Even Mahatmaji used to change his ideas and opinions after realizing from practical experiments." It would have been better if this Congressman had not dragged in his unholy argument the holy name of the Mahatma. If this is the stuff and calibre of which we Congressmen are made, is it any wonder that prohibition does not progress further? The District Congress Chief seems to be worried out of a sane outlook on the question at seeing people drink illegally. He gives a long description of how law-breakers have laid out a chain in the area to ply their nefarious trade. I may not give it here, as it can be easily imagined by the reader. I only ask, what does it prove? Does it prove that prohibition should go? Does the District Congress President, who, as he says, believes in art. 47 of the Constitution of India, and is loyally bound to implement it as an

Indian, and particularly so as a Congressman,—does he wish to suggest that prohibition is wrong policy? The hyper-sensitive description of law-breaking that he gives only proves a serious case for vigilance and action both on the part of the police and of the people. It shows that public opinion must not be unnerved by this upsurge of immoral illegality but must remain true and hold steadfast to prohibition. That will create a moral strength which is bound to deter the evil-doer. Does the District Congress Chief realize this duty of his? Let us rather face this great reality of the situation and mind our business and not succumb to a situation that challenges us to be true to ourselves. Like many others, he also falls into the fallacy of the learned that we must first educate and work through moral persuasion. The reader is requested to see in this connection Gandhiji's speech under the caption, "Legislation before Education" reprinted in the *Harijan* of July 7, 1951.

28-6-'51

M. P. DESAI

PS. Shri G. N. Nandurkar has, on going through the statement of the President of the District Congress Committee above referred to, written a note on it which is given below.

Note by G. N. Nandurkar

"This is a statement by no less a person than the head of the District Congress Committee. The whole issue has been a huge misunderstanding on his part. On the one hand, he concurs in sec. 47 of the Indian Constitution which prohibits the use of intoxicating drinks and drugs and on the other, he dubs prohibition as Gandhiji's fad.

"The President was a staunch supporter of prohibition in the pre-Independence period. Even today he is not an anti-prohibitionist as such. But he holds that the proper foundation for the effective implementation of this reform has not yet been laid, and without which the policy is doomed to failure. In support of his argument he cites the instance of Adoni Taluq where illicit distillation has increased on an unprecedented scale and where corrupt officials and ineffective Congressmen have miserably failed to check it.

"The above statement makes two things plain: (1) that the administrative machinery has become corrupt beyond correction; and (2) barring a few, individual Congressmen have become incapacitated to work or have lost moral influence over the masses.

"Taking these two conditions as static, every social reform is bound to meet the same fate, not to talk of prohibition alone. The real remedy lies not in abandoning the policy but in purifying the administration and raising the moral stature of Congressmen and other social workers so as to propagate prohibition effectively. The President has side-tracked this fundamental issue and has found fault with the policy itself."

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THE LAND PROBLEM OF HYDERABAD

As seen in the Dange-Vinoba correspondence published two weeks ago, the extreme inequality in the distribution of land is one of the tough problems of India. Though the correspondence is confined to conditions in Telangana, it is not merely a local problem. It exists throughout India—maybe, it is a world problem also. That the vast Good Earth should be possessed by a handful of individuals or nations with scanty populations while crores of men have not an inch of land is a state of affairs which must excite the sympathy of every champion of the poor. Though the violent method of getting this gross injustice rectified is objectionable and fruitless and will ultimately defeat the cause of the poor, still one has to realize that the injustice is real and has to be removed.

Two steps have been taken in this direction: abolition of the Zamindari system and laying down the limits of a maximum holding. But in this connection, the principle of compensation laid down in the Constitution has set a great limit to the institution of land reforms. Really, ownership over land need not be distinguished from ownership over other forms of capital. And if other forms of capital and income are liable to reduction by death duties and graded heavy income-tax, there is no reason why ownership over land should not be so curtailed. There is justification in the Socialist criticism that "this has made the abolition of Zamindari almost meaningless in practice. Financially the proposition is ruinous. Even in equity the Zamindars have no right to huge unearned incomes the title to which is dubious." Their proposal, therefore, "to abolish Zamindari without compensation, but providing for rehabilitation grant to the petty Zamindars" (*Platform of the Socialist Party*) cannot be rejected as a violent measure.

