

Indian Opinion

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ONE PENNY

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Agreements For Settling Disputes On Sugar Estates

The workers on sugar estates in British Guiana have been informed that their "LEADERS" have signed agreements with the British Guiana Sugar Producers Association whereby disputes on sugar estates will be avoided.

No one will object to an arrangement whereby peace and contentment will reign on the sugar estates. At present we have a Stipendiary Magistrate in Berbice enquiring into the shooting of a deputy manager on an estate, in the recent past we have witnessed strikes and disputes as regards wages at regular intervals resulting in great loss of time, materials, and produce.

What we are particularly concerned about is the setting up of machinery whereby the LAW could have some control as between workers and employees as regards wages and hours of work on sugar estates. We have no hesitation in stating that the present agreement, signed by two Trade Unions are mere scraps of paper, leaving the workers at the mercy of his greatly entrenched and wealthy employers.

It was amazing to us to find out that the combined membership of the two Trade Unions is less than three thousand with more than half the members engaged outside of the sugar industry.

As an example as to how the Union

The Youth Of [British] Guiana

BY THE WATCH DOG

Quite a lot is being said about the Youth of British Guiana and the majority of the opinions expressed have not been of a pleasant character. Every comment seems to be tainted with the idea that some thing is radically wrong with the youth of British Guiana. The most usual Comment is "what's wrong with the present day youth of the colony."

My view on the matter is concerned with the defending of the Youths of the land. There can be no doubt that the conditions under which 98 per cent. of the youths of British Guiana exist and develop are such as are not fit for wild animals and the most barbarous tribes in the world.

The influence of the present British Colonial economic and politi-

cal structure is squeezing the development of the entire youth of this mis-managed Crown Colony. These youths are all born in economic conditions of semi-slavery and find themselves living in a civilized world. The cross current of the present system of world communications brought about by the radio and airplane accompanied by wider education in contrast with the economic, social and political conditions under which the youth develop have led to his complete disillusionment regarding his lot on earth and tends to drive him to a state of despair and desperation.

The problem of the youths of British Guiana is Freedom from Want and Freedom from Fear. Solve these two
Continued on page 4

cannot hope to control or avoid disputes the workers have to "elect" persons to represent them who have served or worked not less than 76 days during the last six months. Further workers who will be entitled to "vote" for the "election" of persons to represent them must have earned wages in the grinding month prior to the month in which nominations are made.

From our knowledge five hundred workers in the entire sugar industry would not be eligible to "vote" for representatives, therefore the percentage of workers eligible to "elect" representatives will be less than three.

If our recollection serves us correctly the President of the Man Power Association is in favour of every worker having the uncontested right to vote for members of the Legislative Council, yet we are surprised that he has signed an agreement limiting the rights of workers to vote for a representative where he works. Regarding the President of the Workers League it is nothing short of a scandal that he should have been nominated recently to represent Labour in the Legislative Council. We predict an early failure for the new arrangement and urge on all workers to view this agreement as an

ingenuity of the planters to keep them in slavery.

Has the Government no responsibility in this matter? We commend the Government's attention to the new arrangement whereby the Trade Union Council in the United Kingdom has been able to get Government to place before Parliament a Bill to legally enforce agreements reached by COLLECTIVE BARGAINING. It is to be hoped that the Labour Department is keeping abreast of happenings in the United Kingdom and the Commissioner of Labour must understand, if he does not, that he is the employer of the workers of the colony who are in the majority.

In our issue of January 27 we reproduced an instalment of the Weekly News Comment on WAGE COUNCIL by Herbert Tracey, Editor of Labour News from Britain.

We commend these articles to the attention of our Labour Commissioner and the Labour Department, as apparently they are all unaware of English Trade Union principles. We shall return at an early date as to the success or otherwise of the Labour Department seeing that year after year the number of Trade Unionists is rapidly decreasing in British Guiana.

Letters to the Editor

EAST INDIANS AWAKE! THE DAWN IS HERE

The Editor The Indian Opinion
Sir,

The British Guiana East Indian Association, and your paper as its official organ of ventilation, have been doing quite a lot, in order to achieve Indian solidarity in this Country.

How far you both have succeeded in this objective the immediate future will show.

The Rice question will provide the "acid test".

The vital question is now has the British Guiana Rice Industry come into being?

Was it from the efforts of the escape Negro slaves, who perforce had to plant rice spasmodically, in the forest swamps, in order to exist, during their precarious and temporary freedom? or was it from the efforts of the Chinese emigrants?

With due deference to Governor Lethem and those of his ilk, neither of these is the correct answer. Without the least encouragement, and in the face of severe reactions, the Indian emigrant, the great economist that he was, realised that the wage paid him by the Sugar Industry that brought him out from India to British Guiana, was not sufficient to maintain him; he therefore planted a little rice to obtain his staple food, and with his cash earnings from the sugar estates he contrived to live.

