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Editor: S. G. VAZE.

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Topics of the Week.

Unwise Interference.

AS we go to press comes the news that the Congress Ministries in Bihar and U. P. have resigned over the issue of the release of political prisoners. While final comment must await fuller information, it may be said now that the action of the Governors of Bihar and U. P. in vetoing, under instructions from the Governor-General, the proposals of their Ministries to release political prisoners was uncalled for and extremely unwise. Ministries in other provinces have released their political prisoners. The Governors of these provinces have not thought it fit to interfere. There was no reason then for the Governors of Bihar and the U. P. to have done otherwise. Granting that the political prisoners in these two provinces were of the most undesirable kind, the Ministries, who are, or ought to be allowed to be, responsible for law and order in the first instance, should have been allowed to release them if they thought it fit. Congress Ministries have not hesitated on occasions to use preventive and even repressive measures. There is no reason to suppose that, if the political prisoners whom they proposed to release had abused their confidence, the Congress Ministries in Bihar and U. P. would have hesitated to bring them to book even if they had to fall back upon repressive laws for the purpose. Congress Governments have not shown indifference to the maintenance of law and order; in fact, on occasions they have copied the objectionable ways of the old bureaucratic days in upholding law and order. It is most lamentable that the Governors of Bihar and the U. P. should have precipitated constitutional crisis over such a matter as the release of a few political prisoners.

Burma Steals a March.

THE Burmah Government has stolen a march on Provincial Governments in India by its decision to release all political prisoners and to lift the ban on books dealing with advanced political and economic thought. The problem of political prisoners in Burma, it is worth noting, has not assumed the magnitude which it has done in India. Yet by its courage in deciding to give them a chance as free citizens, the present Burma Government has rid itself of an embarrassing legacy left by its predecessors of pre-separation days and made a bold bid for popular approval. By their unconditional release it has put the prisoners on their honour which we hope will stand the test of freedom. The Burma prisoners include even those who were involved in the recent revolt and there is no doubt that the Government is taking some risk in its decision to release them.

IN India the hunger strike in the Hazaribag prison has lent the question of political prisoners an added poignancy. It is of course true that methods like those adopted by the Hazaribag prisoners involve coercion of a peculiar type and ordinarily public sympathies may swing round to the coerced if the question at stake were to be a trifling one. But when somebody deems his life worth the sacrifice for a matter of moment and to the cause he desires to serve, his attempts compel attention and sympathy. We have never approved of this extreme measure to compel consideration of one's problems; but it seems to us that extreme cases may some time justify extreme measures. We wonder if the example of the Burma Government will prove a pointer to Indian provincial governments in this matter.

Congratulations to Mysore.

IT is with immense relief and sincere gratification that we welcome the very sensible action of the Mysore Government in ordering the release of political prisoners and the withdrawal of pending political cases. In many ways Mysore has been among the most enlightened and progressive administrations in India. It was, therefore, a matter for profound regret that of late Mysore attained unedifying notoriety for political repression. One false step led to another; repression provoked further defiance of authority. The situation threatened to develop into an ever-lengthening chain of repression and defiance. The Government have shown great courage and political sense in breaking the vicious chain by their own bold and generous action. The way is now paved for reconciliation and co-operation.

THE timing of the Government's action does not seem to be accidental. It is subsequent to the meeting of the Working Committee of the Indian National

Congress at Wardha and on the eve of the session of the Congress at Haripura. The resolution of the Working Committee meets the objection of the Mysore Government that political organizations in Mysore should owe no allegiance to outside bodies. There is much discontent among a section of Congressmen, particularly of Congressmen in the Indian States, against this attitude of the Working Committee. It is likely to be contested in the Congress session at Haripura. In that controversy Mysore would have played the villain of the piece. The action of the Mysore Government has forestalled that contingency.

WE hope with Mr. K. Chengalaroya Reddi, the President of the Mysore Congress Board, that this action of the Mysore Government is but a prelude to the appointment of the promised committee to enquire into the constitutional changes needed in Mysore and that the terms of reference to the Committee will be comprehensive and liberal. Cochin has stolen a march on Mysore; it is up to Mysore to overtake and outdistance Cochin and show the way to other States.

Azad-Huq Correspondence.

RATHER an unfortunate correspondence is going on between Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and the Premier of Bengal, Mr. A. K. Fazlul Huq. Sometime back the Bengal Premier made a public statement that "horrible oppression of Muslims" was taking place in Bihar and Orissa, reports of which were reaching him in shoals. In reply to this allegation Maulana Abul Kalam Azad challenged Mr. Huq to prove these reckless allegations and stated that "if even one such instance in which Muslims have really been oppressed comes to my knowledge I assure you I will then compel the Congress Ministry concerned either to redress the wrong outright or to vacate their seats." Mr. Huq now says that he did not so far publish the list of wrongs done to Muslims in Congress provinces because he thought it would injure public interest more than help it. But as the Congress papers were charging him with having made an irresponsible statement, he has now "selected cases of oppression from several hundreds at random" and proposes to send them to the press direct as Mr. Azad had already thought it fit to publish his letter broadcast.

IT seems to us that the Bengal Premier's first thought was wise in that such a controversy in public can do nothing more than further embitter the feelings between the two communities, and it is unfortunate that Mr. Azad could not have kept his correspondence private. The publication of letters in haste has been the bane of public life in our country and it is rarely that such publication has allayed suspicions or removed misunderstandings. Because a public controversy cannot be confined to a selected number; it goes on interminably like the chain letters with every man jack taking a hand in it.

NO doubt Mr. Azad has forced Mr. Huq's hands. But we wonder what type of "cases of oppression" the Bengal Premier has in view when he talks of publishing them. For ordinarily it will not be a difficult thing to compile a list of "wrongs" done to stray persons in a whole province and, if one is so minded, a communal colour can be easily given to it. If this unwholesome game is really started, Mr. Huq must know that his own province may not remain unaffected by it. Any community can pile up a list of wrongs to it by a Government as long as there are conflicting interests in society which the Government has somehow to reconcile. What is important is the point whether these sufferings are inflicted on account

of a person's community and religion. The publication of such a list in the press and particularly in the vernacular press is sure to exacerbate communal feelings further and we hope better counsels will prevail with Mr. Huq in the end. The best way would be, it seems to us, if at all the controversy is worth following to the end, for both Mr. Huq and Mr. Azad to issue a joint statement as to the outcome of their correspondence.

A U. P. "Munshi Circular."

IN December last we referred to a "vile and infamous" circular issued by the Bombay Home Department regarding Government printing and advertising patronage to its favourite Marathi paper. Equally amazing circulars have been unearthed by the same enterprising Bombay contemporary which spied out Mr. Munshi's circular. These circulars, in English and in Hindi,—come from U. P. and have no direct connexion with Government. But the spirit underlying it is the same, viz., the despicable desire to make use of official position to advance private or party business interests. Taking into consideration the fact that it is being sent on behalf of a concern with which Mr. Paliwal, who is today a Government servant in U. P., is intimately connected, we feel that the offence involved in it does not differ very much from that over which our provincial governments are agitated, viz., corruption in the services.