But even the abolition of Zamindari and fixing limits of maximum holdings do not solve the entire problem. They grant relief only to those cultivators who until recently cultivated land in a capacity less than full ownership. They give no relief to that great number of men, who aspire to rise from the condition of landless labourers to that of holders of land. This great body can get it only if Government grant them new land or acquire part of the privately owned lands for distribution among them. In the latter case, the principle of compensation creates an impediment difficult to surmount. Hence has arisen the Communist principle of forcible expropriation preceded by a violent revolution. Vinoba's mission has shown a third alternative.

He appealed to the noble urge in man to donate land, and the appeal succeeded sufficiently enough to show that even in this materialistic age man is not a lost soul. He can be made generous. Compensation and forcible expropriation are not the only ways. In this connection, the following views put forth by Shri Vinoba in the course of a letter to a friend in Hyderabad will be read with interest:

"I have studied the problem from the various points of view; that of the Government, the police, the land-lord, the tenants, the people in general, and Congressmen. I had the opportunity to observe minutely the actions and reactions of all. I tried to come into contact with all of them as one who wanted to serve and desired the good of all in a mutually non-conflicting manner.

"I think the Communist problem concerns not only Hyderabad or India, but the whole world. If it were the problem of Hyderabad alone, it would have been just a specific local problem requiring concrete and practical remedies. But as it is a world-wide problem, it is, in my opinion, an ideological one. My observation and study have confirmed my views.

"It will be a long list if we think about all the steps that must needs be taken in order to solve the problem. I shall mention here only one which to my mind is the most important and fundamental one.

"In Telangana, the problem of land is, for the poor, a question of survival. I used to collect the statistics of every village. There is hardly one acre of land per head and eighty per cent of it belongs to a handful of people, all the rest of them being landless. There is no village industry worth mentioning, which could provide a supplementary income to the many. The daily programme in which almost all the people are engaged in order to forget their misery is to get drunk with *shindi* and *toddy*. But even then there is no relief; and it is this very situation, which is exploited by irresponsible elements.

"It was hence, that the idea of *Bhu-dana-yajna*, the Land-Gift-Mission, came into my mind in order to awaken the noble sentiments of man. The moral urge of the people did awake.

"One of the ideas underlying the inauguration of this *Bhu-dana-yajna*, was that it would facilitate the enactment of a legislation. I desire that the legislation should be as liberal as possible, and not as usually happens, a narrow and miserly one. I know that the Hyderabad Government have enacted a law for the protection of tenants and that is good so far it goes. But along with it another law limiting the maximum holding by an individual is necessary. Unnecessary time should not be wasted in debating the issue. If we want to solve the problem, let us realize its gravity and urgency.

"To my mind, every son of the soil, i.e. every man must have a right and a claim on Mother Earth, in the same way as he has over air and water. But in view of the present difficult situation, I have reconciled myself to allowing a maximum of one hundred acres of dry or twenty acres of wet land to a single land-holder in a district like Warangal. I shall not insist on these figures, which may be altered on either side in consultation with responsible and trustworthy persons.

"But I understand that the maximum of two hundred and fifty acres of dry and fifty of wet land are under contemplation. I must confess that these limits seem preposterous. Even a limit of two hundred and fifty of dry or fifty of wet land, I regard to be too much. I wish the Government to arrive at a solution that may be reasonable and acceptable to all.

"*Bhumi-dana-yajna* should be continued even after the legislation. There cannot be any other

peaceful and revolutionary method of providing land to the poor directly and without hindrance... It will be necessary to grant *takavi* and other facilities for all such lands as have been distributed till now, and may be distributed hereafter."

This method needs to be explored further, so that it might be possible for Government to create an atmosphere for passing a law requiring each owner to part with a part of his land for distribution among the landless, *without compensation*. It would be a good instance of law following public opinion.

K. G. MASHRUWALA

SHRI VINOBA AT SHIVARAMPALLI

XII

April 11 & 12, '51: With the Socialists.

