

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor : K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO ANNAS

ON BEHALF OF THE SERVICES

"I have read your appeal to the Members of the Public Services in the *Harijan* of the 21st August. I agree with everything you say and believe that the future of India depends upon them. The Moghul Empire collapsed because the services had become corrupt and the British Empire prospered while its Services were charged with some definite purpose, selfish though that purpose was.

"Today, I believe, we are bordering on collapse and the Public Services, more than anything else, can avoid the catastrophe which I see around the corner. It will not do, however, to blame the Services as you have done; because I think that *you* and our Ministers have let the country down in the matter of the Services. First, *you* kept, in the top positions, men who were corrupt, who had committed atrocities and who can command no respect anywhere, although their unscrupulousness might make them powerful. These men will never establish the team work necessary for national regeneration. As one having first hand experience of Government service in the capital itself, I know these people; and I know the attitude of the other public servants towards them. Please get rid of them, instead of merely saying that *you could* have done so. Secondly, *you* have kept the Services the close preserve of a few and the Service mentality is today stronger than feelings of patriotism. New blood is wanted in every rank of Service. This is not coming. You had a good chance with the Foreign Service which was recruited after Independence and owes allegiance to the greatest living diplomat of the world. The Service is already in ruins and the new recruits are fully taken up with rank, precedence, foreign travel and other exclusive privileges.

"Thirdly, our Ministers have failed to establish modern personnel administrative systems in the Secretariat. They are farther away from their own officers than are the Chief Secretaries; there never are departmental meetings where Ministers explain policy and enthuse the public servants; and there is no system of either recruitment or promotion by merit. There is, therefore, no co-ordination, no team work and no national enthusiasm. If I wanted to salute my Minister, I could wait around his car in the Secretariat, but knowing that he would not address me in an intimate Service conference.

"Fourthly, the Service gradations which now run into thousands are killing all initiative. Each officer is concerned primarily with his own dignity; and dignity, in the Services, means stiffness in personal behaviour and giving unexplained vague orders. The existence of too many gradations also makes for harmful rivalry and every success as well as failure creates further frustration in the officer concerned. You can make three or four broad categories based on rank and salary; but too many gradations are pulling the entire Service structure down.

"And, finally, is it fair to pay the I.C.S. about three times the salary which a non-I.C.S. man can obtain for the same work in the same office? Just

picture before yourself an I.C.S. and a non-I.C.S. man sitting on adjoining tables, in charge of similar offices. While the latter can barely afford an 8 h.p. and keep his couple of children in a good day school, the I.C.S. gentleman can have an American car and plan to send his children to Rugby. That cannot do much good to either of them.

"I shall not speak of interference from outside, of outside people giving us oral orders from our Ministers, of intrigues at high level to promote or demote officers without explanation and of evil influence exerted by the *Blitz* and other newspapers. We have no team spirit among ourselves and outside criticism only makes us worse.

"Much of this, I assure you, will be cured with some firm programme of Service reform in which Ministers take personal interest and which is personally guided by them. The Minister must himself gradually replace the old-time "bureaucrat"; and take personal responsibility for promoting a good man and demoting the slacker. At present our Ministers are leaving this task to those who, they know, are unfit to do it.

"And, you will believe me, there are public servants who are anxious to do a good job at personal sacrifice. Most of us are honest and we are all proud of our leaders. But we want a lead and to get out of the mess we find ourselves in."

This is, as is evident, from one who has seen the inside of the Imperial Secretariat. The state of affairs, I have reason to believe, is similar in Provincial Secretariats also. I wonder why the writer has italicized 'you' and whom he would identify me with. I do not know if he means the Congress High Command, and believes that I have a place in it. But I hope the Congress High Command will dismiss me and will not mind the writer's ignorance but accept the responsibility and charge upon itself.

A friend who had gone to New Delhi just about the time my article appeared happened to be in an office of the Secretariat, and heard some criticism on the article. He said that the submission of the Services was that the Ministers were as much responsible for the maintenance of red-tapism in administration as the system. The substance of their submission was:

"We are the same people, who worked from morning till late in the night during the war, and no red-tape delays stood in our way. Anything that was decided to be done could be got done directly in any part of India. But now we do not have sufficient work even from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Until papers come to us from various parts, we can do nothing. Except a few ones, who are certainly over-worked, even Ministers do not have sufficient work. If they want red-tape to be cut, they must apply their mind

to their departmental job and not to their political discussions. With all the faults of the Viceroy's Executive, the one merit about it was that the members themselves were hard-working people, and worked in team and could inspire team-work by their own example."