MR. S. K. DATTA Paliwal, a member of the Central Assembly, has been recently appointed to the responsible post of the Rural Development Commissioner to the Government of U. P., yet continues to be the editor of a Hindi daily called *Sainik* (the Soldier). These circulars mention all these facts and solicit the advertisers to patronise it as the official position of its editor is bound to profit them. The first circular issued on Dec. 27, 1937 from Agra says :

You are probably aware that the founder-editor of the *Sainik*, Mr. S. K. Datta Paliwal, M.A., M.L.A., has been recently appointed Rural Development Officer, U. P. Government. He has started a very comprehensive campaign for rural reconstruction which has entailed fresh appointment of 1200 workers all over U. P. And remember! *Sainik* is still being managed and edited by this rising luminary. Even under the pressure of his new and heavy duties he will continue at the helm of our affairs.

The *Sainik* has endeavoured to serve the public cause without fear and favour for the last 15 years and it has always received the appreciation and encouragement it deserved. Its certified net circulation is 18,000 copies.

THE other circular, in Hindi, dated January 21, 1938 reads thus :

You must have noticed that we have been sending you the daily *Sainik* for approval. Within a short time we have achieved a success which is surprising. For our daily sales have gone up to more than 9,000. The reason for this is the fact that our editor, Pandit Shrikrishna Datta Paliwal, has become the Chief Officer of the U. P. Government's rural development and has appointed 2,000 persons under himself. He has to start his scheme in one and half-lakhs of villages in the province, and the work has started from the 15th of January. Thus even if we got one reader in one village, the *Sainik* will be read by lakhs of persons. Therefore there is no better vehicle for your advertisement than our daily. We have reduced our rates also, viz., to half an anna per inch.

It requires no wisdom to divine the implied temptation in these circulars. The manager clearly desires to convey that the new employees of the Rural

Development department under Mr. Paliwal will form the readers and canvassers of their boss's daily. Comment on this new corruption in public services is unnecessary.

Disingenuous Defence.

REPLYING to an interpellation of Mr. Lalchand Navalrai, Sir G. S. Bajpai described the nature of the Tanganyika Goldsmiths and Silversmiths Ordinance. This Ordinance gave power to any authorised officer to search without warrant the premises of silver and gold smiths for silver and gold ores; it gave power to the licensing officer to refuse a new licence at his discretion, subject to an appeal to the Governor; and to refuse the renewal of a licence, provided that reasons for such refusal were given in writing, if called upon. There can be no doubt that these are pretty extensive powers to be exercised at the discretion of executive officers without reference to the law courts. Their family resemblance to licensing legislation in South Africa is unmistakable.

ACCORDING to press reports, Sir G. S. Bajpai began by saying that the Ordinance applied to all and not only to Indians. It was only in reply to a supplementary question by Mr. Ananthasayanam Iyengar, who apparently had more knowledge of the situation than Sir G. S. Bajpai would volunteer, that the latter admitted that there were no European silver and goldsmiths! In reply to a further question if the Ordinance would not affect only Indians, Sir, G. S. Bajpai insisted that there was no racial question involved in the Ordinance! This is some disingenuous defence—hardly convincing. Is it really necessary for the Government of India to defend in the Indian legislature the anti-Indian policies of Colonial Governments? It might have been stated at the very outset that the legislation, though worded in general terms, would in effect apply only to Indians, as there were no non-Indian silver and goldsmiths. From the Indian point of view the legislation would not have been worse in operation if it had explicitly stated that it applied only to Indians. Considering the racial antipathies in Africa, not excluding Tanganyika, the effect on Indian interests of giving such large discretionary powers to British Officers can hardly be concealed by the general terms of the legislation. The situation in South Africa will repeat itself in Tanganyika if the Government of India takes up this complacent attitude. A little more zeal and candour may not be out of place.

Anti-Inequality Front.

SPEAKING at the banquet in Johannesburg in honour of Sir Riza Ali, the out-going Indian Agent-General in South Africa, Mr. J. H. Hofmeyr warned the local Indians against forming with the African Negroes a non-European front. It is surprising that so liberal a politician as Mr. Hofmeyr should misjudge the objects of a non-European front, if it were formed, and should give advice which does him no credit. Certainly, Mr. Hofmeyr should know that what he called the non-European front is really an anti-inequality front, a protest against unjust discriminations—in this case based on racial prejudice. Any disability may bring together for common action all those who suffer from it. Does Mr. Hofmeyr wish that those who have a common interest to promote should not combine together for that purpose? Combined action for common purposes is the very breath of modern politics. The better remedy for disabilities imposed on non-Europeans in South Africa is for Europeans to remove those disabilities.

IT would be nothing short of Machiavellian if the Indians in South Africa were given some concessions on condition that they kept aloof from the Negroes. It offends ethical principles, but it will at least be diplomacy: divide and rule. In the present case, not even a bribe is offered to the Indians as a price for their holding aloof from the Negroes. To exalt the white race at the sacrifice of the coloured races and then warn the aggrieved from combining to redress their wrongs is to enthrone injustice and tyranny.

WHETHER an alliance with the native against the European will be a course of wisdom on the part of the Indians is, however, a different question. Besides, voluntary help to the native in sympathy for his cause and strategic alliance with him for the furtherance of one's interests are not one and the same thing. The peculiar position which the Indian emigrant occupies in Africa and the hostile attitude of the rulers of the country, make it very difficult for him to identify his efforts for better rights with the African's struggle for emancipation. The *Leader* puts the difficulty in a nutshell. It says:

Indeed, we fear that not only would they have not been able to help anybody, but that they would injure their own interests. In the past, whenever occasion demanded, the Government of India have lent their full support to the Indian community. If, however, Indians involve themselves in a movement which has nothing to do with them, and if the South African Government take steps against them, the Government of India will not be able to intervene in their behalf.

Plantocracy in Trinidad.

ACCORDING to the cabled news published in the Indian press, the Commission appointed to enquire into the labour riots in Trinidad of last year has found that labour in Trinidad had genuine grievances, but it lacked recognised machinery to ventilate them and secure redress and, therefore, recommended the creation of a Labour Department and an Industrial Court. The situation is thus similar in Trinidad and British Guiana. In both countries labour has serious grievances; it is unorganized and is, therefore, unable to secure redress. It is true that labour, particularly agricultural labour which is almost wholly Indian in race, is not adequately organized. It is not, therefore, in a position to bargain with the employers with any chance of success. Governmental intervention is under the circumstances necessary. This view was not unknown to the Governments concerned. It has been pressed repeatedly on the attention of the Government of Trinidad by the Labour Party, of which the Hon. Capt. A. A. Cipriani is the most prominent leader. The late Governor of Trinidad, Sir Murchison Fletcher, acknowledged the fact in his speech in the Legislative Council. He is reported to have said:

I come to the Government itself. There we are just as much to blame as anybody else. Captain Cipriani, President of the Labour Party, has for years moved this Council to fix a minimum wage.

