

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

Vol. XIX. No. 26

AHMEDABAD — SATURDAY, AUGUST 27, 1955

TWO ANNAS

RIVER DAMS AND ELECTRIC POWER

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

A correspondent from Bombay has written to me a long letter after reading the article "Unemployed Men and Idle Machines" in the *Harijan* of 25-6-'55. He complains therein that the estimates for large dams constantly go on mounting. But, he says:

"I cannot believe that our finance ministers and their expert officers can be constantly falling a prey to mistakes in forming the estimates over a period of so many years."

After making the statement the correspondent goes on to describe how the estimated expenditure on the Damodar Valley Scheme shot up from ten crores to a hundred and ten crores of rupees and says:

"A gentleman associated with works connected with river dams had informed me long ago that the estimate for the scheme will surely reach the huge amount of a hundred and ten crores of rupees."

He further writes to say:

"I also remember the above gentleman telling me that all those big schemes were not going to serve any purpose. According to him, every river should have a dam at every two or three miles' distance along its course. Small dams can be raised on all our rivers without employing steel and cement."

When asked why he did not openly say so, the gentleman complained in reply:

"Who is there to heed to our advice? Everything is carried on according to the advice of American experts. And as we are, naturally, concerned with carrying on our profession.....we have to agree to the condition of employing foreign experts laid down by Government in order to secure contracts. We employ foreign experts who are really of no use to us."

The gentleman also told the correspondent:

"The main object of constructing the big dams is to produce electric power profusely. But it will not be used in areas where it is produced. Once power begins to be produced you will see new schemes of factories costing hundreds of crores of rupees coming up in order to utilize it."

After making these various statements the correspondent finally says:

"Thus while the Congress and Congressmen will go on passing resolutions in favour of village and cottage industries, vested interests are playing their own game by dragging the nation into mechanization and heavy industries."

Thus the correspondent has written to me about something which demands serious consideration. Reverting to the same topic he wrote to me in another letter:

"It is not likely that the gentleman who gave me all the information will say anything publicly. I, therefore, convey to you what I have understood from the discussions I had with him."

After this introduction the correspondent goes on to discuss the subject further in the following manner:

"Construction of big dams involves big expenditure. Many big dams of the kind in America have broken down. And when big dams break down the loss suffered is also big. America can afford the luxury. Our poor country cannot. Another thing: Thousands of acres of land are submerged under water behind such big dams. While on one hand we complain of acute shortage of land, on the other we allow, thus, thousands of acres to be submerged under water!"

"Two temptations are presented when sanction for expenditure on the big dams is sought from Parliament: one is increase in the production of food through extensive irrigation canals to be watered from the dams and the other is of production of millions of kilowatts of electric power. People, naturally, consider increase of production of food very important. But one is inclined to feel that the planners of the schemes consider electric power of greater importance. Now, is agriculture by irrigation from canal waters possible all over the country? Is it possible to spread a network of irrigation canals all over the vast expanse of a country like India? And, supposing it is possible, how much land useful for agriculture will have to be lost for the purpose? If there is another easier and cheaper alternative, which can serve the purpose, it deserves consideration."

"Now that construction of dams is nearly finished, or actually finished a psychological atmosphere for mechanization and for erecting various new types of factories is spreading in the country. We hear of schemes being formed for more textile mills, more sugar factories, more cement factories, steel plants, chemical manure plants and others of the kind."

"There are other dangers involved in the schemes for big dams: (i) whenever found necessary Government may enhance the irrigation rates and canals constructed in the name of the progress and prosperity of the agricultural population may turn themselves merely into means for revenue for Government. (2) If in the areas where the farmer gets water for irrigating his crops from canals big industries are established—for instance, a sugar factory—he does not remain an independent agriculturist but is reduced to a mere helpless link in the industrial chain. Directly or indirectly he will be forced to sow and grow crops needed for mechanized industries or for export by big

trading concerns. And who is there to assure us that the estimate of the acreage to be watered by the canals will not shrink later on even as the Government estimates for construction of dams go on spreading out?