His masters encouraged this, but very strictly and no more, because this policy provided cheap labour for and no rivalry to sugar.

In districts like Berbice, where land was not entirely under sugar monopoly for the simple reason that all the lands were not fit for sugar, our early emigrants after the termination of their sugar indentureship, branched off entirely to these lands, and under most unenviable circumstances, and here the spirit of Indian pioneership remains unchallenged, for where many other races of mankind had failed, and where in the future these very races had foresworn not to venture again, the patience, determination, and other unique attributes of the Indian prevailed and prevailed.

These early Indians ventured into cattle and rice, two entirely new industries, the older industries like tobacco and cotton had already perished, and sugar itself was just saved by the Indian himself, and by their efforts in cattle and rice they soon achieved a status in the community.

In due course New Amsterdam became an Indian township, names like Mabsdeva, Saywat, Luchhoo, Rohoman, Ramdehol and Hanuman had to be reckoned with by the Sugar Magnates of the day.

Today's talented scions of these

eminent ancestors, must realise once and for all, that they owe their present position and the assured prosperity of their children yet unborn to rice and not to sugar, and it is their paramount Duty to God, to throw in their influence for the emancipation of their unfortunate compatriots still under sugar serfdom.

Having proved beyond doubt what rice has done to improve our people it is open for all to see what sugar is doing to continue to, keep us in bondage.

RAJA RAGHU

Trinidad To Agitate For New Constitution

PORT-OF-SPAIN, Feb. 1 (CP) Political organizations and trade unions, meeting on Sunday at the invitation of the West Indian National Party agreed to demand a new constitution for Trinidad with a wholly elected single chamber legislature of 30 members and an Executive Council with the majority of elected members chosen by Legislature.

The Governor would act on the advice of the Executive in internal affairs. The organizations pledged to start agitation for the change.

—Councillor Ranjit Kumar, 33, has been appointed assistant Engineer of the Port-of-Spain City Council after a heated debate. Kumar, who paid the statutory \$480 penalty to be allowed to resign the Council graduated a Bachelor of Science, (Civil Engineering) London University when only 18 and a half years.

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AGENTS

Bhagavat Yag At Wakenaam

There will be Celebration of a Bhagavat Festival, sponsored by the Hindus Residents of Zeelandia Wakenaam on the 17th to the 25th February 1945. Preacher: Lalman Pandit of LaGrange, Shrota Ramharak Singh.

Talented Songsters:—Sunny Singh, Pandit Gangaram and son, Paltu Dass and Mahabir Singh will give selected musical items during intervals.

Impressive Lectures on Sanatan Dharma will be delivered by Pandits Rampher Tiwari, Sookdeo Tiwari and Balwant Singh from Dutch Guiana.

All Hindus are Cordially invited.

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Stablising Post-War Wages And Conditions

(Continued from Issue of 27 January 1945)

WIDER POWERS OF WAGES COUNCILS

Trade Boards were empowered to fix only minimum rates and could not impose on the trade within the jurisdiction of a particular Board more than one week's annual holiday with pay; neither could they compel the observance of the principle of the guaranteed week. Under Mr. Bevin's Bill the Trade Boards, renamed Wages Council, will be able to require employers to observe the guaranteed week, and to concede more than one week's paid holiday in the year.

Provision is made in the Bill for Commissions of Inquiry to be appointed by the Minister to investigate the need for setting up Wages Councils and on receiving their recommendation the Minister may proceed to establish Wages Councils.

COMPOSED OF THREE COUNCILS

These Councils are to be composed of three categories of persons appointed by the Minister; not more than three are to be independent persons, one of whom is to act as chairman, and the remainder are to be chosen as equally representative of employers and workers in the industry or trade concerned. The independent members of a Wages Council are in fact representative of the public interest in the determination of wages. When the Minister makes an Order giving effect to the recommendations of the Wages Council the statutory minimum remuneration becomes obligatory on all employers; and infringement of the Minister's Order carries penalties—a fine not exceeding £20 for each offence.

An important provision of the Bill insists upon representation of workers, employers, and the public in the constitution of a Wages Council, a Commission of Inquiry, and any central co-ordinating committee the Minister is empowered to set up for the purpose of co-ordinating the work of two or more Councils where this seems to be desirable. Another important provision modified the existing system of arbitration. Disputes questions arising out of Wages Councils, or the operation of the Minister's Order, will be referred to the Industrial Court instead of to the National Arbitration Tribunal—this Tribunal will cease to exist, and with the obligation on both sides to accept the Tribunal's awards. There will be no provision of penalties of non-compliance with the Award of finding of the Industrial Court; but a decision of the Industrial Court will nevertheless become an implied term

of contract of service between the employer and employees.