The great difference in salaries etc. between the I.C.S. and non-I.C.S. men holding the same office is certainly an anomaly. In the 1937 regime, some of the Provincial Governments reduced their scales of pay considerably so far as members of the provincial services were concerned. They could not touch the I.C.S. men. The result was that not only an I.C.S. District Magistrate and non-I.C.S. one had different standards of living, but even in the same district if a non-I.C.S. District Magistrate was associated with an I.C.S. or I.M.S. District Superintendent of Police or Civil Surgeon, the former though superior in office carried an inferiority complex which stood in the way of discharging his duties. At that time the Congress had no power at the centre and so there was no remedy. But such a thing should not continue now.

Wardha, 14-9-'49

K. G. MASHRUWALA

AN AMBIGUOUS MIDDLE

[The following article, though anonymously published, is from an eminent countryman of ours. Though in his own person he has risen to eminence, he can claim to belong to the middle class he speaks of. — K. G. M.]

The phrase "middle classes" is in all places a ticklish term but in India the confusion is further complicated by caste traditions. When any word is understood in more senses than one, and it happens to be a word that goes into propositions of importance, the ambiguity is not a curiosity but a thing pregnant with serious error. Middle classes were referred to in a recent speech of Shri G. D. Birla at the East India Association in London, which was followed up by an editorial in the *Times*. These are the people, the article said, "who in India as in other countries customarily provide the bulk of investments", but who are now hit hard.

Now this is easily understood in Great Britain owing to conditions and values therein prevailing. The middle classes there are people with middle incomes, who command leisure by reason of their earnings, not people forced to leisure or unemployment by reason simply of tradition or taboo. In India if one speaks of the lot of middle classes at a University meeting or writes about it in the *Hindu* or the *Hindustan Times* or even in the English-managed newspapers of Calcutta and Bombay, people at once think, not of small investors but of those families who for generations have been devoted to reading, writing and arithmetic, who have supplied government clerks, petty officials, teachers and others of this category and who are total strangers to share-markets and investments, big or small. The main concern of the "middle classes" as understood in Indian parlance has for some decades past been how to meet the requirements by way of food, clothes, house-rent and school-

fees of not only the members of one's own family but also those of the families of one's poor relations of whom the older members have not succeeded in securing a job as petty official, teacher, journalist or clerk. They have no interest in, nor can even understand, the jargon of the share-market or of banks. The one characteristic of the "middle classes" in India is that every one aspires to a job of the character described above and on failing to secure it, becomes along with his wife and children a socially recognized charge on a relative who has secured such a job. The "middle classes" in India are those whose family tradition taboos manual labour unless it also partakes of the character of a petty official such as an overseer or an inspector or a superintendent over mechanical workers.

The conditions described would show without further elaboration what little scope there is for these classes to save or invest and why they are mostly in debt. If we read in the *Hindu* or the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* or in the *Hindustan Times* that the middle classes are in a bad way, it is about these people and has no reference to the small investors referred to in Shri Birla's lecture. It concerns the lot of those families and groups who have hitherto led in culture, education and politics and the bulk of whom are now terribly down and out owing to the rise in the cost of living and the dominant claims of peasants and other manual labourers. They write, speak and agitate and feel frustrated that the lot of their class has not been bettered after Independence but has worsened. The divorce of culture from manual work is at once the distinguishing characteristic of this class as well as the root-cause of their trouble.

Caste rules command little pious respect now but it still holds an unrelaxed grip over the minds and habits of men and women. No solution can be found for the adversity of the Indian middle classes in politics or administration but only in a re-adjustment, if not abandonment, of traditional taboos and in the reform of education and educational methods. So great is the power of the traditional taboos that any suggestion of abandoning them is regarded as amounting to cruelty and consequently is bitterly resented. Be that as it may, one thing is clear, namely that these unfortunate people who are now hit hard according to all impartial observers, are not in any sense an investing class. The small investors who form the bulk of share-market customers about whose earnings and investing capacity Shri G. D. Birla was concerned in his East India Association speech are quite a different category. The smaller fry among the commercial people who have been hit by control regulations to some extent may be worse off now than they were before, but they are immeasurably better off than the "middle classes" whose lot is daily referred to in the Indian newspapers.