"Let us then consider the other alternative for farming and irrigation. That is irrigating fields by means of water from wells. At first sight the idea might seem ridiculous. The reason is water in the wells does not last for the season these days. But our own mistakes are responsible for the drying up of our sub-soil streams of water. We have now to start conserving it again. That could be done in the following manner. The water in all our rivers should be stored by having small dams constructed with earth and bricks at small distances along their courses. Construction of such small dams will not require steel and cement, nor technicians. They will thus be less expensive and could be raised much more quickly. Wherever necessary and possible rivers might be dredged to deepen them by removing the silt, because on account of the destruction of trees from the banks the latter have been washed down into them and they are shallower than what they were. In order to put a stop to further erosion of the banks trees should be planted on them. Wherever in the villages tanks have been silted they should be repaired. Even in the entire area of the village trees should be planted and grazing pastures for cattle should be set apart, so that the rays of the sun may not be able to dry away the water in the soil. All these measures will help conserve water in the soil again. Then we could sink new wells. In fact, we will hardly need artesian wells either.

"The Five Year Plan has given attention to irrigation only with a view to the improvement of agriculture. But good farming means three items which are all of them of equal importance. In the first place, the soil must be properly ploughed. In the second place, it should be adequately manured. Thirdly, comes irrigation. For ploughing soil we need bullocks and there is a huge shortage in their supply. More often than not seed is sown before the soil could be adequately ploughed for want of the animals. The Bombay State alone is short of 17,00,000 bullocks. This serious shortage cannot be coped with unless cow-slaughter was completely prohibited. Next is the problem of manuring the soil. That, too, could be solved only by, and along with, prohibition of cow-slaughter. The other alternatives for solution of these two problems are employing tractors and chemical manures. Our Finance Minister at the Centre, Shri C. D. Deshmukh, has declared that an amount of some hundreds of crores of rupees has been reserved for improving agriculture in the second Five Year Plan. This is equivocal language. I am afraid he has before his mind's eye a huge fleet of tractors and a number of plants for producing chemical manures. We are thus being dragged towards mechanization and a national catastrophe."

The correspondent has elaborated his point so well that one need not add to the argument. We may not enter into the accusations the correspondent has made regarding the attitude of the Government planners. It seems, however, to be true that what he has to say is fairly justified by the manner in which Government's plans are made and worked.

The correspondent has touched upon the point of shortage in the supply of bullocks at the end of his argument. He could well have added the shortage of milk supply also. As a remedy

he has suggested a law prohibiting cow-slaughter. He should, truly speaking, have suggested service of the cow and its better breeding. Even as it is there are on the statute book acts prohibiting slaughter of milch cattle, calves etc. But out of their greed our people do not much seem to heed them. This may be responsible for illegal slaughter of the animals. The problem of supplying milk to the urban population is also responsible for the evil. The problem is sought to be solved by a policy of mechanizing the supply and pasteurization on the advice of experts imported from outside. As a result crores of rupees are spent, not in organizing the service of the cow but are diverted to perverse methods of supplying milk to cities.

In short, the crux of the whole argument is that our country is now at the cross roads. Now, under Swaraj its benefit must reach the villages where eighty per cent of our people live. Indeed, it must reach them immediately. Policies as to how it could effectively be done should be considered and evolved. Knowledge should be obtained and technique should be found and organized to that end. What, however, seems to be going on is that economic policies of industrialization from capitalist and imperialist foreign nations are being imitated.

That the interests of the industrialists of the country who own capital are linked with the policies is apparent. The new economic plan allows them to function in the private sector. At this juncture in the nation's progress they are trying to keep the private sector reserved for themselves and also to extend it if they can. They are striving hard to achieve their aim.

The other thing they are afraid of is that if Khadi and village industries were to find a place in the new plan their textile mills, factories for pressing oil, for polishing rice, leather works etc. will be adversely affected. But these mechanized industries which work for increasing unemployment and making it permanent have to go from India if the villages of India which are ruined are to be regenerated and the problem of unemployment is to be solved. Government should adopt this policy with firmness. This is the crucial problem facing us today.

Government has till now been paying more attention and diverting more of its funds to industrialism. But it has been a grave error because the policy cannot solve the problem of unemployment and of providing gainful occupations for the people. To that end the people as well as their Governments have to adopt and earnestly follow the economics of Khadi and the message of world peace given by Gandhiji.

The message is deeply significant and simple; it is equally direct and easy of execution.

If the people of India were to realize their present position and to devote themselves to Khadi and village industries, many perverse trends would easily correct themselves. The Second Five Year Plan provides for the endeavour, to a limited extent, of course; but we should take the fullest advantage of the provisions. Thereby the way to future progress will be opened to us.