IT was not want of knowledge, nor want of recognised channels, that stood in the way of redress of labour grievances. The planters and other employers were unwilling to move and the Government was too much under the influence of the employers to do anything itself, even if it wanted to. Government had hitherto taken cover under the doctrine of *laissez faire*: capital and labour should settle their disputes, the Government merely holding the ring. Now, the Commissions both in British Guiana and in Trinidad

have held that such a situation was unsatisfactory and have recommended the creation of Labour Departments to protect the interests of labour and mediate between employers and employees.

* * *

THE usefulness of these Labour Departments is bound to be very limited. These departments will be controlled by the local Governments, which, in turn, will be controlled by the planters and other employers, whose power remains unimpaired. The power of the British employers can be measured by the fact that the late Governor, Sir Murchison Fletcher, was for all intents and purposes recalled or dismissed because of his outspoken speech in the Legislative Council in which he criticised in none too severe terms the policies of the planters and other employers (Vide SERVANT OF INDIA, 9th Dec. 1937). This dictatorial power of the employers will remain undiminished until the Governments become responsible to the peoples they govern. In the meanwhile, some independent agency is necessary to safeguard the rights of the

employees. In the case of Indians in these Colonies this can be best secured by the appointment of agents of the Government of India. For, agricultural labourers are mostly Indians, and agricultural labour is more difficult to organise than industrial labour anywhere in the world, and is, therefore, more in need of Governmental protection, and the Government of India have a responsibility towards the Indian populations in these Colonies.

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A Correction.

IN the note on the Madras Debt Relief Bill on page 66 of the SERVANT OF INDIA of the 10th inst., We had stated that one of the amendments proposed by the Madras Government gave it power to constitute special tribunals to dispose of cases arising from the legislation. This is a mistake, for which we apologise. It is true that the Government gave notice of this amendment. But eventually it did not proceed with it.

CONGRESS NON-INTERVENTION AND STATE REPRESSION.

THE presidential address of Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya at the All-India States' Workers' Conference held at Navsari on Tuesday last is a conspectus of the situation, both internal and external, in the Indian States. But of the many subjects dealt with in the address the one that is of immediate interest and that is exciting a keen controversy at the present moment relates to the Congress Working Committee's draft resolution on the States. This lengthy resolution purports only to be a restatement in more precise terms of the policy which the Congress has been following for the last few years, but Dr. Pattabhi has shown clearly how it constitutes a retrograde step in the evolution of the Congress policy.

A setback undoubtedly it is, inspired obviously by Mahatma Gandhi, but it is only fair to remark that in one important respect it registers an advance on the policy that has been advocated by Gandhiji. The Mahatma has ever tried to "keep the Congress unspotted" from the States, except that he felt no scruples on the ground of principle to take from the States' people as much help as he could in purely British Indian agitations of the most extreme kind, viz. civil disobedience campaigns. But when it came to British Indians extending help to the States' people he has consistently cried: Hands off. He does so not only on grounds of expediency and practicability but on the high ground of principle. To British Indians, he holds, the States are foreign territory: they have, therefore, no right to interfere with the internal administration of the States. This legalistic ideology of the Mahatma must be firmly grasped. He has no doubt said that "India of the States is undoubtedly an integral part of geographical India." But he has himself cautioned the public in the next few sentences against riding this theory to death and drawing from it conclusions which he thinks lack validity. For he continues: "But that carries us no further than where we stand to-day. Portuguese and

French India are also an integral part of geographical India, but we are powerless to shape the course of events there." The Indian States are to British India no better than Portuguese and French India, or Afghanistan and Ceylon, which he mentions *eo nomine*, or like China and Peru, which he does not mention. They are foreign territory, with which we in British India must not attempt to meddle in any way.

When Mahatma Gandhi speaks of the powerlessness and the helplessness of the Congress in the matter of rendering assistance to the States' people, he does not mean merely that the Congress at present does not possess the requisite resources in men and money to make the assistance effective; he means further that on account of the States being "independent entities under the British law," the Congress is debarred by constitutional considerations from giving effective help even if it be in a position to do so. He arrives at this conclusion even though the Congress itself consists of both British Indians and the States' people. The doctrine does not stand in the way of the latter helping the former; but it becomes an impassable barrier when the latter call for the help of the former. The Working Committee's draft resolution rejects this one-sided theory to which Mahatma Gandhi clings so tenaciously. It fully admits that the so-called British India and Indian India together constitute one and indivisible India; that, whatever the case may be in the eye of law, the Congress cannot make any distinction between them; and that internal administration alike in the Provinces and the States is the common concern of the Congress. It is no less the duty of the Congress to stimulate and even initiate a struggle for political emancipation in the States than in the Provinces. If a differentiation is observable between the extent of the Congress activities in the Provinces and the States, it is due to the same reasons for which a lesser differentiation is observable between the extent of the Congress activities in one Province and another, due, that is to say, to the

varying political conditions in the areas in which the activities are conducted. But the Congress regards its jurisdiction to comprehend both the Provinces and the States, and it, therefore, considers it its moral duty to strike as hard a blow as possible for political freedom in the States just as much as in the Provinces.

So far the Working Committee's resolution is a decided advance on Mahatma Gandhi's theory and is entirely unexceptionable. But the cloven hoof of the resolution consists in that it inhibits the Congress as an organised body from taking an active part in the States' people's movements. Thus in effect the Working Committee reaches the same conclusion as Mahatma Gandhi, but from different basic positions and ideologies. Mahatma Gandhi would impose such a disability upon the Congress from theoretical considerations and the Working Committee from practical considerations. The Working Committee recognises that the Congress has not been able to do anything worth mentioning for the States' people and feels that for some time it will not be able to do anything either. The reasons for this are two: first, the Congress organisation in the States is very feeble; second, the struggle in the States has to be carried on against much greater odds than in the Provinces on account of the much more rigorous repression that it has to contend against. The Congress, therefore, is unable in its present state to do much in the States. So far everyone will agree, and we do not suppose that the States' people are labouring under any delusion as to the possibilities of help from the Congress in the immediate future. But where the Working Committee goes wrong is in forbidding all activity in the States in the name of the Congress. Its reasoning is as follows: If the activity is weak, as it is bound to be in the present circumstances, it will only bring discredit to the Congress. If, for instance, the national flag is hoisted and the State authorities dishonour it, the Congress will be unable to avenge itself for the insult offered to the whole nation. The best plan would, therefore, be to save the Congress from any direct involvement in such disgrace. The States' people are of course bound to carry on the struggle as best they can, however discouraging the circumstances may be; any British Indians who are impelled to participate in the struggle from a feeling of national solidarity may well do so. Only they should join the struggle in their individual capacity and not as Congressmen. This will prevent the Congress from being placed in a tight spot in which it cannot do any good. It will also prevent the States' people from forming any exaggerated expectations of Congress help and from depending too much on extraneous help and losing their spirit of self-reliance.

