

Indian Opinion

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— EDITORIAL

Education

We are convinced that a sound education is the surest foundation for Social progress. Basing our conclusions on this premise we propose to examine the methods that are being adopted by the Imperial Government and the local Government to educate the Masses in British Guiana.

For over a quarter of a Century this Association has been pleading with Government to extend the facilities of primary education in this colony. While there has been some progress at a snail's pace the mass of the people remains unlettered. The majority of workers on sugar plantations are unable to read and write intelligently. As a matter of fact 10 out of every 100 workers on sugar estates are unable to read and write an intelligent letter. The Franchise Commission reported in 1944 that 59.2% of East Indians are illiterate. We are convinced that the figures given in the Report of the Franchise Commission are correct. But while 59.2% of the East Indians, that is from 5 years and upwards are illiterate, the balance who may be called literate and residing on the sugar estates; form by far the greatest number thereof just know how to sign their names only.

This is the position as regards adults. What is the position with respect to the youths and children of today? There can be no doubt that four out of ten of the youths of today are unlettered and three out of ten children of school-going age are still out of schools. This state of affairs is well known to the government of this colony and to His Majesty's Advisers.

It is estimated by a Competent Authority that out of a population of 365 000 in 1943 there are no less than 88,500 children between the ages of 5 to 16 years. Of this number, 59,800 children or 68% were in the primary schools in 1943 leaving 28,700 or 32% out of schools. The great majority of these children are East Indians.

The Governor who professes to have an interest in the welfare of the people ought to know this fact.

What has he done to begin to remedy this disgraceful state of affairs? Nothing.

The Public Works Department or those responsible allowed a school building at Plantation Emore to go into such a state of disrepair that it had to be closed permanently and the majority of the children had no where to get primary education for over six months. The temporary building that has been erected there is nothing short of a scandal and disgrace and we request Sir Gordon Lethem, who likes to travel around

the country, to do us the favour to have a look at it. It is a wonderful piece of work!

Since July 1942 Sir Frank Stockdale recommended that \$183,000 should be spent annually for 5 years to recondition schools and build new ones, but up to this date no start whatever has been made. May we ask why?

It is clear to us that this century old problem is not considered urgent, but the raising of the status of British Guiana to a First Class Colony by paying incompetent officials increased salary as from January 1944 is a more urgent problem.

We have been asked by certain friends to bear in mind that while Education in the United Kingdom is "Greatest National Asset" in the colonies the "Greatest National Asset" is to pay officials high salaries so that the bulk of it will find its way to the United Kingdom.

(To be Continued)

Moribund Legislative Council

MEMBERS REPRESENT THEMSELVES AND GOVERNMENT NOT THE PEOPLE

IMMEDIATE DISSOLUTION DESIRABLE

Time and again it has been pointed out to the Government of British Guiana that the present Members of the Legislature do not represent the people but themselves and the Government and that the present Legislature is only interested in formulating and passing legislation which tends to serve themselves, and the Government.

This state of affairs cannot lead to the preservation of democracy which (incidentally does not exist in British Guiana) but to the destruction of its very principles and its core.

The present system of our Government is, as is well known dictatorial and partial to the Capitalist the latter being definitely against progress of the colony and its inhabitants.

Gurkha Recruit Wins B.E.M.

The gallant rescue of a British officer in difficulties in a swiftly flowing river in the Jullundur area on August 5, 1943, has earned the British Empire Medal (Military) for No. 18576 Recruit Manbahadur Thapa of the 1st Gurkha Regimental Centre.

Lieut. R.P.N. Green was practising crossing a river when he was swept away by the river, which was in spate. He was observed by Recruit Manbahadur Thapa, who, with a number of other recruits, was about to attempt the crossing—600 yards downstream. Plunging in, the recruit swam through the torrent and dragged Lieut. Green, by now in a semi-conscious state, to the safety of a rock and subsequently to the river bank.

Manbahadur Thapa joined the Army from the village of Bhaluwa, Palpa district, Nepal.