3-8-'55

(From Gujarati)

FOUNDATION OF NEW SOCIAL ORDER — VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

(By J. B. Kripalani)

[From a speech at Rohtak (Punjab) on 10-7-'55 to Bhoodan Camp]

Let us not run away with the idea that once five acres of land are given in gift to a family the problem stands solved. People had land even before. But due to lack of good administration, to their bad habits and customs, and as a consequence of depending entirely on the cities for the supply of their necessities they became so poor that having two square meals a day itself has become a problem for them. Gandhiji had told us that every family in a village should constitute a factory for production of articles and goods so that all things needed by a village are produced by itself and every family in a village can be self-reliant and self-sufficient. In this age of scientific and technological advance our educated classes are strongly emphasizing the need of rapidly industrializing the whole country. But they do not allow any scope for village industries in their plan of industrialization. These advocates of industrialization who lack real understanding have not the sense to see that village industries do not obstruct but help industrialization. There is no doubt, however, a difference. When we seek to industrialize every home in a village by means of village industries and to make it self-reliant as well as self-sufficient, we surely attempt to divorce the villages from the life of the cities which destroys the sacredness of the village civilization of which India is proud. In truth this is the high and great ideal of Sarvodaya which we have received as a legacy from Gandhiji and is the aim of the new social order we want to establish.

(From the *Bhoodan Yajna* (Hindi), 29-7-'55)

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PROHIBITION IN KUTCH

(By P. L. Majmudar)

Kutch is a small C class State with a population of less than 6 lakhs altogether. Being situated in Western portion of India and surrounded by desert and gulf etc., it hardly attracted any great notice.

After partition of India and its merger, Kutch came into prominence because some energetic Sindhi friends evolved the idea of making a very big colony of Sindhis there in memory of their beloved city Karachi which they had to give up. The Government of India gave much financial assistance to develop Gandhidham as it is called today and to develop Kundla port as a first class port. This has become a windfall for Kutch as after partition the chief source of getting work in Karachi was totally stopped. Our present National Government is now contributing much towards the development of Kutch in all respects. But one great thing which mars the progress is the absence of prohibition in the State.

It appears that in former times the Ruler of Kutch had sanctioned opening of shops for selling country liquor in 4 or 5 towns of Kutch. As the means of communication during those days were very scanty, it appears only local people in towns were affected and as the standard of living of the people was comparatively low, it did not attract anybody's notice. But the recent marvellous growth of Gandhidham and Kundla port has changed the situation.

Recently I had a chance to visit the area which is under development and I saw about 15,000 labourers mostly coming from Backward Classes doing unskilled work. The Harijans began to complain that the existence of liquor shops was ruining their career. To my great sorrow I was told that in spite of all regulations to the contrary, liquor could be available even in other shops such as hotels etc., and the place which is named after the Father of the Nation, who was the topmost promoter of prohibition, is almost famous for the illicit drug. I am informed that the workers of Kutch and the present advisors of the Government are all trying their best to introduce prohibition as soon as possible and they have moved the Central Government for the same. I request the public to use their influence to see that complete prohibition is introduced in this State as soon as possible, so that the fair name of now progressive State of Kutch may not be spoiled. I contacted the organizers of the Gandhidham and the workers, who were all agreeable that liquor traffic was spoiling the fair name of the area, which is named after the great Father of the Nation. I trust, this important question will receive due consideration and save the area from the evil and demoralizing effect of liquor.

26-7-'55

HARIJAN

Aug. 27

1955

A TRAGIC ERROR IN ECONOMIC THOUGHT

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

In the course of a talk about small-scale village industries and their place in the new Five Year Plan, an economist friend of high repute said that it must not be forgotten that these industries were to find their place in a plan which has heavy industries as its chief objective. The point under discussion was, in what sense are the village industries described as an *integral* part of the Second Five Year Plan? The plan-frame puts down this point in the following terms:

"The basic strategy in the second plan must, therefore, be to invest large sums in the development of basic industries, transport and mining at one end and to economize as much as possible in the capital requirements for other sectors without restricting the supply of consumer goods. This strategy requires all-out efforts for the maximum utilization of capacity in existing industries and for the development of additional production in the capital-light or small-scale sector of industries. Since a large part of the additional demand for consumer goods would be directed against food, attention must be paid to the adoption of schemes which would increase productivity in agriculture quickly and at less capital cost."

Thus the planners have recognized the chief and unique merit of small-scale village industries, viz., that they are capital-light and can give the nation a huge amount of consumer goods immediately, here and now.

However, the most material point about them that the planners forgot to note is that these industries possess also a huge employment-potential and a very welcome virtue of securing equitable distribution of purchasing power. Further they ameliorate that part of our people who need to be first attended to.