This is a fallacious argument. If the national flag is dishonoured and the dishonour is not avenged, it will discredit the Congress whether the activities in connexion with which the insult is suffered are carried on by individual Congressmen in the States and the Provinces or by a recognised unit of the Congress. If these activities fail, the responsibility for failure

will rest no less upon the Congress as a body than upon individual Congressmen participating in them. Such failures are our allotted portion in the initial stage of any movement; and they do not bring any discredit. Secondly, the States' people are fully aware of the limitations upon the active help which the Congress can render under the present conditions, and they would certainly repel the suggestion that any outside help would deprive them of their sense of self-reliance. This is a gratuitous slur which the Working Committee casts on them without any warrant. What the Congress should do is to affirm its bounden duty to help the States and the Provinces in equal measure, but enter a caveat to the States' people that, for reasons beyond its control, it can in fact give very little help to them at present. It should also be ready actually to give this help, ever so little as it may be, when in its own judgment it is in a position to do so. But it should under no circumstances place a ban on Congress help, as the Working Committee's resolution does. If this policy is adopted, it will, we believe, satisfy the States' people who appreciate Congress difficulties and will not throw upon the Congress any burden which it is unable or unwilling to bear. The policy, now proposed, of rigid non-intervention is theoretically unsound and practically mischievous. The possibilities of mischief in it are many. Seeing that the Congress is not only unable to give any effective assistance to their subjects but is under a legal prohibition to do so, the State authorities will in all likelihood pursue a policy of even more ruthless repression than they are now doing, and the consequences will be disastrous. Non-intervention will work in this country just as it has worked in Spain, for instance. Indeed, in its resolution on War, the Congress blames the British Government for its profascism. The blame that rightly attaches to Britain proceeds from its policy of non-intervention which in effect has helped Italy and Germany. Similarly, Congress non-intervention will result in putting the screw still tighter on the States' people. Thus the States' people will have as much justification for accusing the Congress of encouraging repression as the Congress has for accusing Britain of encouraging fascism.

In order to make the policy of non-intervention completely effective, the Working Committee's resolution orders a disbandment of all the Congress Committees that exist at present in the States and prohibits the formation of new ones. As a matter of fact the Congress objective should be to strengthen the existing Committees and to organise new ones as soon as it can do so. For, admittedly, non-intervention is now dictated by want of power, and the want of power is due to weakness of the Congress organisation in the States. A remedy must, therefore, be sought in as speedy a removal of this weakness as may be practicable. In the measure in which the Congress organisation grows in strength, the need for following a non-intervention policy will become less. By preventing the growth of the organisation, however, the Congress will only perpetuate the circumstances in which it will find it impossible to carry out a policy which it has taken power to itself to carry out. This

power was taken in 1928. The constitution of the Congress as it existed at the time had imposed a policy of non-intervention upon the Congress, though the States' people were enrolled as members thereof. The proviso to para. 3 in Article VIII of the constitution of the time was as follows:

Provided, however, that the inclusion of Indian States in the electorate shall not be taken to include any interference by the Congress in the internal affairs of such States.

This proviso was deliberately deleted at the 1928 session on the motion of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The effect of the Working Committee's resolution is to re-insert it now. The ban to be put on interference in the States' affairs and on formation of Committees in the Congress must be raised. This will make very little difference to the actual help which the States' people will get, but it will make the Congress position sound in theory and will at least not help in intensifying the persecution which the States' people are suffering at the hands of their Governments.

As a matter of fact, the duty of the Congress is to give greater help to the States' people who need it more than to British Indians who need it less. Just

as the civil authority, which is pledged to deal with all sections of the community in equal justice, not only does no wrong but is fully justified in tilting the scales in favour of the wage-earner rather than in that of his employer, so the Congress must even in the interest of equal justice show greater solicitude for its weaker members than for its stronger. Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical has said:

Rights must be religiously respected wherever they exist. Still... when there is question of defending the rights of individuals, the poor and the badly-off have a claim to special consideration. The richer class have many ways of shielding themselves and stand less in need of help from the State; whereas the mass of the poor have no resources of their own to fall back on, and must chiefly depend upon the assistance of the State. And it is for this reason that wage-earners, since they mostly belong to that class, should be specially cared for and protected by the Government.

It is a tragic circumstance that the Congress is unable to work effectively where its assistance is most needed; for this situation no one can blame the Congress. But the least it can do, is not to withdraw its countenance and imprimatur from such legitimate and peaceful movements as can be carried on in the States.

THE RAILWAY BUDGET.

SIR THOMAS Stewart presented this week his first Railway Budget as Member of the Government of India for *Railways and Communications*, a portfolio newly created to co-ordinate road and rail transportation systems. He took the occasion to say that, though he could not watch with folded hands the destruction through uneconomic competition of the railroads in India valued at some Rs. 750 crores, he realized that road transport system had come to stay and that it was to the economic advantage of India that it should be developed and co-ordinated with railroad system, and he gave the assurance that he would endeavour to bring about such co-ordinated development.

Apparently as part of this co-ordination, Sir Thomas announced that the Railway Department would offer road services complimentary to the railway between Lyallpur and Jhang in the Punjab as an experimental measure. We hope the experiment will be successful and that ere long co-ordinated rail and road services will become the normal system.

Now that Sir Charles is not only a member for Railways but also for all communications, perhaps it will be an improvement if his speech contained a comprehensive review, as a supplement to his Railway Budget speech, of the developments in all forms of communications under his charge.

Coming to the Railway Budget it is a matter for congratulations that the surplus for 1936-37 amounted to Rs. 1.25 crores instead of the anticipated Rs. 15 lakhs, and that the current year's surplus is estimated at Rs. 2.75 crores instead of the budgetted amount of Rs. 15 lakhs. The surplus budgetted for 1938-39 is Rs. 2.50 crores. Considering the experience of the last and current years, the surplus for the next year seems to be too conservative. This conservatism is not without some justification. In our review of the

last Railway Budget we noted that, while goods traffic kept up an improvement, passenger traffic had actually declined. The present budget discloses an improvement in passenger traffic. Goods traffic also showed an upward tendency until November last, when it suffered a check. The check in goods traffic was largely due to the present conditions of the cotton market. The international situation, particularly the situation arising from the Sino-Japanese War, is not very hopeful for the recovery of the cotton trade. On the expenditure side, there is estimated an increase in expenditure largely due to the increase in the price of coal. Thus cotton and coal, the lower prices of the one and the higher prices of the other, have adversely affected the current year's operations, and may affect the next year's as well. On the whole, therefore, a conservative estimate is safer.

Though over Rs. 20 crores are to be spent under Capital and from the Depreciation Fund during the two years 1937-38 and 1938-39, most of the money is to be spent on renewals. During the current year the King George VI Bridge across the Maghna River on the Assam Bengal Railway was opened. Three new railway lines are being constructed in Sind to serve the areas developed by the Lloyd Barrage.