A small group of young Socialists saw Vinobaji twice at Shivarampalli during the Conference days. One of the questions which they asked related to the Indian Government's foreign and armament policies. "If the Government claimed to follow the lead of Mahatma Gandhi," they said, "how is it that it maintains an army? Why does it not disband it?"

Vinoba: You must be aware that the Indian army was deputed to defend Kashmir while Gandhiji was still alive, and that he did not object to it. We must not forget that the Indian Government represent the Indian people and can act only to the extent of the strength of the people. It is for reformers to lead the people to the higher ideals. They must tell and teach the people to keep their hearts pure and full of goodwill, to give up fear, and to create a situation favourable for the disbandment of the army.

The creation of a favourable situation means educating public opinion. This led to a discussion on the forthcoming elections. One of them asked:

"What will be your test for voting? Will you prefer to vote for a particular party?"

Vinoba: I have often spoken about it. You should first know every candidate fully. If the candidate is good and accepts your manifesto, you can vote for him provided those people around him, who know him, also trust him. You should not vote for a man who is not trusted by those who know him even if he belongs to any particular ideology. Blind voting cannot and must not go on any more. The fact is that Congressmen do not want to educate the masses about their programme. They do not want to take the trouble of explaining their ideology to the masses. They want to fight the elections on the past reputation of the Congress. This is not proper.

This was followed by a discussion on village service. During his tour from Wardha to Hyderabad Vinobaji had closely studied the conditions of the Hyderabad villages. The Socialist friends wanted to know if Vinobaji could suggest any particular programme in view of the local conditions. They asked: What, according to you, would be the best programme for the service of the villagers here?

Vinoba: During my talk yesterday I have pointed out that the awakening which was so evident in Karnatak and Maharashtra was not to be seen in Telangana. In my tour through the villages I diagnosed that the reason for this was *shindi*. It is solely responsible for the backwardness of these people. Not that I was unacquainted with the evils of this drink. But I had no idea that the evil could have gone so deep as that. This is, therefore, in my opinion the most important task here. Workers should engage themselves in this work which affords a common programme for all parties. But now-a-days such programmes do not attract workers. They want something *revolutionary*, and this seems to them to be merely a programme of social *reform*. They want a programme which will create not improvement, but discontent.

Q: But in Hyderabad the problem of Zamindari is more important than that of *shindi*. Is not Zamindari solely responsible for the spread of Communism?

Vinoba: Communism has spread only because the Communists have worked among these people while others have not.

Q: But what constructive work have the Communists done?

Vinoba: Constructive work has no place in their ideology. They want to exploit the discontent of the people and are dissatisfied if the intensity of that discontent diminishes. They would therefore like to fan the fire of discontent.

Then returning to the original question about the constructive programme for Telangana, Vinobaji said, "At every place during my tour I enquired if there was any industry going on in the village and I found that there was none except agriculture. You should therefore start threefold work simultaneously: prohibition, village industries and relief from distress, i.e. removal of the day-to-day difficulties of the people."

The friends had a complaint against the Conference also. They said that the majority of delegates seemed to be Congressmen.

"But we have not invited them as such," replied Vinobaji. "You too are welcome. Those who come here do so in their capacity as the *sevaks* of the Sarvodaya Samaj. It is not confined to Congressmen or Socialists, or any other political group."

Q: But why don't these people seek the co-operation of others?

Vinoba: You should take a lesson from Gandhiji in this respect. Constructive workers had to resign their posts in constructive organizations, when they wanted to join any Satyagraha movement. So, too, even now constructive workers wanting to join politics have to leave their positions in the constructive organizations. The reason for this is that not only we ourselves but even others should not entertain any doubt about our intentions. They should be satisfied that our work is not of a doubtful and mixed character. There are many today who would exploit their public service. This should not be done. Gandhiji never did so. He established a prestige for his pledges. Let us also do likewise. Today service has power as its goal but Gandhiji founded and conducted many an institution for the purpose of service alone and got many Congressmen associated with the work.

The Socialist friends then put their basic question, "What is the programme of the Sarvodaya Samaj to stop exploitation?"

"Have you read the objects and rules of the Sarvodaya Samaj?" was the counter-question.

"No."