Damaging Effects of Alcohol On The Indian Community

During the BPI "Farm Hour" on Sunday, December 3, 1944, Mr L. A. Sookoo delivered the following talk:—
Good afternoon friends,

I have been asked by the Secretary of the Indian Publicity Committee to speak to you this afternoon on the damaging effects of alcohol on the Indian Community

A REMINDER

You will agree with me that this subject has time and again occupied the attention of all our social workers, for it is obvious to everyone who is familiar with conditions in the country districts, including sugar-estates, that the excessive use of alcoholic beverages among the Indian people, and more particularly by our young men and women is growing rapidly; so much so that the BRITISH GUIANA EAST-INDIAN ASSOCIATION thought it timely and wise to pass a Resolution at its Annual Conference, a few months ago, requesting Government to restrict the issue of spirit shop licences in certain areas throughout the colony so as to remove the temptation which is always present.

BANEFUL EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL

There are absolutely no real benefits to be derived from drinking alcoholic beverages. It is only a habit which when one becomes an addict to it, is one of the greatest evils in life. It has been universally accepted by responsible men from all branches of the professions, and in other walks in life, that in the moral, mental, physical and economic realm, the effect of alcohol is nothing short of devastating and, if used in excess leads to poverty,

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AGENTS

insanity and physical importance. I would like our Indian people, especially those of poorer classes to realise the danger that can be created if an immediate end is not put to this insane method of brutality which will reduce our people to the worst state of life.

I would now turn my spot-light of interest to the country districts, and draw particular attention to the fact, that today more than ever as a result of inadequate recreational facilities, the rum shops are used as a reaction center for many; this is indeed very regrettable and unfortunate, and I want to impress upon you with all the vehemence of language that the Liquor Shops are an insufferable curse upon Society; and they should be regarded as prohibition centres rather than recreation centres. One should not even be enticed to have a single drink in a liquor shop for this is what happens. As the old saying goes:

First the man takes a drink
Then the drink takes a drink,
One drink calls for another,
Then the drink takes the man.

When a man becomes drunk, it is difficult for him to control his emotions. As a result, the best qualities are destroyed in him. There are also cases of disorderly behaviour and abusive language, so prevalent and due to drunkenness, that the Court, in some cases, commits the offenders to prison with a fine.

HAPPY HOME LIFE JEOPARDISED

In many poor Indian homes children starve and go to bed hungry, wives shed tears and suffer torture, mothers weep in silence because the bread-winner would prefer to spend the last shilling out of his slender earnings to tickle the palate rather than provide a wholesome meal for his family. Many homes, once happy and peaceful, were reduced to ruin as a result of drunkenness. We are told "that the strongest unit in civilisation is the home, upon it we depend for all the happiness and virtues of life, it is the blood-stream of a healthy nation. When liquor enters a peaceful home, more often than not it is turned into a hell, peace and love go out sorrow, poverty and death come in.

Indians should avoid this degrading state of affairs and awake to a sense of self-consciousness and self-realisation so that, as individuals they can earn for themselves the respect of all, and as a race they can be proud of their noble heritage.

Modern Society has adopted a new method of entertainment that unless a friend greets you with a bottle he is not regarded as being social or

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friendly." How does this measure up to the following from the Book of Books?

"Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also.

The whole mass of mankind is passing through a world revolution, and there is the incessant cry for a NEW ORDER of things. When this NEW ORDER is established who will share it? It is only the good citizens of the State Government conscious of this fact, will soon launch on a country-wide organization of Social Welfare Centres and Youth Clubs to improve the Minds of our people and prepare them to fit gracefully in the NEW ORDER of things. To my countrymen I say "Do not succumb to the evil influences of alcohol but in the words of Milton "Awake, arise, or be forever fallen."

A Christmas Message To all Indians

BY JEANARINE SINGH PRESIDENT B.G.E.I.A.

It is indeed a great pleasure to write this Christmas Message to all our people throughout British Guiana and to express my feeling of good will and cheer to them.

This is the season when the atmosphere is filled with peace and there is rejoicing and happiness everywhere.

I know that for the majority of our people Christmas almost means nothing. As poverty and misery stares them from every corner. I am aware of the oppression and exploitation that goes on even on to Christmas day. To these our people goes my special wish and prayer, that God gives them fortitude and strength to overcome these hardship and that somehow someday they would be able to enjoy the normal privilege of men on earth. In conveying this message I am

making a special appeal to all our people in every walk of life to close their ranks and consolidate their position with a greater degree of harmony and unity than heretofore.