Both Sir Charles Stewart and Sir Guthrie Russel make brief references to the Report of the Railway Enquiry Committee, presided over by Sir Ralph Wedgwood. "The Wedgwood Committee have reaffirmed the majority of the recommendations of the Pope Committee and have added others which appear to offer fruitful avenues of investigation", said Sir Charles. "In fact, the Railway Enquiry Committee Report reinforces in many instances action already taken by Railways on their own initiative or on the recommendations of the Pope Committee", said Sir

Guthrie. While the former is diplomatically polite to the Report, the latter is frankly critical. Sir Guthrie is not convinced that the Committee's recommendation regarding speeding up of goods transport is economically sound in India. In a highly industrialised country like England with many industrial centres it is economical to run full train loads daily; but in India, with few industrial centres, such daily service is very uneconomical.

One of the active policies adopted by the Railway administration, on the recommendation of the Wedgwood Committee, was the concentration on internal, as against external, publicity campaigns. In consequence, the Indian Railways Publicity Bureau in New York was closed down and attempts are being made to stimulate passenger traffic in India itself by a greater and more direct appeal to the third class passenger, "who after all is our best customer." In this connection efforts are being made to improve the amenities of the travelling public in India. The progress in this direction is very disappointing. Of third class carriages of the new design approved in 1936 by the Railway Central Advisory Board, only 33 broad-gauge and 115 metre gauge carriages were under construction in 1937-38. The 1938-39 programme includes 179 broad gauge and 109 metre gauge coaches of the same kind. Considering the urgency of providing improved facilities for third-class passengers, this provision is much too disappointing. Now that the policy of pampering the foreign tourists with luxuries of travel is being modified in favour of providing at least minimum human comforts to the third class passengers in India, we hope the new policy will gain momentum. In this connection it may be considered whether it is any longer necessary to have three and even four classes on railway trains, and whether two will not be sufficient, preferably coach and sleeper.

While the Budget speeches make references to operation costs, renewals and capital charges etc., etc., they hardly make any mention of the human factor involved in running the railway services. Sir Guthrie asked for congratulations on the fall in operating ratio from 74.1 per cent. in 1932-33 to 65.9 per cent. in 1937-38, but he did not tell us how this reduction was brought about and if it involved any reduction in wages of employees, if not some improvement in them. Some reference to the conditions of labour on the railways will not be out of place.

Nor is there any reference to the progress of Indianization in men and materials. It was mentioned that the King George VI Bridge, referred to above, was built of Indian material with Indian labour. It would be interesting to know if the superior staff was also entirely Indian, and how much foreign element is still in the Railway service in India. Reference was made in the speeches to the standardization of railway requirements to facilitate their local manufacture. "We are now able", said Sir Guthrie, "to obtain a large part of our requirements from manufacturers in India instead of having to import them from abroad." It will be interesting to have figures to illustrate the statement.

BOMBAY TEXTILE COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

A PERUSAL of the official summary of the interim report of the Bombay Textile Labour Enquiry Committee and a cursory glance over one or two of the more important chapters of the report itself prepare the reader's mind for a favourable reception of its recommendations. The report bears the impress of an economist and, therefore, its contents are not easily digestible. A considered opinion on its important recommendations must necessarily await a careful study which is not possible within so short a time after the publication of the report. An interim expression of general views on the interim report is, however, possible; and that is all that is attempted here.

The Committee has taken a reasonable and commonsense view of its interim term of reference, viz., "whether in view of the present condition of the industry an immediate increase in wages can be given in any occupation, centre or unit of the industry pending the conclusion of the Committee's work and the preparation of its report." It has, and correctly, interpreted "the present condition of the industry," to mean "the conditions of the last six months, in the light of the history of a few previous years and in relation to such future trends" as the Committee could justifiably forecast. Whether an immediate increase "can be given," the Committee has interpreted "in the ordinary sense of trading conditions permitting the industry to give the increase." After giving an interesting survey of the cotton textile industry in the Bombay Presidency, the Committee enters into an illuminating discussion of the factors in the industry that made its recent history, viz., decline in imports of piece-goods, recovery of the home market, extension of exports and increased efficiency of production; and reaches the conclusion that the depression has definitely disappeared, that the industry has improved, that the improvement is not of a purely temporary nature and that, therefore, it can well face the future in a spirit of confidence and can meet additional charges of a reasonable magnitude for raising the wage level.

The report shows that the Committee has taken considerable pains in examining the financial position of the textile industry and has proved, after eliminating bloated figures of over-capitalisation, heavy financial liabilities and excessive depreciation charges, that the Bombay industry is estimated to show a betterment in its financial position to the extent of Rs. 76 lakhs for 1937 and that the Ahmedabad industry should show the betterment approximately 2/5ths of that secured by Bombay. As against this betterment, the Committee has shown that the earnings in July 1937 in Bombay, Ahmedabad and Sholapur have come down by 25.40%, 12.93% and 13.38% since July 1924, May 1934 and July 1926 respectively. Having thus considered almost all the factors and discussed them on a thoroughly rational basis the Committee has reached the unanimous conclusion that there is a

strong and powerful case for an immediate wage rise.

Having thus established the improved condition of the industry due to normal trading conditions, it is indeed curious that the Committee should not base its case for a wage rise on that improvement. It all of a sudden drops this factor like a hot potato and draws, for purposes of recommending a wage rise, only on the surplus resulting from the fall in the price of cotton. It calculates this surplus at 9.8% of the total cost of production. Allowing 1.8% of this for meeting the possible rise in the other elements of cost, the Committee arrives at a net widening of profit-margin of 8%, which is available for a wage rise. It must be confessed that it is not possible to appreciate the arguments employed by the Committee in ignoring the betterment of the industry in almost every respect and in drawing only on the surplus arising out of the fall in cotton prices. It is also difficult to understand why the Committee has recommended that a wage rise should be only to the extent of half the amount of this surplus, and not the full amount. And even of this half amount of the surplus, the Committee has set apart a certain portion for meeting the cost of the social legislation which Government have in the region of contemplation. It may be that social legislation may increase the cost of production on account of the contribution the employers have to make. But if the employers are asked, as is sought to be done by the Committee, to contribute out of the earning to which the employees are entitled on account of the improved position of the industry as part of the wage restoration, it really means that the employees make the employers' contribution in addition to their own. And it is yet not known whether the Government are going to contribute at all. If they do not, the workers are going to have social legislation entirely at their own cost! And it is a matter for regret that the Jairamdas Committee should be indirectly a party to such an arrangement. The Committee has shown, in fact, excessive caution in recommending the amount of the increase in wages.

The Committee has taken a fair and reasonable view in recommending a sliding scale for a wage increase, the bottom dogs getting the highest rise and the top ones upto Rs. 75 the lowest. The earnings have been divided into five categories and the rise varies from three annas in the rupee to one anna. It is calculated that as a result of this recommendation, the annual wage bill will be increased by 9% in Ahmedabad, 11.9% in Bombay and 4.3% in Sholapur. It is not, however, easy to calculate the percentage rise in the workers' earnings; and, therefore, it cannot be said to what extent the workers' demand for the full restoration of the wage cuts effected since 1933 has been met. To the extent to which it has been met, the Committee is entitled to the workers' gratitude. In industrial disputes it is hardly ever that any party gets full satisfaction. Compromise is the very essence of their settlement. It is perhaps after

many years that the workers have been recommended a wage increase without a struggle or a strike. It would, therefore, be a right step for them to accept the Committee's recommendation and continue to agitate for more. It would not be prudent to reject it and resort to direct action to obtain their full demand. It is to be hoped that the workers, particularly in Bombay, will take a reasonable attitude and the right decision.