This attribute of small-scale industries is very important. We wish to plan for a socialistic pattern of society. The first essential to do it is to make the whole of our people work, and work immediately, here and now. Not only the idle and the un- or under-employed must work, but also those who live on unearned income which it is possible to have in a capitalistic or property-minded economy, — all must be made to work.

In our country, poor and backward as it is in terms of western economic ideas, the evil of unearned income is comparatively smaller than the colossal amount of idleness, forced unemployment and underemployment. To remove the latter, therefore, has to be made the immediate target for any planning; more so if the aim is to have a socialistic pattern of society with social justice as its chief objective.

Therefore, to interpret that the real nature of the Five Year Plan is to have heavy industries and consequent industrialism in India would not be right, though it might be conceded that the plan provides for some so-called heavy industries in its programme. But if we look at the larger and broader aims and objects of a plan for India, we must admit that these heavy industries — though arrogating to themselves an unproportionately large and exorbitant amount of our capital resources and attention, — do not serve these aims; they can be and are served by the basic national industries of our people, viz., the small-scale village industries that can produce a very huge amount of consumer goods. I may explain my point in another way.

The graph of real prosperity in India, speaking in mathematical terms, has two co-ordinates, the axis of *x* being agriculture and cattle breeding and the axis of *y* being the small-scale village industries together with a sprinkling of a few so-called heavy or key industries which, by their very nature, require a different economic technique. Our misfortune during the last few centuries has been that the axis of *y* which gives real height and crescendo to the curve of the nation's prosperity is almost forgotten and an attempt is in vain being made to put a few capital-intensive and employment-poor industries in the place of our massive village industries. We must beware of persisting in this mistake in Free India.

This mistake again lands our economic thought in a tragic error of looking upon agriculture and industry as two separate compartmental economic pursuits, thus vitiating both of them from the point of view of the real social objective of justice and equality. As we saw above, they are integral parts of a common economic system. Agriculture alone becomes a poor economy, unless it is also industrialized by making the holding very large which is prohibitive and impossible in our land.

Industry alone, allied with capital and the machine, becomes a centralist agent of unemployment-creating and exploiting economy, driving the unemployed hordes of the nation to land which grows still more scarce and overburdened with such pressure and is thus rendered the poorer as an economy.

This unholy dichotomy of industrialism and agriculture, brought about by western industrial revolution and its dire results on a people who are not colonial nor imperialist — which we in India are — require to be fully noted by us if we wish to institute in India a truly free, happy and equalitarian social order. The school of thought speaking under the slogan of a socialistic pattern of society does not seem to note this important point, which is basic to the Sarvodaya school of economic thought. The economists also,

trained as most of them are in the western economic systems which are colonial and capitalistic, aggressive and competitive, err similarly when they say that the Indian Five Year Plan is aimed to have heavy industrialism here. The next plan must boldly remove this confusion and clear this point if our future progress and development are to be put on sound economic and peaceful lines, assuring peace and prosperity to all, which is Sarvodaya.

18-8-55

LET LAND IN THE VILLAGE BELONG TO IT

(By Vinoba)

[From the prayer speech at Vikrampur camp in Orissa on 1-6-55.]

I have been informed some Telugu-speaking friends are here. I was glad to know it. The Bhodan Yajna was started in the Telangana region itself. It was four years ago in the month of April that I was moving about in the Nalgunda and Varangal districts. It is a hot region. Heat from outside would of course be there, but that from within exceeded the former. Thousands had been massacred and all the landowners were shaking with terror. Many were hiding in the jungles and many more were in jails. The armies of the Government were marching all over the region. The Communist friends took shelter in the jungles by day and would come out in the night to carry on their work so that the people were harassed on their account by night and on account of the soldiers of Government by day. The people were ground to dust between the two. In this atmosphere I was moving about in the area with a few companions. We went even to the villages deep in the interior also, so that we could contact and talk to all people.