Discussion of this for reaching measure has hardly yet begun either in Parliament or outside; but Parliamentary debate will begin with the knowledge that the Trade Unions welcome the introduction of the Bill.

Freedom of Congress Leader Demanded

INDIAN DEADLOCK CAUSES CRISIS IN BRITISH LABOUR PARTY

Hands-Off-India speakers got their way at the recent Labour Party Conference in London.

They clashed with their own Executive Leaders demanding that Ghandi, Nehru and other Indian personages should be given their freedom. Padmore speaks of "pandemonium" at the meeting. Their resolution, though vaguely worded, was adopted. It called for the immediate ending of the political deadlock by negotiations with all leaders of the Indian peoples with the view to the formation of a responsible national government which will rally the entire population of India to the anti-Fascist cause.

A speaker for the Party Executive James Walker, countered as follows: "The Executive yields to no one in its determination to bring about self-government for India. But we do not believe we shall be carrying out our duty to the Labour movement in this country or to the people of India if we simply adopt the irresponsible attitude of washing our hands of the whole affair and leaving the Indians to settle it themselves in the only way it would be settled when people feel so strongly."

Mahatmaji Appeals against use of Term Colonial Peoples

GHANDI: The Mahatma has issued an appeal to the coloured races throughout the world to stop using the term "Colonial peoples" and to describe themselves as the oppressed races of the earth. He hopes that "all coloured peoples will stop fighting among themselves and achieve unity by learning from each other's experiences in their fight for freedom. Civil disobedience and non-co-operation are designed for use when people that is the tillers of the soil, have no political power. But immediately they have political power their grievances will be ameliorated through legislative channels."

Master Race Problem In Africa

EUROPEANS IN KENYA MOVE FOR PERMANENT SUBJECTION OF AFRICANS AND INDIANS

KENYA: Alfred Vincent, leader of the European elected members of the Legislative Council, has called for a conference of all European representatives of mining, agriculture, trade, commerce and other vested interests in order to demand that the British Colonial Office should turn over the control of 4½ million Africans in the Colony to the direct rule of local whites. He has invited General Smuts, South African Premier, to lead the struggle to free Africa from the domination of British officials in London. He adds that his aim in seeking power for the white section of Africa is to maintain the imperial point of view, and not, as opponents allege, to weaken British power and prestige. On the other hand Africans and East Indians settlers in Kenya are opposing the ambitions of the Europeans, East Indian stating that they decline to have anything to do with South Africa unless the Union Government of General Smuts agrees to remove the colour bar and other disabilities which they complain of. Thus comments the "Daily Herald" of London: "We can be certain that their (Vincent and colleagues) idea is not inspired by any motive for improving the lot of the African native. It is aimed at government of Africa by Europeans, for the benefit of Europeans with the permanent subjection of the Africans."

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The Viceroy-Gandhi Correspondence

Continued from last issue

LORD WAVELL'S REPLY

New Delhi,
15th August, 1944.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

Thank you for your letter of 27th July. Your proposals are,

- (i) that you should undertake to advise the Working Committee (a) "that in view of changed conditions mass Civil Disobedience envisaged by the resolution of August 1942, cannot be offered," and [b] "that full co-operation in the war effort

should be given by Congress" provided,

- (ii) that His Majesty's Government (a) declare immediate Indian Independence, and (b) from a "National Government" responsible to the Central Assembly, "subject to the proviso that, during the pendency of the war the military operations should continue as at present but without involving any financial burden on India."

2 His Majesty's Government remain most anxious that a settlement of the Indian problem should be reached. But proposals such as those put forward by you are quite unacceptable to His Majesty's Government as a basis for discussion, and you must realise this if you have read Mr. Amery's statement in the House of Commons on July 28th last. They are indeed very similar to the proposals made by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad to Sir Stafford Cripps in April 1942, and His Majesty's Government's reasons for rejecting them are the same as they were then.

3. Without recapitulating all these reasons in detail I should remind you that His Majesty's Government at that time made it clear:

- (a) that their offer of unqualified freedom after the cessation of hostilities was made conditional upon the framing of a constitution agreed by the main elements of India's national life and the negotiations of the necessary Treaty arrangements with His Majesty's Government;

(To be continued)

The Youth of British Guiana

Continued from page 1

problems and the solution is successfully found to the root cause of the present persons who are worrying about the youths.

There is no doubt that there exists a definite gap between the economic and political conditions of the people on the one hand and their social and educational outlook on the other and unless this gap is bridged early it will tend to widen and heaven knows where it will end.

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