Along with the Committee, the Bombay Government deserve to be congratulated on promptly accepting the Committee's recommendation. Their resolution on the report is a clear direction to the mill-owners to carry out the recommendations immediately, failing which they will not hesitate to take such action as may be necessary to implement the recommendations. This is as it should be.

PROVINCIALISATION OF THE SERVICES.

ON the motion of Sir Maharaj Singh, the U. P. Assembly carried unanimously on February 3 last a resolution recommending that the Government should request the Government of India to move the Secretary of State to provincialize the Indian Civil Service, the Indian Police Service and the Indian Medical Service. In moving the resolution Sir Maharaj Singh made it clear, and all those who spoke upon the resolution concurred with him, that it was aimed not at the members of these services but at the system under which they were constituted. It was a happy chance that a person who had served under and with members of these services and who eventually occupied a position of authority over them, happened to sponsor this resolution. Sir Maharaj Singh urged that the present practice and procedure regarding the recruitment, position, salary, grades and control of these services should be altered as they were anomalous to the position of the provincial ministers of autonomous provinces. He urged that

the continued recruitment of the three services by the Secretary of State was undesirable and unnecessary. The principle was wrong. It was constitutionally anomalous, on which ground the Lee Commission transferred other services earlier. All the provincial Governments except the then United Provinces Government expressed the opinion, in reply to the Government of India's letter of June 20, 1924, that whenever transfer of a subject took place the transfer of the service concerned should be contemporaneous. ... If this considerable number of officers were recruited locally the saving would not be less than fifteen or twenty lakhs, an amount which the Premier would regard with the utmost greed in view of the financial state of the province for the last several years. There was also the point of view of administrative convenience. Officers recruited either in England or other Indian provinces had no previous knowledge of this province. In the case of the I. M. S. the position was still more indefensible. No less than eleven civil surgeoncies had to be filled by British officers at *delectable* places. No Indian could be appointed civil surgeon of Nainital, Meerut, Lucknow, Cawnpore and some other stations. This was wholly incompatible with both provincial autonomy and administrative convenience. ... There was no statutory bar against the acceptance of this resolution by the higher authorities, Section 244 of the Government of India Act fixed no date, though the

Joint Parliamentary Committee was opposed to any change for five years.

The U. P. Premier, Mr. G. B. Pant, wholeheartedly supported the resolution although he said that Congress had no desire to bring about minor changes in the constitution but was pledged to throw it overboard. As far as the Congress was concerned they wanted to throw the Government of India Act off and trample upon it. They did not want a small alternation here and there. Till they had real power they would have to put up with disabilities. The proportion of these services which they were required to entertain in the U. P. was greater than in any other province, except the Punjab. It was absolutely necessary in the interest of even a minimum reasonable standard of administration that these services should be recruited by the provincial Government. The system had been imposed on the plea that efficiency should not be sacrificed in the initial stage of the introduction of autonomy, though the older personnel would have remained for many years even if recruitment were stopped at once. But Mr. Pant asked where efficiency remained when those who were not fit enough to compete with Indians must be brought in by nomination to all these services. Their failure to get by examination was itself a proof of their inefficiency and the manning of the service by inefficient people was very dangerous, if not disastrous. They wanted to man the services by missionaries not mercenaries, and missionaries they could find only in our land. The resolution goes beyond what the Indian members of the services sub-Committee of the first R. T. C. asked for viz., the transfer of the control over these services to the Government of India. Sir Maharaj Singh probably left a margin for bargain in his resolution and also secured the co-operation of the Congress Party as the result.

The question of the transference of the recruiting authority for these services from London to New Delhi was discussed at length in the sub-Committee. A division was found to exist between the Indian members on the advisability of provincialising all the services they were unanimous on one point viz., that their control and recruitment should be vested in the Government of India and the Secretary of State should be divested of his powers in the matter. The Indian view was expressed by Mr. C. Y. Chintamani who observed that

the greater mass of opinion has been that the Civil Service and the Police Service should continue to be All-India Services, while the Medical Service, the Forest Service, and the Public Works Irrigation Service need not be so regarded. But on one point there has been complete agreement—agreement approaching absolute unanimity—namely, that even the recruitment of the All-India Services shall be made under the control of the Government of India and no longer under the control of the Secretary of State for India. It is fatal to the whole scheme of the representative and responsible government, on the construction of which we are here engaged, to leave to a distant authority like the Secretary of State who is responsible to the British Parliament the decision in the matter of recruitment of the Services. In the Provinces there has been few handicaps more serious acting against the success of Ministers than the circumstance that the administrative agency to whom they have to function is not an agency in the recruitment of which they have any part or in the control of which they have more than a very minor share.

So keen was Mr. Chintamani on this point that he went on to say that "the Indian Civil Service as we have known it all these years, must from the point of view of future recruitment cease to exist.

Sir A. P. Patro insisted that

as regards the future recruitment, it may be divided into two parts, namely, provincial recruitment and recruitment on the All-India basis. As regards the provincial recruitment, it should be, practically speaking, a principle that every Government should have its own agency to carry out its own policy.

Sir Chimanlal Setalwad put the matter in forcibly convincing manner. To him it was

an entire negation of responsible self-government and Dominion status for India to say that the All-India Services shall be recruited by the Secretary of State for India—not only recruited by him, but that the present system under which he has control should also continue. What would be said of the Secretary of State for the Dominions if they were to claim that he would recruit the Services in the Dominions, that he would control their salaries, their transfers? Would that be tolerated for a moment? And if we are going to really have a change in the administration of India, if you really mean to make India self-governing, if you really mean to raise India as a Dominion, then it is absolutely anomalous to vest the recruitment and the control of the Services in the hands of the Secretary of State. It is absolutely inconsistent with the position we are claiming for India. It is an inconsistency which goes to the root of the matter. If India is going to have self-government, if India is going to be a Dominion, then India must have the power and the right and the duty to recruit its own Services. I am, therefore, strongly of opinion that all future recruitment of the Services should be in the hands of the Government of India.

The Liberals at the R. T. C. were so keen on the transfer of the recruitment to these Services to the Government of India for a perfectly cogent reason. When the questions connected with the terms of reference of the Services Sub-Committee were being itemised under different heads Sir Chimanlal raised the question of control. Lord Zetland immediately referred to item (4) which dealt with Recruitment and observed that "the control goes with the recruiting authority." The Chairman of the Committee, Sir W. A. Jowitt, also agreed that "the one is a corollary of the other." The Muslim members, among whom were Sir Shafaat Ahmad Khan, Sir (then Mr.) Zafrullah Khan and Sir A. H. Gaznavi, and Sir Henry Gidney were anxious about minority representation and seemed inclined to leave many of the details to the consideration of the Service Commission which was expected to be set up in 1939. But they then expected that the Federation would have been worked for at least three or four years by that time. None, however, questioned the demand that these services should be under Government of India direct for all purposes.