I told the Communists of the area that we too wanted to work for the poor and that if they altered their methods they and we together could work for them in India. I explained to the soldiers of Government that if they were out to destroy tigers they could achieve their end by hunting. It was never possible to hunt out the brave who dared death itself. Therefore I explained to them, you could not counter the Communists merely by violence. I persuaded the land-owning friends to see that the remedy of the whole trouble lay in their hands. I asked them why if they had to live amongst and with the poor they tyrannized over them. I exhorted them to live in love with the poor. The poor landowners were so terrified that they had run away to the cities. I persuaded them to return to their villages and not to be afraid. I assured them that we would help them create conditions of love between them and the village folk. With the villagers I reasoned that if they had grievances against the landowners it was not good; and it would not pay to terrorize them. It would be wiser to place the grievances before them. In this manner I persuaded the peasant, the zamindar, the soldier and the Communist to see reason. In the end within a period of two short months of my travels in the area I collected twelve thousand acres of land in gift. Only then did people begin to be convinced that peace and love could also be effective. This was how our mission started in the Telugu-speaking region. I would, therefore request the Telugu-speaking friends who are present to perceive the essence of the movement and to work for it.

Thousands of the landless attend our meetings and hear the message that land could belong only to God, no one else could be owner of land. Just as air and water and the light of the sun are gifts of God, so also land is a gift bestowed on man by God. No one, therefore, can have a claim on it as owner. Now that the landless have

seen the light it is impossible that they will remain suppressed as they were, till now. Nor do we wish them to remain suppressed. We do not want anyone to oppress another or to be oppressed by another in India. The meaning of Independence to us is that in this land of freedom no one is afraid of another, or that no one threatens another; that no one oppresses another or is oppressed by another. Only the nation where such conditions prevail is free.

The meaning of Swaraj is that we should not be coerced by others nor should we coerce others. We were being oppressed by the British and we oppressed the Harijans. Bapu taught us not to oppress the Harijans nor to stand oppressed by the British. Thus we do not want, when now we are free, that any single person be suppressed here. It is our duty, now after Swaraj, to redistribute land and give it to the landless. Let all land in the village belong to it and let ownership in land be abolished.

(From Hindi)

WHY I OPPOSE B.C.G. — FIVE REASONS

(By C. Rajagopalachari)

(i)

Extract from the first paragraph from a preliminary assessment of B.C.G. vaccination in India prepared by the WHO Tuberculosis Research Office, Copenhagen :

"Assessment of these programmes (of B.C.G. vaccination carried out under the auspices of WHO and UNICEF), would obviously be desirable in terms of how much tuberculosis is being prevented; but this would be a long range task — too difficult and too expensive to be feasible, and it may never be known how much these programmes have contributed to the fall in tuberculosis which is observed to be now going on almost everywhere."

After this confession, the memorandum proceeds to state that

"the more modest task assumed is the assessment of the technical procedures in use in the campaign, not so much to document what has been accomplished in the past but to obtain guidance for the work of the future."

On this point, the following observations are made :

"The allergy produced by the mass vaccination campaign in India appears to be not only variable but in average very much weaker than the allergy resulting from natural infection. Indeed for many groups it is well below the level considered desirable.

"No single factor has been found to account for these results.

"Improvement of the vaccine by exposure to light could only be a contributory factor. The marked variability of the campaign results suggests that some factor connected with the handling or application of the vaccine is involved."

(ii)

The basis on which the whole scheme of B.C.G. rests is that the allergy referred to above amounts in some way to a protective immunity however limited. The following is an extract from Topley & Wilson's *Principles of Bacteriology and Immunity* :

"Even if we admitted the beneficial effect of B.C.G. vaccination, which we are not prepared to do, we should still have to decide what value it is likely to

be in practice.... Calmette himself advised re-vaccination at 3, 7 and 15 years of age. If re-vaccination is not performed, the immunity—if any—resulting from the primary vaccination will probably wear off in a year or two. If, on the other hand, it is performed, there is a danger of setting up in a tuberculin-positive patient an acute allergic reaction, which may have serious results."

(iii)

The following is an extract from a letter received from a lady whom I do not know personally:

"I have just read your booklet on B.C.G. vaccination. If I had read this some months ago, I would not have allowed my two girls aged 6 and 2 to be given B.C.G. It was when the Nilgiris were being covered 4 or 5 months back. It is only from your writings in the papers that we understand that the period of immunity is only two years. This fact I am sure is never mentioned in the blaring loud-speakers of the B.C.G. vans. If the public knew that the immunity is for such a short time and that re-vaccination is not advisable, nobody would get their children vaccinated with B.C.G."

(iv)

The following is an extract from a very recent letter from the United Kingdom Health Ministry:

"...As you will see we have gradually extended the scope of our B.C.G. vaccination scheme, but until the present Medical Research Council trials to test its efficiency are completed—and an interim report may be published in the near future—we still have no accurate estimation of its value—we have no intention of expanding our vaccination programme at the moment."