Vinoba: "Then you should read them first. Ours is a programme complete in itself. Moreover the Sarvodaya Samaj has been holding its deliberations for the last four days. Many doubts are daily clarified there. The thing is that you do not care to read our literature. What is the meaning of your question without reading our literature?" Vinobaji paused here for a moment, and then narrating his experience of the Socialists, he said, "I find that even in *your* organization the youth is not free. Freedom is necessary in order to acquire knowledge. But once you are wedded to a party, there is the beginning of mental slavery. The party-men fill the brains of the youth with their ideas only. They want to set all in one and the same mould.

The talk was all informal and homely; the friends felt that they were talking to one of their own men. They were all young men, and sincere young men have always a claim on Vinobaji. And he always feels at home with them, and identifies himself with them.

The friends again asked without any hesitation, "We are afraid that in the Sarvodaya Samaj the majority is of Congressmen."

"What harm is there? The Sarvodaya Samaj does not take any decisions by majority."

Then there was some discussion about the method of work of the Sarvodaya Samaj and it was but natural that truth and non-violence came in to be discussed. Thereupon Vinobaji said, "Do you accept truth and non-violence as basic principles? That is the fundamental question. But you are not prepared to accept truth and non-violence as basic principles. If these two are accepted, our doors are open even for the Hindu Sabha. But they do not come to us because they do not believe in non-violence."

"We differ only about non-violence. There is no difference of opinion so far truth is concerned."

"That is not correct. Suppose you are preparing for war. Will you put all your schemes before the enemy? On the contrary, you will pretend that you have no intention to go to war. Where is the truth then? How can you then claim that there is no difference on the acceptance of truth, but only on that of non-violence. The fact is that just as to a devotee, God alone is the last sheet anchor, so to you, violence, and not non-violence, is the ultimate shelter."

There was no question of denying this. Shri Jayprakash Narain clarifying the policy of the Socialists said at Madras: "The policy statement has categorically stated that *under present conditions* in India democratic methods are the only methods to follow. It states that *if conditions change our methods also will change.*" (Italics ours) Obviously democratic methods for the Socialists are conditional. But to those who have an absolute faith in truth and non-violence there is no question of conditional acceptance. I am not sure if Vinobaji hinted at this statement of Shri Jayprakash Narain while making his remark. The talk had given sufficient food to the young friends to ponder over, and they left intending to join us again somewhere during the Telangana tour. But before leaving they put one more question regarding maintenance of the sanctity of the vote in the next elections.

Vinobaji: People should receive the necessary training regarding elections. Every party should feel equally responsible for maintaining the purity of the elections. 'Purity shall be maintained no matter if we lose,' should be the idea while contesting the elections. The British people have set a great example in the matter. One instance is sufficient. They did not think it proper to re-elect Churchill in their post-war period administration, although he was their war-hero, who had led them to victory in the great war. There is no doubt that they cannot forget Churchill's service so far as the war was concerned; but when they saw that Churchill was not useful for the peace time problems, they elected Alee.

(Translated from Hindi)

D. M.

More Gifts of Land

Since the completion of Vinoba's Telangana tour the Land-Gifts-Mission Committee has received over 1,100 acres of more land, the largest single gifts being of 500 and 400 acres.

D. M.

Training in Leprosy Work

The Secretary, Maharogi Seva Mandal, Dattapur (P. O. Nalwadi, Wardha) sends the following addition to his notice, "Training in Leprosy Work", published in *Harijan*, 18-8-'51:

The training will commence from the 2nd October 1951, the Gandhi Jayanti Day. The candidates should send their applications for training so as to reach the Secretary before the 15th September 1951. Applications of candidates who have passed Inter Arts will also be considered. (The previous notice mentioned only Inter Science).

PANNAI ASHRAM NOTES

[There has been a constant demand for information regarding the work that has been started at Pannai Ashram, Seldoh, Sindi P. O. (G. I. P. Ry). It is but natural that people should be curious about this new venture. It is not possible to give a report of work done before the work has actually started. However, what can be done is to give a running account of the activities that are being carried on dally. From such a report readers will be able to gauge the purpose of the Ashram. If there be any good in it other constructive workers may draw their lessons from it. If there be mistakes we shall welcome corrections and suggestions. To this end, we have found a chronicler who will record and report our activities. These will appear in these columns from time to time as space permits. —J. C. K.]