The Committee recommended in the end that the I. E. S. and the I. C. S. recruitment should be continued on an all-India basis, but no Judicial officers should be recruited from the I. C. S. and that the Indian Forest Service and the Irrigation Branch of the Indian Engineering service should be provincialised. Messrs. S. B. Tambe and Shiv Rao took the view that all the Services should be provincialised forthwith and Dr. Ambedkar, Sir Zafrullah Khan and Sardar Sampurna Singh wanted only the European element of

the I. C. S. and the I. E. S. to be recruited on an all-India basis. None imagined that even in the event of the grant of a federal constitution with Provincial Autonomy the British Government would continue the anomaly of recruiting Indian Services from a distance of seven thousand miles. The Committee reported its conclusions on the question as follows :

Whatever decision may be reached as to ratio of Indian and European members in the Services, the majority of the sub-Committee hold that recruiting and controlling authority in the future should be the Government of India. They would leave to that authority the decision of all questions such as conditions of recruitment, service, emoluments and control. Those who take this view attach importance to complete control over the services being vested in the Central and provincial Governments. A Minority of the sub-Committee think that the recruiting authority should be the Secretary of State, since they hold that without an ultimate right of appeal to him, and through him to the British Parliament it will not be possible to secure recruits of the required type for the British element in the Services. Those who take this view consider that adequate control over the members of the Services can be secured to the Indian and Provincial Governments under the devolution rules.

Many members of the Sub-Committee were inclined to postpone consideration of details because of the Services Commission which was, according to arrangements then in existence, to examine the whole question in 1939. As those arrangements have been scrapped, there is no other way but the one adopted by Sir Maharaj Singh to open up the question and force the Government of India and the Secretary of State to take up the matter. We hope legislators in other provinces will also follow suit in condemning the present illogical situation where a Government is unable to discipline its own servants.

CURRENT COMMENT.

THE NEW POLICY OF THE CONGRESS.

THE resolution of the Congress on this subject does not countenance the position, advanced with persistence by Mahatma Gandhi, that it is not within the legal competence of the Congress to intervene actively in the affairs of the States, which are, strictly speaking, foreign territory ; but it maintains nevertheless an attitude of non-intervention, though only on the ground of lack of sufficient strength. This attitude of rigid non-intervention does not find unanimous support, in Congress ranks, and we are glad to see the *Bombay Chronicle* raising its weighty voice in protest. It observes :

It (the resolution) practically amounts to this that, in the present circumstances, Congress as such may not offer any material help, in men or money, to the people of any State in their struggle for freedom, mere "moral support and sympathy" not availing much in such a struggle. We do not feel this is the best solution of the problem. We admit there are formidable difficulties in the way of the Congress working in the States. But if the need for the work is established, the difficulties, indeed, call for more active attention from the Congress, though also for more caution in the activities to be undertaken. There is more dignity in the cautious facing of great difficulties than in virtually flying from them. We concede, too, that non-intervention stimulates self-reliance among the people of the States. But will the same argument be urged to support non-intervention by the all-India Congress organi-

sation in a particular province or a district? Moreover self-reliance on the part of a few against tremendous odds may all go to naught unless they are helped by their fellow-countrymen when help is possible and necessary. Finally, it does look anomalous that Congress may actively help a country like China by boycotting Japanese goods but may not help the people of a State in its struggle, say, against ruthless repression. We suggest that in respect of Congress intervention there should be no essential difference between the provinces and the States but that in view of undeniable difficulties in the latter intervention should be permitted in exceptional cases and should be adapted to the circumstances of each case. The mere fact that it is open to the Congress at any time to intervene in a State is bound to have a salutary effect on the rulers inclined to be oppressive. On the other hand, a rigid rule of non-intervention will be used as a license by several rulers.

But the *Tribune* sees nothing but wisdom in the Working Committee's resolution. Unlike the *Chronicle*, it desires no change in it, nor does it see any betrayal of the hopes given to the states' subjects in it. On the other hand it sees in it "a substantial improvement upon the past position of that great organisation in this matter of vital importance." The change in the policy is wise, says our Lahore contemporary because

for the Congress to interfere directly in the affairs of the States would be to place a powerful weapon in the hands of both the Princes and the Paramount Power to throttle the movement for freedom both in the States and in the rest of India. The Princes will inevitably call upon the Paramount Power to protect them from such interference under the terms of their treaties, and the Paramount Power which in the past has been none too friendly to the freedom movement will have a plausible reason for interference with the further progress of that movement. On the other hand if the people of the States will follow the advice of the Congress and seek to promote freedom movements in their respective territories, relying mainly on their own effort, but at the same time with the sympathy and moral support of the Congress and the people of the Indian provinces behind them and the active aid of individual congressmen or other patriotic Indians, it will be extremely difficult both for the Princes to invoke the aid of the Paramount Power to suppress such movements and for the Paramount Power itself to lend its support to them in suppressing it. Any British Government will find it extremely difficult, in the famous words of Lord Lothian, to "interpret paramountcy to mean that Great Britain has the duty of supporting a ruler in denying to his own subjects the very rights which have been established by the authority of Parliament in British India."

The *Guardian* draws attention to an implication of the resolution which seems to have escaped notice. It points out that

if the Congress withdraws from the States completely, people of the States will be deprived of progressive incentives altogether. They will stand isolated not only from British India, but from one another, because an inter-State popular organisation would be just as repugnant to individual State authorities as the Indian National Congress. In these circumstances, the sole meeting ground where the States can be exposed to democratic influences would be a Federation of some sort. Is the Congress aware of this effect of its resolution? In such a case, the initiative for steps for approximation towards the conditions that the Congress lays down, would be left entirely in the hands of the Princes and the people would be asking for the moon when they demand rights as against the constitutional

rights of the Princes as agreed to by all parties, whether the Paramount Power or the Congress. The withdrawal of the Congress from the States, is itself an admission on its part of the right of the Princes to lay down limits for a popular movement led even by an all-India organization.

On the capitulatory resolution on the Indian States and the Congress attitude towards them, the *Independent India* holds strong views and does not hesitate to express them. It says :

By passing the resolution recommended by the Working Committee, the Congress will obey the orders of the autocratic rulers. There was a time, not very long ago, when Congress Committees could not function legally and properly in other parts of India, and the dignity of the national flag could not be always successfully defended. We did not liquidate all Congress organisations. On the contrary, we insisted upon our right to carry on political activities and defend the national flag. If the Congress stands for full responsible government in the States as the Working Committee resolution declares, we fail to see why it should not defend its principles there just as it did in the British provinces in the past, and may have to do again in the future.

The hope is expressed that the Congress session may not pass this resolution. We are afraid that there is very little chance of any of the resolutions undergoing any important change in the A.I.C.C. or the Congress at Haripura. Verbal changes there might be, but the spirit of the resolutions, which betrays a *volte face* on previous policies, will remain.