LEGISLATIVE ECONOMIES

Shri K. P. Verma's suggestions in his article published in this issue deserve to be seriously considered by the authorities, legislators as well as the public. Shri Verma is not a young politician-critic; nor is he a life-long 'constructive worker' of Gandhiji so deeply lost in it that he cannot see anything good outside the Gandhian gospel. Indeed, he met Gandhiji in person only once and that too on his day of silence. All his life, he has been a government servant — an income-tax or revenue officer or a magistrate — and a student of finance. His faith in the Gandhian programme is therefore no blind devotion to a Master.

His suggestion of withdrawal of currency notes of Re. 1 and Rs. 2 must not be lightly dismissed. Of course, this cannot be done without heavy economies in the public expenditure. He has suggested several posts and departments which can be abolished without any loss of efficiency. The argument often advanced that since Independence the amount of work has considerably increased necessitating opening of new departments with their staffs is not quite correct. For everything said and done, it cannot be said that government servants have more work to attend to than they had during the years of the last war. Shri Verma asks for reducing the personnel to the limit reached during the war period. At present it is said to have become four times that number and on scales of pay much higher. This is altogether unmain-
tainable.

Several new posts have been created from elected members. They are not needed for efficient administration; rather, some of them obstruct efficiency and honesty by their own influence and by the influence which can be exerted on them by friends and politicians. They include some ministerial posts also. These appointments are made more out of party considerations than for management of departments or ability of the appointees. It is most improper to throw their burden on the tax-payer.

The policy of providing salaries to legislators was adopted in the hope that they would do nothing but public work during the period of their office. They were expected to be constantly moving about in their constituencies and mixing with and serving the people. The experience is that very few of them do anything of the type. Several are less available in their constituencies than in the capitals and more in hotels and other places of the capitals than in the legislative halls during the sessions. We have read more than once how business had to be suspended for want of a quorum in the assemblies. And yet the register of the day will show that most of them have been marked present, and have drawn their full allowances for their nominal attendance. This shows the way in which the representatives discharge their duties to the nation. It proves at least, if not more,

that a majority of them are a burden to the tax-payer, and their number must be severely cut down, if not to the proverbial five (of the *panchayat*), to not more than 50 for the States and 105 for the Centre, and only such among them who are deserving and have no other means of income should be paid a very moderate salary.

Wardha, 29-9-'49

K. G. MASHRUWALA

Negligent Waste of Wealth

I would like to share with the readers a lesson which I got nearly 25 years ago from a Japanese agent under whom I then served. He was a purchaser of Indian cotton. Every one knows that during the cotton season, the ginning and pressing factories are all covered with great heaps of ginned or unginned cotton. Cartloads of cotton are also brought to cotton-markets. On their way, in the markets and on the factory grounds, considerable cotton is thrown or negligently allowed to drop here, there and everywhere. Some merchants appoint a person to follow the carts and pick up such droppings. How much he collects depends upon his regard for value and duty. Much is either eaten up by stray cattle or mixed up with dust, and goes into the gutters or the town-refuse. My employer gave once a visible demonstration of the amount of wealth we wasted by our negligence. He employed under his personal supervision a few labourers to pick up all the cotton scattered everywhere in the factory compound, got it cleaned and weighed. It was found to be worth more than Rs. 300! He then gathered the factory staff and drew their attention to the great amount of wealth they wasted everyday, thus impoverishing a country already so poor. "Herein lies the secret of your political subservience. You must not waste your wealth, but must study the use of every little thing found in your country, and employ technical science for turning it into a valuable article. A country is alive and prosperous only to the extent it makes itself useful and valuable."

These words, which I reproduce from memory, have left an indelible impression upon my mind. I remember to have read somewhere to the following effect: "Wealth misplaced becomes dirt; dirt in its proper place becomes wealth."

10-9-'49

B. V. SHIKHARE

(Translated from Marathi)

Correction

In *Harijan* of 4 September 1949 (XIII-27) on p. 216, second column, last paragraph, in line 3 from bottom for *God or truth* read *God of truth* and in line 13 from bottom for *learnt* read *learn*.

In *Harijan* of 11 September 1949 (XIII-28) on p. 223, second column, first paragraph, in line 28 for *are for us* read *are true for us*.