In this message I am compelled to state that the problems which confront our people are indeed enormous but are by no means unsurmountable.

It is the sacred duty of every Indian who is in a position to help another Indian to do so; this form of action should be regarded with sanctity and trust.

In my concluding remarks my solemn prayer is that God show us the path and deliver us from the present situation of oppression and exploitation which faces us in British Guiana. A Merry Christmas and Bright and Happy New Year.

Labour Sweeps Election

GOVERNOR APPEALS FOR CO-OPERATION

The Governor of Jamaica, speaking at the annual dinner of the Press Association last Saturday night where Bustamante, whose Labour movement swept the country in the recent Elections, was present in referring to the Elections said: "I am not alarmed at the prospect which lies before me. I know my fellow men well enough to realize that when they have to assume full responsibility for making a success of what they have undertaken they can be relied upon to approach their tasks with the one overriding desire to do what is best for the people of the country who have elected them.

"To that end I trust that those with whom I have the honour of sharing responsibility for governing this colony will co-operate wholeheartedly with each other and with me in making a success of the new constitution.

"This will require a spirit of give and take and demand a respect for each other's feelings and convictions which I feel confident, will not be lacking in those who have been selected to guide the fortunes of this island for the next five years."—*Canapress*

Letters to the Editor

The Editor "Indian Opinion"

Dear Sir,

Kindly allow me space in your valuable columns to ask you a few open questions of the present Governor Sir Gordon Lethem and the administration as a whole. This I am doing because of certain recent incidents which crowd my imagination and I cannot cipher out things clearly for myself.

(1) To which side does our Governor belong :-

(a) Is it on the side of the capitalistic exploiters of British Guiana or

(b) Is it on the side of the oppressed and exploited inhabitants of British Guiana?

(2) Why is Land Settlement being delayed and frustrated much to the detriment of the people of British Guiana?

(3) Why has the administration and the moribund Legislature removed the dollar a ton export tax on sugar, thus cutting down the revenue of the colony by \$140,000—especially at a time when apparently a financial crisis looms over the colony?

(4) Why has there been such a lassitude in the drainage and irrigation schemes?

5 Why has the administration and the chief executive the Governor not put into effect the recommendations of Mr. Hammond to solve the educational problems of the colony, could there be any motive which keeps operating in the minds of the educational advisers of the administration to keep the people of the colony illiterate so that they the people may be subjected to as much exploitation as possible?

6. Why has Government continued to pursue a policy of chaotic mass unemployment?

Mr. Editor I think the whole government of the colony is badly mismanaged and the people should be awakened from their apathy and set them right.

I banking you in anticipation

I am yours

"EXPLOITED INHABITANT."

What Else ?

To the citizens of Ahmadabad; Mohandas K. Gandbi proposed a modest program: "I'll be really satisfied if Ahmadabad fulfills my cherished dream by achieving the following things: untouchability must be rooted out. Hindus and Moslems should live as brothers. Men and women should be leading a regulated life. Disparity between rich and poor should disappear. Drink, evil and also gambling should be abolished. People should be habitual *khadi* [homespun cotton cloth] wearers. People should observe ideal cleansing mentally and bodily. Nobody should starve in Ahmadabad. Carry out as much as you can of the above. What else? You have my blessing."

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The Governor of British Guiana

A PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE COLONY

Reported Refusal to See Windsor Forest Residents

Contrary to Established Principles of Democracy

BY LIBERTY

Whither blows the destiny of British Guiana and its inhabitants seems clear to all and sundry—Back to the old days of complete Imperialist rule—and crown colony administration.

The entire inhabitants of British Guiana are being told by the Governor

Changes At Air H.Q. India

The formation of the Air Command, South East Asia, under the Supreme Allied Commander has led to a change in the organisation of Air Headquarters, India Command, and a re-statement of the responsibilities of the Air Officer Commanding.

The Air Officer Commanding will continue to be responsible to the Commander-in-Chief for the control and administration of the Air Forces allotted to the N.-W. Frontier but he will now have more specific responsibilities for the development, administration, terms of service, recruitment and selection of personnel of the Indian Air Force, in accordance with the policy of the Government of India. Air Headquarters, India Command, will similarly control the Indian Air Training Corps Units at Indian Universities.