(v)

The following is an extract from a letter written by Dr. R. C. Webster in the *Lancet*, March 5, 1955:

"Prof. Heaf (Feb. 12) says that 'there is strong evidence that B.C.G. increases resistance against tuberculosis infection, although statistical proof is difficult to obtain.' He admits our ignorance of allergy and immunity in tuberculosis, but he also says 'these acknowledged advantages of the vaccine are sufficient to justify its use'. Are these advantages so generally acknowledged? The fact that the vaccine is readily administered and cheap is not so very important: the fundamental question to which we do not know the answer is whether a positive skin reaction is really very important in immunity to tuberculosis. After all, we have other diseases in which positive skin reactions occur, but I do not know that it has been suggested that they mean immunity.... Are we really justified in asking parents to submit their children to injections which may in a significant proportion of cases produce unpleasant local reactions and have a risk, however slight, of causing general disease, when we have really no sound knowledge of its good effects?"

Madras, 7-8-55

By Vinoba Bhave

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PILGRIM'S PROGRESS DAY BY DAY — V

(By Damodar Das Mundada)

I

Vinobaji once again extended his oft repeated invitation to all the political parties in the country and pointed out how the door was open to all, without any exception, to serve the country and win Peace, through the process of Bhoodan, by the non-violent method. He also narrated at this juncture how the Congressmen formed the bulk of workers and appeared prominently on the scene where they wielded influence and, also, how the P.S.P. members dominated the Bhoodan work and played the most prominent part in such districts where they had good following.

His policy, said Vinobaji emphatically, was quite clear and straight. He recognizes man as Man; he never looks at the party labels that are "affixed" to the people.

Referring to the programme of Gramdan or *Saraswadani* which has appeared on the scene as a recent development in the process of Bhoodan, Vinobaji pointed out that those who had closely followed his speeches were not unaware in the least that this idea of Gramdan or *Saraswadani* was definitely deep in his heart right from the very inception of the movement. Since the very beginning he has been pleading that all land in the village should belong to the village collectively and that individual ownership over land should be liquidated. While emphasizing equitable distribution and eliminating ownership or proprietary rights over land all the time, he did not, of course, insist upon it then because it is quite a different thing to give expression to great ideas and an altogether another thing to implement them and demonstrate them in actual practice.

It may be recalled here that the Orissa Pradesh Congress Committee has, by a resolution, decided to collect 20 lakh acres of land from the province. The Bhoodan workers had sought Vinobaji's guidance in this connection about the nature and way they were expected or required to adopt to extend their co-operation to the Congressmen in their efforts to fulfil the quota.

The Golden Rule for All Workers

Vinobaji's reply to this query was, "So far as Bhoodan is concerned, let us consider ourselves Congressmen cent per cent. While this will, no doubt, enhance the prestige of the Congress, the process will, equally surely, purify this institution also. We do wish that Congress be transformed into a service-rendering institution from its present form. Let us not, therefore, harbour the idea in our minds that Bhoodan workers and Congressmen are two distinct and separate entities. So far as Bhoodan is concerned, both must become one.

And exactly the same is to be said about the P.S.P. also. If the P.S.P. members, like Congressmen, also decided to work wholeheartedly for Bhoodan, naturally the gulf between the two parties would be bridged due to the common programme, so much so that ultimately both will come nearer each other and work together in many, if not all, fields and spheres also.

With his characteristic preciseness, Vinobaji remarked that the cause of the differences between the Congress and the P.S.P. is clear: One is in power and hence speaks with greater sense of responsibility while the other is not and hence can afford to use loose or tall language!

What About the Communists?

"Can we say that the Communists also would join hands with other parties to work for Bhoodan?", I asked Vinobaji for the sake of clarification. His reply was brief but precise: "Our success has not yet reached that mark that we can claim their co-operation. I have no doubt, however, that their rank and file shall certainly join us, if we can distribute land by thousands of acres."

II

In his post-prayer speech one evening, Vinobaji expressed his surprise that there were people who still

felt shy of parting with their lands and had still so much attraction for the ownership idea which was fundamentally wrong, wholly foreign to this country's culture and out of date any way.

Vinobaji then exhorted his audience to liquidate ownership over land and wealth and profit by the boons of Gramdan. He went on a step further and asked: "What was at the root of this evil of ownership idea?" His short but precise reply was: "The vicious money economy is the root cause of the present human predicament."

"Money has usurped the place of God today. How to challenge it? How to neutralize its evil influence?"