I

It will be remembered that the Pannai Ashram was inaugurated by Acharya J. B. Kripalani on the 18th of May. The function of this Ashram is to help bring about an all-round enrichment of rural life in general and to carry on agrarian research, the aim being the building up of at least one unitary basis of a non-violent democracy.

The scheme starts with the proposition that the brunt of the exploitation whether it be by industrialists or through channels of commerce and trade falls back on and is borne by the landless labourers ultimately. Before we get down to the landless labourers, there is the string of agrarian workers including land-holders, farmers and tenants, who also are victims of the urban exploitation while they in their turn exploit those below them in the hierarchy of the rural economy. The special problem that is to be investigated is to see how the exploitation of villages can be stopped.

The Scheme of Work

The method that is proposed is to carry on balanced cultivation and find out how much acreage would be needed to support the workers on a well-balanced diet. At the same time, it is suggested that clothing and a certain amount of purchasing power should also come out of the agricultural occupation. To this end some constructive workers have joined together under Shri Kumarappa's lead and guidance to work out this thesis. Every member of the Ashram will be expected to give his whole energy, time and thought to this programme. Nobody will receive a money salary or remuneration in the ordinarily accepted sense. Any excess land over that required to supply our immediate needs will be used to cultivate certain raw materials, like oil-seeds or cotton, for other sister institutions from which we may take articles that we do not produce ourselves.

Our Site

We have not yet been able to secure all the land that we wanted for our purpose as the agricultural season had well advanced by the time our scheme matured. However, we were able to secure certain poor plots on which the Ashram might be located. We may have to secure more and better lands as soon as we are able to do so. Our choice of land has been considerably limited as Kumarappaji insists that we should not dislodge local farmers from their

lands. He prefers to secure lands of either absentee landlords or comparatively big Zamindars who cultivate with hired labour. Naturally, therefore, it is going to take time before we can get all the land we need. Shri S. J. Pannase, who was in charge of the agricultural work at Maganwadi, has taken up the agricultural part of the Ashram programme. At the moment our 16 acres of building land is being cultivated with different crops for whatever it can produce. We have sown *jaivar*, cotton, rice, tomatoes and other vegetables.

The Well

Our first activity was to sink a well and while doing so we had to bale out the water and that water was utilized to raise our vegetables. We secured a water diviner who located in the central part of our plot water within 15 feet and this was in the middle of May when most wells go dry. We set to work on it and we found excellent water within 12 to 13 feet. We have dug another 10 feet and we are fortunate in having such good water that some of the villagers are coming there for their drinking-water requirements. Though the well has been dug, the masonry work has not yet been started.

On the 4th of July, this well was inaugurated so that it may be brought under use. The function was fixed for 10 a.m. when people from about five or six villages were expected to attend. Kumarappaji had arrived from Wardha a little earlier and those villagers who had come before time were talking to him. One of them offered to put up a little shed of zinc sheets for Kumarappaji's camp. At present the Ashram dwellers have been accommodated in various verandahs in Seldoh village. Kumarappaji himself has been housed by Janba, a Gond farmer, in the Gondvadi which is next to the Harijan *basti*.

Reservoir Economy

Kumarappaji, while decling the zinc camp, explained to them why we should not use the products of large-scale industries freely for our prime necessities. This led to a good deal of searching questions and illuminating answers. It was explained to them that zinc is a mineral product and therefore it is limited in quantity. And the use of such materials whose supply is not abundant leads to violence. And in so far as we use them we become parties to world wars also.

He also explained that these articles made by mills are substitutes for tiles and bricks which are village products. Utilization of these mill products is equivalent to cutting the branch on which we are standing. When we come to a village for its reconstruction we should not do anything which is part of its destruction. Our villages are losing their industries one by one because of the patronage of the village people being transferred to mill products. Similarly, he drew attention to factory-made shoes displacing village-made *chappals*. All these were ruining

our villages. The wealth is going to cities while the villages have to send a good deal of wealth they themselves produce in return for these ruinous articles. The villager, who offered to build this zinc camp, immediately withdrew that offer and promised to put up a wood and mud hut and they were all appreciative of the explanation given. This led on to a keen discussion on village industries and the economy that should be our aim.