The specific and primary responsibilities for the Indian Air Force now given to the A.O.C., India Command, mark a new and important stage in the development of the Indian Air Force. A considerable share of the appointments in the newly organised Air Headquarters, has been allotted to Indian Air Force officers.

The Air Officer Commanding will act as the Inspector-General of the Indian Air Force in respect of I.A.F. Units and personnel outside his command, such as those now loaned to and serving with Air Command, South East Asia, for operations against the Japanese.

Air Commodore H. J. G. Proud, Inspector-General of the Indian Air Force, is officiating until the Air Officer Commanding is appointed. Air Commodore Proud will then assume the duties of Air Officer in charge of Administration at Air Headquarters, India.

Sir Gordon Lethem to produce more sugar and that labour should bound itself body and soul to that end. Now it is known to all that the huge profits which is declared year after year by the sugar estates is really due to the starvation wages which is being paid to the labouring classes on the sugar estates and the policy of the administration of maintaining a large section of the population unemployed and landless.

There is on the West Coast of Demerara the Plns. Windsor Forest, Hague and La Jalousie which is Government owned and leased to the people; of recent years there is an alarming increase in the expenditure on these plantations ranging from 100 per cent on the back lands to about four hundred per cent on the front lands. A very unsatisfactory state of affairs. Consequent on this alarming situation the inhabitants were worried not knowing where it will end sought some explanation but could find none whatsoever but mismanagement.

The people of these estates are thoroughly dissatisfied with Government's methods as regards to its policy and are wondering whether it is not King Sugar at the back of it all. The old game of creating more landless and unemployed so that wholesale exploitation of human blood, sweat and misery may continue.

Let it be forgotten the people of Windsor Forest about three hundred and fifty came to Government House to see the Governor Sir Gordon Lethem to seek some satisfaction and now I wish to remind my readers that Sir Gordon Lethem is a public servant and in the pay of the inhabitants of British Guiana. His duties are to serve the people, and what did he do, he refused to see them point blank. This is certainly a very serious matter when a public servant refuses to see the public who pays him during working hours.

This is the example which the Chief Executive and King's representative in the pay of the inhabitants of British Guiana has shown to three hundred and fifty inhabitants of the colony. Could there be any atom of justice and democracy in such an action? God's the judge of the inhabitants and time the only salvation to remedy such acts.

Princes On Strike

There would be no free tickets to the viceregal audience for India's princes in New Delhi this year, though all other preparations for it had been made. In the *navendra Mandal* [Chamber of Princes] the two high-backed plush thrones [for the Viceroy and his wife] had been dusted off. The red velvet Victorian armchairs [for India's princes] were all in place. The heavy Mogul tapestries had been hung from the high marble walls. The thick red carpet had been duly swept. India's princely rulers, each entitled to his salute of guns, should soon stalk in, stiff with brocade and glittering with jewels for two days of genteel debates. Afterwards they would be entertained at a formal party by the Viceroy and Lady Wavell.

But two princes—the polo playing Nawab of Bhopal [19 guns] and the tiger-hunting Maharaja of Nawanshar [15 guns]—had more pressing business. The day before the audience they drove up resolutely to the Viceroy's house. To affable Lord Wavell they handed the resignation of the nine princes who constitute the Chamber's Standing Committee. The signatures were impressive; the Nawab of Bhopal, the Nawab of Rampur, the Maharaja of Indore, the Maharaja of Dungarpur, the Maharaja of Patiala, the Maharaja of Jaipur, the Maharaja of Bikaner, the Raja of Bilaspur. This was a royal strike without precedent in Their Highnesses' relations with the Crown. Promptly the session was cancelled.

The cause of the well-bred walkout was reportedly the Viceroy's inattention to modernize the administration of India's many petty states in line with "changing times." Sensing a slight to their sovereignty, the princes were indicating their alarm at the "tendency to alter the States' relationship with the Crown." Some of the ruffled rulers even talked of "browbeating." Most sulked in their princely *mahals* (palaces).

Said a New Delhi newspaper: "You can belabor an elephant and he will not resent it, but a small irritant under one toenail may drive him mad."

Races! Races! Races!

A Grand Horse Race would be held on Christmas Day, at the Bush Lot Race Ground, C. rentyne Berbice.

The General Public is invited to a day of perfect entertainment.

R. C. Sookhoo
Secretary

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