"Well, a start has to be made somewhere. And hence Bhoodan."

The next question in natural consequence to be answered to is: "But what about the houses, the factories and such other things?"

To this question his reply was equally definite: "After the land, their turn shall also come!"

Citing an illustration of what havoc the greed for money has wrought and changed the very temperament of human beings, Vinobaji observed: "Take for example the case of the medical practitioners. Instead of realizing the religious and moral duty of running to the sick and alling quickly, they hesitate, rather refuse, unless their visit fee is paid or guaranteed!" Continuing Vinobaji solemnly remarked: "I would prefer death to such a doctor!"

Frying Cakes on Fire of Cremation!

Analysing the psychology of these medical men, he added: "The more their income, the greater is their rejoicing. This means that they profit when others fall ill and suffer or die! Is it *human* to fry your cakes on the fire of cremation?" he asked.

However, Vinobaji said sympathetically: "But, is the doctor not absolutely helpless?" Continuing he said: "In the good old days, the villagers looked after their medical advisers who rendered their services free of any charge and were guided by the sense of duty or *Dharma* alone. Every house in the village was the doctor's bank. Same was the case with the carpenter, the blacksmith, the barber, the teacher, etc. Everyone of them was an active participant in every other's joys and sorrows. If those golden days are to return again—and return they must—then let Gramdan be a complete success."

Dang Suruda, a village in the far interior of the dense forest, was specially connected by a new *kutchia* twelve-mile long road constructed recently in view of Vinobaji's tour. Several thousand men, women and children from the adjoining area and surrounding villages had gathered there since the early hours of the morning awaiting the arrival of Vinobaji. They sang *bhajans* and *kirtans* under the mango grooves. Many amongst them had already joined the Gramdan movement and the redistribution of their lands, on the basis of the number of members in each family, also took place at the hands of Vinobaji.

Congratulating them, Vinobaji explained the difference between *prayashchitta* (i.e. atonement) and *Dharma*. Parting with a portion of land was *prayashchitta*, but to surrender the entire land in Gramdan was *Dharma* itself.

Dharma implies the basic faith that we are not owners and that whatever we possess has been given to us by God as a sacred trust and as such is meant for the common use of the whole community. This conception and faith in *Dharma* is undoubtedly on the increase since the augury of Gramdan. He expected, therefore, that the big landholders in particular will come forward and take up this unique work of *Dharma* on themselves and carry it on to complete success.

Undoubtedly, this implied a change of heart on the part of the landholders, some of whom still hesitate to part with their lands. There are also a few who still doubted the utility and efficacy of Bhoodan movement as a unique mission. On an earlier occasion while referring

to this subject, Vinobaji had remarked that though he did not claim that there did take place the desired change of heart in all the four lakhs and over donors, he had at the same time not the slightest doubt that such change did take place in at least many thousands amongst them. He has been inspiring them to move a step forward and devote their remaining life to the service of the people. For this purpose he advised many to take to the life of *vanaprasthashram* i.e. retiring from worldly affairs after the age of 50 as laid down in the scriptures and devote one's time and energies entirely to the service of humanity.

1-8-55

BUILDING FROM BELOW—V

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

[Continued from the issue of August 6, 1955, p. 184]

The next Five Year Plan-frame envisages an increase of about 25 to 27 per cent in the national income during the plan-period. Obviously this increase would not be uniform for different sectors of the economy. The increase in capital-intensive heavy industries will be higher than that in, say, agriculture or small-scale enterprises. The plan-frame calculates that net output per occupied person (at 1952-53 prices level) in agriculture and allied pursuits will be Rs. 571, while in mining and factory establishments it will be Rs. 2632, when the total averages to only Rs. 840. As we well know, averages in such matters do not give a true or real picture. The bulk of the population will not have a really substantial rise in income, thus having less opportunities for a higher standard of living. Social justice requires that those who are the lowest in this standard must be made the special target for securing to them first a sizable increase, thus assuring to the people a march towards a socialistic pattern of society.

The second plan, being capital-intensive either through State capital in the public sector or through private one in the private sector, cannot do this to an extent utterly necessary for our poor people in the present conditions. Capital, whether in the private or the public sector, will generally behave in a capitalistic manner, thus making the rich richer and the poor poorer.