A simple ceremony of breaking a coconut and distribution of palm-*gur papdis* followed. The well water was freely distributed for drinking as it was a hot forenoon.

R. R.

DAMODAR VALLEY CORPORATION

(By S. Datta, Chief Information Officer, DVC, Calcutta)

[The following statement ought to have been published long ago. I regret, on account of various causes, it remained on my pending file awaiting its turn. The statement is in answer to the criticisms of the DVC scheme by Principal S. N. Agarwal published in *Harijan* of March 3, 1951. His rejoinder to the statement is also published at the end. — K. G. M.]

The Committee set up to enquire into the calamitous floods of the Damodar in 1943 recommended the building of four storage dams which would provide flood control for the Lower Valley and could also be used to produce hydro-electric power and irrigation. Accordingly, the Government of India borrowed the services of one of the foremost TVA planning engineers, and after the most careful investigations, he concluded that the cheapest and the most effective scheme for achieving the three main objects was an amalgam of eight dams with associated hydro-electric installations, a large steam-power station to even out the seasonal fluctuations of water power, a skeleton transmission grid, and an irrigation barrage and canals capable of perennially irrigating 7,60,000 acres inclusive of 1,85,000 acres already under *kharif* irrigation from the Anderson Weir.

This multi-purpose project, estimated to cost Rs 55 crores on the basis of 1945 prices, was examined in detail by a Board of Consultants composed of two top-most U. S. engineers, the present Chairman of Central Waterpower, Irrigation and Navigation Commission and one of the best-known South Indian engineers, and they were satisfied about the soundness and economic justification of the scheme. Unfortunately the political and other changes which were occurring then made immediate implementation of the project impossible, and by July 1948 when the Damodar Valley Corporation was set up it was no longer practicable to proceed with the entire scheme all at once. Consequently it was split into two parts, and further sureys completed in the meantime showed that proportionately better results would be obtained by extending the scope of the first phase which comprised four dams with hydro-electric stations, the thermal power plant, the transmission system, the barrage and irrigation canals.

On the 1945 figures, but without taking account of the substantial extensions that have now been incorporated into it, the cost of the first phase works out to Rs 38.13 crores. But in the last six years prices both at home and abroad have risen sharply. The index number of wholesale prices in the U. K., U. S. A. and Canada have registered an increase of 50 to 70 per cent since the war ended. Elsewhere, for example in France and Italy, the rise has been steeper, while in India the wholesale price index has gone up by 70 per cent, i.e. from 245 to 418. Moreover, the cost of heavy construction has risen much higher than the general prices. The U. S. construction-cost index, which was 302 in January 1945, stood at 520.6 in August 1950, and there has been further increase since.

In India the rise during the same period has been of the order of 100 per cent, and the cost of West Bengal's Mayurakshi Project, which in October 1945 was estimated at Rs 7 crores, is now computed at Rs 15 crores.

It is perhaps a tribute to the care and judgment bestowed on the planning of the Damodar Valley Project that it should have suffered comparatively less from the general rise in prices, and if the revised cost estimates of the first phase now stand at Rs 76 crores approximately, only 50 per cent are attributable to world-wide inflation, while devaluation accounts for Rs 4 crores and extension of the benefits for Rs 15.3 crores. On this last score must be put down (1) a 50 per cent increase in the area to be perennially irrigated, (2) quadrupling of the high-voltage transmission system, and (3) providing for a 33.1/3 per cent augmentation of the ultimate installed capacity of the Bokaro Thermal Power Station. Two extra hydro-electric plants and a 90-mile long navigation-cum-irrigation canal connecting the lower Bengal coalfields with the Hooghly were contemplated in the total plan of development of the Damodar Valley; but their costs formed no part of the original estimates. All three items have now been brought within the scope of the first phase to develop more fully the wealth potential and revenue-earning capacity of this industrially important region.