HARIJAN

October 9

1949

CRITICISMS ON CONTROLS

I hope the authorities and the public have carefully read the various articles that have recently appeared in the *Harijan*, criticizing controls. The contributors are from various classes. The writer of the series "Controls Re-examined" enjoys a responsible position in trade and has first-hand experience of their working in a variety of trade articles and the rest are representatives of middle class traders, agriculturists, consumer public and others. Those published are only a few of the several letters I have received. It is possible that some of the arguments advanced by them might be weak and refutable or controversial. But they represent public opinion both well informed and studied as well as just popular and highly prevalent. It is both urban and rural. I feel that the Government must respect public opinion and relieve the people of this burden which presses them like a heavy boot crushing the toes.

Apart from physical hardships, it is a great and continuous strain on people's nerves, a great demoralizer and destroyer of all sense of self-respect.

It is gratifying news that a step has been taken to decontrol cloth to a certain extent. I hope it will be pursued with patience and diligence, and temporary unfavourable fluctuation or seeming scarcity will not create a panic either in Government circles or the public. The public must refuse to buy if the prices do not go down sufficiently low. They must practise economy and in no case should they purchase anything at a higher than the fixed price, or more than they need in a period of temporary cheapness. The public must remember that the lifting of a control adversely affects a number of interests, and people should not be surprised if attempts are made by them to create appearances which show that decontrol has failed in its purpose and must be reimposed. The game was successfully tried once and may be tried again. The public must also remember that the pro-control interests have better means of making their voice heard than the public and that the decontrol, which is still very much guarded and hesitant, has not been made in the interest of the consumer public, but that of "industry and trade" who have found themselves in a difficult and critical position. It is possible that, if not immediately, a little time hereafter on account of more cloth being exported, the people at home might be made to experience scarcity. A case will be thus made out for reimposition of con-

trols and rationing, resulting in the resumption of the black market.

As a believer in *khadi*, I also believe that as much India's mill-cloth must be exported to other countries as possible, and that for home consumption we must encourage hand-spinning and hand-weaving as speedily and to as large an extent as possible. So if the people, particularly of villages, experience scarcity of mill-cloth, let them not grumble but seize the opportunity of throwing out mill-cloth from the villages altogether. Wise village *panchayats* must try to free themselves from their dependence upon mills for either cloth or yarn. If village people grumble at the high prices of mill-cloth and ask for rationing or controls, they will be acting against their own interest. Not until the villages take to spinning and producing all their cloth and also all their food, to maintaining their own grain banks and co-operative stores, and to resorting to yarn currency, will they know that Purna Swaraj has come to them.

One more important thing. It must also be understood that controls are the necessary law of life. No society can exist without controls. The wise exercise self-control, and ordinary well-behaved people voluntarily obey social and ethical controls. Those who disregard self-control as well as social and ethical controls are sought to be controlled by laws. But law is a crude and lifeless mechanism, which is successfully evaded by the crafty, and catches only stray victims, but punishes the whole country by its expensiveness, dilatoriness, vexatiousness and ordered disorderliness. And therefore, if we want legal controls to go, we must exercise self-control over our selfish propensities and meticulously discharge our moral and social obligations as a disciplined and God-fearing people. Otherwise those responsible for good government cannot but feel again and again compelled to pass new laws and impose new controls, if they do not want the country to be deliberately thrown into chaos.

People must take part in production, must not accumulate and store more than they need, must not conceal their money and stores, must not consume more than necessary, must not waste, and must always remember that there are crores of people in our country who do not know from year's end to year's end what it is to have two square meals in a day, and to have a full dress for wear and a decent mattress and blanket for rest. God used to be described hitherto as the Lord of the Fourteen Worlds with His home in the Eternal and Glorious Land of Bliss. Bapu has taught us to know Him differently. His is the unique description: "Lord of Humility, dwelling in the little pariah hut!" When we eat and dress and enjoy our comforts, let us remember to send our offerings and respects to that temple.

Wardha, 12-9-'49

K. G. MASHRUWALA

DECONTROL — IN GANDHIJI'S WORDS

[Note: My purpose in quoting Gandhiji on this subject is not for using his great name in support of my plea for lifting the controls. For I know that in such matters policies would vary in accordance with situations. I have quoted him only to the extent of the fundamental principles on which the subject rests, and to the extent facts have not changed. — K. G. M.]

Educative Value

The public should be educated to become self-reliant. Once they knew that they had got to stand on their own legs, it would electrify the atmosphere. It was well known that fright took a larger toll of life than actual disease. He wanted them to shed all fear of calamity if they took the natural step of self-help. He was convinced that removal of food control would not result in a famine and deaths from starvation.