The "Building from Below" plan, in its programme of development, therefore, takes a line quite different from this and directly aims to ameliorate the lowest income groups first and thus takes the way of Sarvodaya, which minds the claims of 'unto this last' first and foremost. The approach may be shortly pointed out here:

"The principal objective of a socially significant economic effort is to increase employment because without it the equitable distribution of the benefits of increased production is not possible. Towards this end, therefore, it is necessary to consider not only the productive efficiency or economic capacity of a sector but also the social impact and consequences of its operations.... In other words, it is already a generally accepted principle that allocation of productive responsibility to a sector must effectively reconcile economic capacity with social significance."

As we already saw, the B.F.B. programme of development is based upon integral self-employed family units or their small co-operatives. Therefore it plans to assure to each family a minimum expendable annual income "capable of sustaining a human standard of living".

The standard of living is concretely defined in a table of annual family requirements which is as follows:

Annual Family Requirements

Items	Daily Needs	Assumed Value	Total Rs.
A. Food			
1. Cereals	80 ozs.	Rs 300 0 0	
2. Pulses	20 ozs.	" 50 0 0	
3. Milk	60 ozs.	" 180 0 0	
4. Vegetables (green and non-leafy)	40 ozs.	" 200 0 0	
5. Oils and fats	12 ozs.	" 350 0 0	
6. Fish, meat and eggs	20 ozs.	" 450 0 0	
7. Fruits and nuts	30 ozs.	" 150 0 0	
8. Sugar and gur	20 ozs.	" 100 0 0	
9. Spices	—	" 20 0 0	1800 0 0
B. Clothing and other wear	80 ozs.	Rs 250 0 0	
C. Repair and maintenance of houses and buildings		175 0 0	
D. Health and medicine		175 0 0	
E. Old age insurance		100 0 0	
F. Education, books etc.		200 0 0	
G. Entertainment, recreation and miscellaneous		300 0 0	1200 0 0
			Total Rs. 3000 0 0

The table "shows that the average annual income per family should be not less than Rs. 3000. As against this objective, the present average annual income per family in India is no more than Rs. 1320. This level of family income, however, ignores altogether the sharp inequalities of income distribution and consequent wide variations in family consumption standards. Experience of constructive workers as well as several field surveys show that quite a large number of families in rural and urban areas have average monthly incomes of Rs. 25 and below." (*Ibid*, para 46)

"To assure each family in the country a minimum annual income of Rs. 3000, it is necessary to raise their respective productive capacity by the provision of appropriate and adequate tools of production, enable them to work to capacity through organized assistance to acquire raw materials, to obtain necessary credit and to market their respective output. Assistance would, however, be so designed as to develop self-reliance rather than dependence." (*Ibid*, para 48)

The plan next examines the investment needs for such a line of development and assumes that an "average yield in the ratio of 1:1 over the entire economy may not be unrealistic. On this basis, an annual income of Rs. 3000 per family may necessitate an average investment of Rs. 3000 per family." (*Ibid*, para 49)

And it further says that "a programme of development, to be practicable must be made to accord, on the one hand, with the capacity of the country to find the necessary capital resources; and, on the other, with the needs of the people in the lowest income groups." (*Ibid*, para 50)

To do this, "it is necessary to ascertain accurately the pattern of income distribution in the country, the

number of families in the lowest income groups, their present problems and capacities, and initiate a development programme specifically designed to suit them. Such a process automatically divides the given development programme into various stages, spreads the capital outlay over a period of time and reduces immediate requirements to manageable proportions." (*Ibid*, para 50)

The B.F.B. notes that there is no statistical data regarding the income-wise distribution of families in India. However, from what is available, it gives the following table for it:

Distribution of Families

Annual Expenditure Rupees	No. of Families (Lakhs)	Percentage to the Total
Up to 600	163.2	20.4
Between 600 and 1200	249.6	31.2
" 1200 " 1800	168.8	21.1
" 1800 " 2400	83.2	10.4
" 2400 " 3600	76.0	9.5
Over 3600	59.2	7.4
	800.0	100.0

And it bases "the operative pattern of the development programme on the need to raise the poorest families to the next higher level before taking up those in the higher-income groups, as such a pattern progressively enlarges the area of economic and social equality, and as in it priorities are based upon needs and not merely on productivity." (*Ibid*, para 52).

And it phases its whole programme accordingly in suitable stages and works out its financial implications and describes the kind of organization necessary for it.

6-8-'55

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Subscription Rates—Inland: One year, Rs. 6; Six months, Rs. 3; Foreign: One year, Rs. 8 or 14s. or \$2.

Printed and Published by Jivanji Dahyabhai Desai, Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad 14.