The economics of a multi-purpose project must be considered integrally, and while no part of the Damodar Scheme is uneconomical, when its components are brought together in an organic whole the over-all financial picture improves beyond recognition. That does not mean that detailed estimates of the separate projects have not been prepared; nor was great pressure required to produce them. But in an unstable situation like the present, forecasts tend to become outdated sooner than they are made, and that is why some of the estimates the Corporation has supplied from time to time have needed revision. Had conditions favoured a freer flow of funds, especially of foreign exchange, the progress of the Damodar Scheme, as of other projects, would obviously have been faster. As it is, what is remarkable is that the Corporation should be so far advanced with two dams, the largest steam-power station in India, an extensive transmission grid and other activities like soil conservation and reclamation of waste land.

But critics of the Corporation have no patience for such fundamental considerations, and some of them do not seem to have even read the audit report on which their attack has been based. Consequently they appear to be unaware that the Auditor himself is far from certain that in cases of his difference with the Corporation the latter's contention is untenable. As for the specific charge that the Corporation has no schedule of rates, the allegation is baseless. The Corporation's area of operation covers an area of 8,000 sq. miles, and major constructions are proceeding at more than six sites. It is not possible to insist on the same rates everywhere in this vast area, and rates prevailing in particular localities are certainly maintained in local offices.

In any case, the concurrent hundred per cent audit to which the Corporation on its own initiative has submitted its affairs is proof of its anxiety to safeguard against unwise expenditure, and it would be blameworthy only if the job it is doing could be done more expeditiously and more cheaply by methods other than those it follows. The cost of Bokaro and the transmission system, which has so far been the major items in the Corporation's expenditure, remains lower than that of post-war installations of a similar nature, and this will enable the Corporation to sell its electricity in bulk substantially cheaper than in the U. K. or the U. S. A. The average price for industrial power in India is not less than what the DVC proposes to charge, and yet supplies elsewhere are mainly from pre-war plant. Meanwhile, the financial implications of the Damodar Scheme are by no means as black as they have

recently been painted. Had the plant and equipment which the Corporation has already acquired been ordered today, their costs would have been 30 to 40 per cent more, and similar capital appreciation has also taken place in constructions and installations hitherto completed.

Rejoinder by S. N. Agarwal

I have read with interest the clarification of the Chief Information Officer about the Damodar Valley Corporation. My previous article on "Guess-work Planning" was based on the information that was revealed by several Members of Parliament during the budget debate. Further discussions in the Parliament on the DVC towards the end of March also testify to the contention that all is not well with the Damodar Valley Project. While I am grateful to the Chief Information Officer for supplying us with valuable information on the subject, I still strongly feel that the working of the whole scheme, especially its financial aspects, needs a thorough and impartial inquiry by a few experienced Members of Parliament. The recent report of the Estimates Committee in regard to the working of the Central Tractor Organization is one additional proof of defective State enterprise. A poor country like India can ill afford to gamble with crores of her revenues. It is gratifying to read Shri Shripakash's assurance to the Members of the Parliament that the Government would be "very careful to keep a constant eye that the money may be spent properly." We have always to bear in mind the well-known principle that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.

3-4-51

A Thought-provoking Pamphlet

Pandit Ramanand Tiwari, evidently an ex-policeman of Bihar, has written a pamphlet in Hindi, titled सिपाहियोंकी कहानी। आंकड़ोंकी ज़बानी। (Story of the Policeman in Facts and Figures). It has been published by the Bihar Raja Police and Jailmen's Association, Nayatola, Patna 4, and priced one anna. Though it describes the conditions of Bihar only, it is true of the whole country, and I commend the pamphlet for the study of all Ministers of Law and Order in India, I. G. P's., members of the Planning Commission and politicians in general. It is a simple narrative, but reveals how the nature of our administrative set-up is such as should encourage policemen to be dishonest and corrupt and to exploit and rough-handle the people, and kill the natural urge in every human being to perform his duty and serve his people. It also shows that unless the administration is radically altered voluntarily, it must generate Communist or revolutionary movements, in which the lower ranks of the army and the police would also participate and help in overthrowing the established governments.

Wardha, 12-8-'51

K. G. M.

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