Similarly, there was no reason why there should be shortage of cloth in India. India produced more cotton than she required for her wants. People should spin and weave themselves. He was therefore, for the removal of cloth control too. That might result in increase of prices. He was told and he believed that if people abstained from buying cloth for at the most six months, the abstention was bound to result in a natural fall in prices. And he had suggested that in case of need in the meantime the people should produce their own *khadi*. He did not at the present stage bring in his belief in the use of *khadi* to the exclusion of any other cloth. Once the people began to produce their own food and cloth, it would change their entire outlook. Today, they had gained political independence only. By following his advice they would gain economic independence also and that would be felt by every villager. Then there would be no time or inclination left for fighting amongst themselves. It would result in elimination of other vices like drinking, gambling etc. The people of India would gain in every sense of the term. God would also help them, for, He helped those who helped themselves. (*Delhi Diary*, 10-10-'47).

Limitations of the Civil Service

The Government was trying to spoon-feed the people. Instead of that the people should be thrown on their own resources. The Civil Service was used to carrying on work from their offices. The red tape and the files controlled their activity. They had never come in contact with the peasants. They did not know them. He wished they would be humble enough to recognize the change that had come over the people. Their initiative should not be strangled by the controls. They should be allowed to be self-reliant. Democracy should not result in making them helpless. (*Ibid*, 17-10-'47).

Control Breeds Evil

Control gives rise to fraud, suppression of truth, intensification of the black market and to artificial scarcity. Above all, it unmans the people and deprives them of initiative, it undoes the teaching of self-help they have been learning for a generation. It makes them spoon-fed. This

is a tragedy next only, if indeed not equal, to the fratricide on a vast scale and the insane exchange of population resulting in unnecessary deaths, starvation and want of proper residence and clothing more poignant for the coming inclement weather. The second is certainly more spectacular. We dare not forget the first because it is not spectacular.

This food control is one of the vicious legacies of the last world war. Control then was probably inevitable because a very large quantity of cereals and other foodstuffs were exported outside. This unnatural export was bound to create man-made scarcity and lead to rationing in spite of its many drawbacks. Now there need be no export which we cannot avoid if we wish to. We would help the starving parts of the world, if we do not expect outside help for India in the way of food.

I have seen during my life time covering two generations several God-sent famines, but have no recollection of an occasion when rationing was even thought of.

* * *

The artificial control of prices, the growers do not, cannot understand. They, therefore, refuse willingly to part with their stock at a price much lower than they command in the open market. This naked fact needs no demonstration. It does not require statistics or desk-work civilians buried in their red-tape files to produce elaborate reports and essays to prove that there is scarcity. (*Ibid*, 3-11-'47).

Khadi Economics

He then referred to the control of cloth. His submission was incredibly simple. The Congress had readily supported the opinion he had held about *khadi* as an entire substitute for any mill-cloth, foreign or indigenous.

* * *

It was therefore, a most surprising thing for him (Gandhiji) that now that they had come into their own, nobody talked of *khadi*, nobody seemed to have his faith in the possibility of *khadi* and that they could think of nothing but mill-cloth for clothing India. He had not the slightest doubt that *khadi* economics was the only sound economics for India. (*Ibid*, 6-11-'47).

People's Voice

Must the voice of the people be drowned by the noise of the pundits who claim to know all about the virtue of controls? Would that our ministers who are drawn from the people and are of the people listened to the voice of the people rather than of the controllers of the red-tape which, they know, did them infinite harm when they were in the wilderness! (*Ibid*, 17-11-'47)

Meaning of Decontrol

The object of the removal is not to lower the prices at a bound, it is to return to normal life. Superimposed control is bad any day. When this control is removed, the nation will breathe free, it will have the right to make mistakes. The ancient method of progressing by

making mistakes and correcting them, is the proper way. Keep a child in cotton-wool and stunt it or kill it. If you will let it develop into a robust man, you will expose his body to all weathers, teaching him how to defy them. Precisely in the same manner, a government worth the name has to show the nation how to face deficits, bad weathers and other handicaps of life through its own collective effort instead of its being effortlessly helped to live any how.