Our contemporary makes some trenchant observations on the "repudiation not (only) of all the other more radical declarations of the Congress about the new constitution, but also even of the compromise resolution of the Working Committee itself." The resolution appreciating the work of Congress Governments, our contemporary believes, is a step backwards from the position which the Congress took towards the new constitution two years ago. From "wrecking" it came to "combatting" and now, so runs the resolution "the Congress has permitted the formation of Ministries by Congressmen with a view to strengthen the people and hasten their march on to the goal of independence." The *Independent India* comments on this thus :

This ambiguous re-statement of the purpose of office-acceptance implies the admission that the goal of independence can be reached by working, for all practical purposes, the Constitution which, according to the same resolution, entrenches British Imperialism and prevents the popular Ministries from solving the grave problem of our country. "Work outside the Legislatures" is still regarded as "the vital part of the Congress program." But the nature of that work is not defined. Nor is the movement given any plan of action. On the other hand, the Congressmen in office are given a completely free hand to interpret the Congress program so as to suit the restrictions and limitations of their position. We fail to see how their activities will be co-ordinated with the activities of the Congress as a whole. As a matter of fact, the activities of the Congress organisation have been severely curbed on the plea that the Ministers should not be embarrassed. By adopting the resolution recommended by the Working Committee, the Congress will practically liquidate all mass activity and stake its political fortune on the doubtful achievements of its representatives in office.

Reviews.

GEOGRAPHICAL HISTORY OF THE QUR'AN.

A GEOGRAPHICAL HISTORY OF THE QUR'AN
VOL. I. By SYED MUZAFFARUD-DIN NADIR.
(The Author, 106, Harrison Road, Calcutta.) 1936.
23cm. 161p. Rs. 5.

THIS book is written with the aim of giving a systematic account of the peoples of the Qur'an—the final, unalterable, and the complete exposition of the religion of Islam. The test of the fixing of periods and of the identification of names in ancient history is beset with difficulties inasmuch as like all other traditions, Arabian traditions do not mention dates. Nor is the Old Testament so helpful in this respect, owing to its brevity and lack of details. Under the circumstances the author relies on engraved tablets and monuments. In his method of research the author has emphasised the necessity of finding the connection between the names of historical persons and those of their places of residence, particularly because Semetic races generally named towns and villages after their inhabitants.

The above mentioned view explains the title of the present work: A Geographical History of the Qur'an. It is curious that a people isolated from the surrounding countries by mountains and deserts should describe their country as an 'island'—"Jazirat-ul-'Arab"—and yet should regard it as a central place of human habitation. It is significant, however, that the names, certain regions of Arabia, as given by the Arabians during the Qur'anic period point to the nature of the land. For, example, the low-lying lands on the south of Hijaz are known as 'Tehama' and 'Ghor' which literally mean low-lying lands. The eastern part which is generally high in level is known as 'Najd' which signifies high land. The tract lying between these two is called 'Hijaz' which literally means a screen or barrier. The name of the fertile and blessed province 'Yemen' is derived from 'Yumu' which means a 'blessing.' 'Arud' means a curve, and the tract including Yamama, Oman, Bahrin is called 'Arud' because it forms a curve.

The author holds the view that Arabia was the true birth-place of the Semites and weighs the evidence of European scholars. Arabia has practically no rivers and, therefore, her people frequently migrated to the neighbouring countries—Babylon, Syria and Persia. As contrasted with the Sumerian Civilization "which was old, with the seeds of death in it, the Semetic civilization was instinct with life and vigour, because the Semite had come out of the free air of the desert and had in his veins abounding life." They are referred by the Egyptians as 'Hycos' i. e. Shepherd kings. Frequent references in the Qur'an to the Ad people (great builders and founders of an old civilization) were eye-openers to the Arabs:—

- "Ad gave the lie to the Apostles....."
- "Do you build on every height a monument : vain is it that you do....."
- "And when you lay hands (on men) you lay hands (like) tyrants."
- "So guard against the punishment of Allah and obey me."
- "But the Ad always turned deaf years to their prophet."
- "So we sent on them a furious wind....."
- "Destroying everything.....so that naught could be seen except their dwellings."

The inscription of Ād, the second, in the ruins of Hisn-i-Ghurāb (near Aden) reads :—

"We dwelt at ease for ages within the courts of this castle.....Rolled in upon us the sea with brimming tide. Our rivers flowed with copious fall..... Among the lofty palms, their keeper sowed fresh datesAnd we hunted the game, by land, with ropes and reeds. And we drew forth the fishes from the depths of the sea. And we walked proudly in silks.

After the Ād, Thamūd rose to power. But when the Thamūd refused to believe in one God.....the anger of God befell them in the form of an earthquake."

The remaining chapters of the book are devoted to the descriptions of the Jurhamites the Tasm and Jadis and the Minācans in order. The last chapter deals with the Lihyarites. Testifying to their religious observance of pledges Herodotus writes :—

"When any wish to pledge their faith, a third person standing between the two parties makes an incision with a sharp stone in the palm of the hand near the longest fingers of both the contractors; then taking some of the nap from the garment of each, he smears seven stones, placed between them, with the blood....."

This tribute paid by a foreigner to the denizens of the desert cannot be over-estimated.

B. G. NENE.

TEMPLE ENTRY PROCLAMATION.

THE EPIC OF TRAVANCORE. By MAHADEV DESAI (Navajivan Karyalaya, Ahmedabad.) 1937. 21cm. 251p. Re. 1-8-0.

THE Epic of Travancore rightly immortalises the proclamation of the Maharaja of Travancore, which gave to the Avarna Hindus of that State the right to worship in public temples. Of course, every Hindu

has the inherent right of worshipping in temples and to deprive him of the same is to perpetrate a wrong. But custom and tradition have struck such deep roots in our country and our country is so vast in extent that it takes generally years of arduous endeavour for any reform movement to make an impression. The State of Travancore was one of the worst criminals so far as its treatment to untouchables was concerned. It had not only untouchability but also unseeability and unapproachability. Yet such is the force of persistent, sincere agitation that within twelve years of the Vaikom satyagraha the Avarnas were given in Travancore the full right to worship in public temples. As the writer of the book has very clearly shown, the whole credit of this temple-entry in Travancore does not belong to the efforts of the Harijan Sevak Sangh but also to the efforts of these pioneer workers who sacrificed their lives at the altar of their dear cause.

All the more important and encouraging is the fact that the temple-entry proclamation of Travancore has not been accepted merely as a State fiat; it has won the sympathy and approval of the caste Hindus as well. The personal testimonies given in the book of Sj. Rajagopalachari and Sj. G. Ramachandran amply prove that the temple-entry-proclamation has proved a success in Travancore, the worst affected part in the whole of India so far as the rigour of untouchability is concerned. It would surely prove a success in the other parts of our country as well. The time has therefore arrived for reformers in all parts of India to carry on a country-wide agitation in favour of temple-entry. Unless the people take the initiative it would not be proper even for the Congress Ministry to proceed in the matter. We hope Sj. Mahadev Desai's book would inspire the reformers everywhere throughout India to take up this cause and agitate for it in right earnest. If that is done, India will very soon find herself in the fortunate position of Travancore.

S. S. MISRA.

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