Thus considered decontrol means that the business of foresight is transferred from the few members of the Government to the millions composing the nation. (*Ibid*, 8-12-'47)

Defeat of Decontrol

Any successful attempt at adding to their profit owing to decontrol will defeat its purpose. (*Ibid*, 8-12-'47)

DEVALUATION OF THE RUPEE

Since the article "Currency and Finance" (published in the last issue) was written, the Government of India has been obliged to devalue the rupee to a considerable extent following the devaluation of the pound by England. Already our rupee stood devalued to the very limit on account of our inability to check inflation and its further devaluation renders all the more necessary that the amount of currency in circulation should be reduced, if prices are not to be allowed to mount still higher up. The devaluation means that while we could formerly get goods worth 30 dollars against ours worth Rs. 100, now we shall be able to get worth only 21 dollars against the same quantity; or, in other words, we shall have to export goods worth nearly 143 rupees against imports worth 30 dollars. It is suggested that this will encourage our export trade; but it must be borne in mind that we cannot increase our export of raw materials necessary for home consumption without further reducing the power of consumption of our people which must bring the prevailing discontent and disaffection at once to breaking point. Our exports, therefore, must be confined largely to articles such as manganese ore, which we produce over and above our requirements. Nor in matters like oilseeds and tea, which we have been exporting at the sacrifice of our consumers, should we think of any further increase. Again, Pakistan's decision must compel us to curtail to a very considerable extent our exports of jute, jute-goods and cotton piece-goods and, what is worse, we may ere long find our markets flooded with cheap British cloth—a fit retribution for our sin of discarding Mahatmaji's famous *khadi* scheme of 1946 for the sake of our silly craze for mechanized production of cloth. Nor may we seek to derive the consolation that devaluation will discourage the import of foreign grains. No doubt, this will be so; but whether that itself will enable us to give sufficient food to every one of us is a big question, depending upon various factors—natural as well as human. So far as the latter factor is concerned, unless our policies become saner and

our sense of social duty higher than hitherto, the dearth of food might compel us to part with everything in order to obtain a meal. Here too we have not followed Mahatmaji and the longer we take to accept his counsel, the greater will be the delay in making ourselves theoretically as well as practically self-sufficient.

In the sphere of external or international economy also, I am afraid we stand to lose a good deal. As a result of the devaluation, our Sterling Balances as also our gilt-edged securities stand practically reduced by 30 per cent while our foreign loans as well as the cost of foreign machinery are augmented in the same proportion. We could have and can still reduce our losses on this account if we give up nervousness, indecent haste, infatuation for machinery and our vanity to do everything on a big scale regardless of the disastrous effects of such action on our purse and the moral and material well-being of our people. Indeed by such action we are carving out our abject dependence in spite of the unqualified independence which Mahatmaji won for us with his tremendous suffering, sacrifice and active soul-force.

But some effective remedy must be found and I submit the following measures for urgent consideration and adoption:

(1) the reduction of currency by the withdrawal of one-rupee and two-rupee notes without any fuss or ado. Since this cannot be done for long if the public expenditure is always greater than or equal to income—an indulgence which must bring about the country's ruin if not speedily controlled—it is obvious that the withdrawal should be followed with drastic economies in expenditure. Hence the necessity of—

(2) cancellation of the orders for textile and other machinery which we can do without, except parts needed for repairs or replacement;

(3) cutting down of all unnecessary and wasteful expenditure by discontinuing the salaries paid to M.L.A.'s, Central as well as Provincial, abolishing the posts of Parliamentary Secretaries and their staffs, curtailing the number of Central and Provincial Ministers, their Secretaries and the new Secretariat appointments to the number that used to obtain under the British Government during the last war, dispensing with the entire Control staff as soon as prices show an appreciable and steady downward tendency as a result of the introduction of the currency reform, and reimposing and enforcing proper checks on the vagaries of Ministers and Governors in regard to expenditure on their residences, motor cars, furniture, etc.;

(4) amendment of the new Constitution Act by abolishing the Upper Chambers altogether, by severely reducing the proposed number of legislators and considerably cutting down the scale of salaries provided in it even if for no better reason than that the nation cannot afford to bear this burden in her present condition; and

(5) above all, if we really wish to serve the masses and save ourselves and the country from economic ruin without at the same time endangering our defence, we must, without a moment's delay, provide for the ethical instruction of the people and the rising generation (if we do not wish to raise a race of polished monsters), revise our development plans on the lines chalked out for us by Mahatmaji and implement his Constructive Programme, than which, I have no hesitation in saying, nothing better, cheaper and more efficient has been produced hitherto by all

the experts in economics, education and health consulted by the Government. K. P. VERMA

CONVERSION AND REVERSION

[I received several letters and newspaper cuttings even from Hindus in foreign lands, drawing my attention to the alleged activity of Shri Vinoba and his workers—referred to by the accusers as Sarvodaya Samaj—of asking Hindu Meos to revert to Islam. Shri Vinoba's own "Clarification" is published elsewhere. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Dr. Rajendraprasad have also received several such protests. The following correspondence, therefore, between Sardar Patel and Rajendrababu (received through Shri Vinoba) will, I hope, put an end to the false propaganda. —K. G. M.]

Birla House, Mount Pleasant Road,
Malabar Hill, Bombay, 12-8-'49

My dear Rajendrababu,

I am sending herewith an extract from a letter which I have received from L. Devichand, President, All India Dayanand Salvation Mission, Hoshiarpur:

"Shri Vinoba Bhave, the organizer of the Sarvodaya Samaj, being a political worker, is going out of his way in preaching to the Meos who had embraced Hinduism to revert to Islam. I can understand if a Muslim Maulvi does it. Shri Vinoba Bhave is not a Muslim divine. What business has he got to restrict the freedom of the Meos to adopt any religion they like? Should we understand that the Sarvodaya Samaj, instead of being a social and cultural body, is in disguise pro-Muslim organization?"

"I learn that the Sarvodaya Samaj is receiving aid from the Gandhi Memorial Fund. If so, it is a flagrant misuse of the fund, which is not meant for the spread of Islam. Has Shri Vinoba Bhave done anything to take back thousands of Hindus, who have forcibly been converted to Islam in Pakistan?"

"Please stop giving any aid to Shri Vinoba Bhave for the propaganda of Islam, and ask him to desist from his wrongful activities, which will bring a bad name to the Congress and make it unpopular."

Yours sincerely,
(Sd.) Vallabhbhai Patel
Camp Pilani,
20-8-'49

My dear Vallabhbhai,

I have received your letter dated 12th August, 1949 giving extract from a letter which you have received from L. Devichand, President, All India Dayanand Salvation Mission, Hoshiarpur.

I may mention to you that I also have received a number of letters and telegrams complaining that Shri Vinoba Bhave and workers under him in some way have been responsible for asking the Meos who had embraced Hinduism to revert to Islam. From the enquiries that I have made this is altogether without foundation. The work of Shri Vinoba Bhave and his co-workers is purely social and intended to help the sufferers. It is not interested in conversion. What happened is that Meos, who under terror became Hindus, now finding that there is no reason to fear molestation from Hindus on account of the presence of independent workers are gradually reverting to Islam and this is what is called as preaching on their part to revert to Islam. There can be no doubt that many of these Meos had accepted Hinduism and had been allowed to stay because they had done so under fear. That fear having disappeared, the Meos now openly go back to Islam. During this period of nearly two years many of them had been showing themselves as Hindus but secretly also offering *namaz*. What they had been secretly doing they have now begun to do openly.

As regards aid from the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, not a pie has been given out of that fund, as you are fully aware. I am however passing on your letter with a copy of my reply to Shri Vinoba Bhave.

Yours sincerely,
(Sd.) Rajendraprasad

HINDUS OF TRINIDAD

Dr. Parashuram Sharma, of Ferozepur, (East Punjab) is an old worker, who has lived and moved for a long time among Indians settled in various parts of the world, and, therefore, necessarily takes deep interest in their difficulties and grievances. Though now more than 75 years old, he is still active and keeps himself well-informed about the conditions of life of our emigrants and their descendants. The following is based on his communication:

One of the grievances long felt by the Hindus of Trinidad is that the Colonial Authorities there do not allow Hindus to cremate their dead in accordance with Hindu traditions and rites, but compel them to bury them as among the Christians and Muslims. Though in India also there are among Hindus some sections, who bury and not burn their dead, it is well known that Hindus prefer cremation. Moreover they consign bone-ash of their dead to holy waters as a religious rite. They cannot perform this rite if the corpse is buried. Where the burial is resorted to, it is on account of incapacity to find the expenses for fuel and not out of preference for burial. In Trinidad the problem of finding sufficient fuel or of its cost hardly arises. Dr. Parashuram Sharma reports that the Trinidad Hindus have been long agitating for permission to cremate their dead but the authorities have so far rejected the demand. Somehow the white authorities feel that cremation is less civilized and sanitary than burial, and white people do not like the sight of a pyre. On grounds of sanitation, I should rather think that cremation is any day a better mode of disposing of the dead than burial. Moreover, it economizes space, for you can repeatedly erect a new pyre on the same place or use a modern oven for any number of bodies in succession. But what is a more civilized way is often a matter of traditional habits, and it is quite understandable that a Christian or a Muslim might regard cremation to be rather disrespectful to the dead relative, as a Hindu might regard his burial. The best course in these matters for wise authorities is to respect all customs equally.

This matter was represented a few months ago by Shri P. D. Sagi, President of the Overseas Indian National Congress, before Sir John Shaw, Governor of Trinidad. While the Governor sympathized with the demand, he looked at it only from the sanitary point of view and not from that of the religious sentiment of Hindus. It is necessary to look at it from that point. Not having taken into consideration the latter point, the Governor thought that the solution of the problem lies in the construction of modern crematoria.

Now, modern crematoria might be a good substitute for a pyre in a city like Bombay or Calcutta, but it has no place in villages or even towns where the populations are not large enough to provide even one dead every day. Moreover, they cannot be thought of where there is no electricity, or no dearth of wood, as in Trinidad. All that is needed in these places is to set apart a small plot, surrounded, if necessary, by a wall, with a shed and other small facilities.

I hope the Trinidad authorities will look upon this subject with the sympathy it deserves and our Commissioner for that part will plead on behalf of the Hindus with the authorities.

I understand that cremation is allowed in other Colonies where Hindus have settled. It should be where it is not.

Wardha, 20-9-'49

K. G. MASHRUWALA

CLARIFICATION

As decided at the time of the Sewagram Conference (1948), I along with other colleagues proceeded to Delhi for working among the refugees, and have been since then trying to work for them to the best of our ability. In pursuance of the same programme, I paid a visit to the Sindhi camps at Kalyan and the Bombay suburbs last month and have promised to return to them whenever my presence was needed.

In the course of this work arose the problem of the Meos and it was impossible for me to disregard it. They too were displaced persons and their rehabilitation was also one of the items of Bapu's unfinished work. No doubt, in comparison with the work of refugees, this was a very small piece of work and expected to be finished in a short time. But owing to communal bitterness, it took much longer than expected. The work is now almost, but not entirely, over and one does not know how long the unfinished portion, though very small, might yet take.

My principal concern in executing this piece of work was to see that the Meos should do nothing which might create breach of the peace. I took particular care to place among them only tried workers with devotion for this type of work. It has been a great relief to me that on account of their contact, guidance and service, nothing untoward happened at the hands of the Meos. Their efforts as also the general improvement in the communal atmosphere of the country have made it possible for the Meos to be rehabilitated.

I observed that the efforts were appreciated both by the local Hindus and Meos, and their former good relations were re-established. But one of the consequences (perhaps natural) has been that some Arya Samaji and Sanatani workers have felt agitated over it. The facts are that when during the disturbances Muslims in general had been compelled to leave their homes, there were some who, out of fear, embraced Hinduism and were allowed to remain there. Some of these converts have been, now that the situation has improved, begun to resume their *namaz* publicly. During the turbulent period they had not given up the *namaz* but offered it secretly. They received the nick-name 'Hindus by day and Muslims by night'. Now they have become 'Muslims also by day'. Even this is true not of all, but of some of them only. Some have become Hindus for good, the reason being that, after all, there is not much difference between the local Hindus and Meos in their habits of life. But the fact that some of them have returned to Islam has made some Hindu propagandists nervous and they have begun to complain that this return to Islam is due to the workers placed by us among the Meos. The Arya Samajis in particular have made propaganda about this matter and every branch of the Arya Samaj has been

issuing statements of protests similarly worded. I have been accused by some of being a pro-Muslim worker. My workers and I are absolutely uninterested in the subject of conversion, reversion and reconversion. We are interested only in serving these distressed human beings and wish to render whatever assistance we can in mitigating their hardships. We have been asked if we wanted to serve the distressed, why should we have chosen Muslims in particular? The question is based on a misunderstanding. Before taking up work among the Meos, we all had been serving the refugees. This work came to us incidentally in a compelling manner. Our other workers are still working among the refugees. We do not recognize any distinction of caste or creed in rendering our services to distressed humanity.

I would like to make it clear to my friends of the Arya Samaj that whatever small differences there might be between them and me, there is a great common factor between us two and that is our common faith in the *Vedas*; therefore, they should not entertain any misunderstanding about a co-believer. They must rest assured that as a devotee of the *Vedas*, I would not do anything which is antagonistic to them.

Wardha, 9-9-'49

VINOBA

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