

The Servant of India

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CONTENTS.

	Page
TOPICS OF THE WEEK. — — —	61
ARTICLES —	
Rejection — — —	62
Shielding Misgovernment — — —	63
A Scheme of Debt Redemption — — —	64
The Textile Strike. By R. R. Bakhale — — —	65
OUR LONDON LETTER. — — —	67
OUR PARLIAMENTARY LETTER. — — —	67
MISCELLANEOUS:—	
Unemployment Relief—Mr. N. M. Joshi's Speech in the Assembly — — —	68
CORRESPONDENCE:—	
Post Office Economies. By A. R. C. — — —	72
BOOKS RECEIVED. — — —	72

Topics of the Week.

Some Sense of Realities.

IN their letter declining to attend the All-Parties' Conference initiated by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Dr. M. A. Ansari and Mr. Asaf Ali have recapitulated some very excellent canons of politics. The constitution for India should be based on the will of the Indian people and should not be imposed by the British; a constitution based on self-determination has the practical advantage of the willing co-operation of the people and those who pay for the machinery of the constitution should have the right to control it. In virtue of these admirable principles they suggest that, in the first instance, an electorate at least double the size of that recommended by the Lothain Committee should be created and that, subsequently, this enlarged electorate should elect representatives who would frame a constitution for India, which the British Government should enact. Nothing could be more ideal and more satisfying, at any rate to India.

But is it practicable at the present time? Messrs. Ansari and Asaf Ali have no doubt in the matter and it is because the All-Parties' Conference did not propose to discuss such a proposition that they found it useless to attend it. "Even now," they said, "there is time for achieving this result." If ever such a plea had any chance of success, it was when the Labour Government was in office and Lord Irwin announced the Round Table Conference and invited opinions as to how the Conference should be constituted. But at that time no such suggestion was influentially made. Now when the Government of India under Sir Samuel Hoare has become Hitlerite in its *tempo*, and the prestige of the Congress is very low, it is idle to dream of self-determination.

Pandit Jawaharlal also made a similar suggestion but he admitted at once that at the moment it was impossible to carry out the plan. An unofficial

effort, though not exactly on the same scale and plan, was made when the Indian National Congress based itself on the four-anna and the yarn franchises and constituted the Nehru Committee. But that Report was thrown overboard by the Congress itself in a fit of vexation. The Muslims would not approve of it. Do Messrs. Ansari and Asaf Ali entertain any hopes that a fresh effort *at this time* has any chances of success? If so, let them take the initiative and get a move on.

Perhaps these friends do not contemplate an unofficial move but an official one. Is it seriously contemplated that Sir Samuel Hoare could be persuaded to enlarge in the first instance the electorate to double the size recommended by the Lothain Committee, convokes a constituent assembly and commission it to draw up a constitution for India and agree to put it through the British Parliament? Well, well.

Sir Frederick Sykes on the White Paper.

REUTER has obligingly acquainted us with the reaction of Sir Frederick Sykes, the ex-Governor of Bombay, to the White Paper. His views even by themselves are no doubt entitled to weight; but for us they have interest more particularly as an indication of the direction in which the wind of British opinion is blowing in matters Indian. Naturally he restricts his attention to Bombay about which his knowledge is, comparatively speaking, both recent and intimate. For Bombay he emphasises the need of a bicameral legislature from the beginning of its career as an autonomous province. It is not clear from the cabled summary of his views if he would like this to be accompanied by the curtailment of any of the wide overriding powers which it is contemplated under the constitutional proposals to vest in the Governors. That at any rate was how the mind of the Bombay Government was working in years gone by. Much of constitutional importance has happened since then, with all of which we need not concern ourselves. All that is necessary to note is that the Simon Commission was unable to make up its mind on the subject of provincial second chambers while the despatch of the Government of India on the Commission's report recommended their being set up only in three provinces which did not include Bombay. The White Paper too closely follows the lines of the despatch; but Sir Frederick Sykes as a 100 per cent. Conservative apparently wants all provinces, though he is careful to mention Bombay alone, to be saddled with upper houses! All that we can say is that if that is his view, he has misjudged public opinion in this presidency and his five years' association with it has not enabled him to see the wood for trees.

He also expressed his preference for indirect as against direct election to the Central Legislature. On this point too he has failed to assess the strength of public feeling with any degree of precision. Even

Sir Samuel Hoare with all the distance that separates him from us must be said to have shown himself a greater realist than the Bombay ex-Governor when in his evidence before the Joint Select Committee he consistently resisted all suggestions from die-hard quarters for a reversion to the indirect method of election in the case of the Federal Legislature. That is far from saying that the battle of direct election is finally won. In fact Sir Frederick Sykes' ostentatiously expressed partiality for second chambers may be regarded as an unpleasant reminder to us of the strenuous fight that may be put up within the Committee itself with a view to inducing it to decide in favour of the indirect form of election for the Central Legislature. On which side the balance will eventually tilt it is more than can be said. Anyway a whittling down of the constitutional proposals in this matter as in that of provincial second chambers seems to be a not altogether inconceivable contingency.

* * *

Late Mr. A. Rangaswami Iyengar.

THE death on Monday last at the comparatively early age of 57 of Mr. A. Rangaswami Iyengar creates an almost unfillable gap in the ranks of Indian journalists. He began life as a clerk in Government service but soon exchanged it for practice of law. But this too did not retain his undivided allegiance for very long. It was journalism apparently for which he had real fascination with the result that in 1906 he found himself on the staff of the *Hindu*, the uniformly high level of whose writings has been the envy of older and more resourceful newspapers. Since then he has been in the public eye not so much as a lawyer but as a journalist and politician. His work on the *Hindu* as also on the *Swadeshamitran* with which he was associated for nearly twenty years was marked by rare ability and sound knowledge of public questions and it did not take him long to come to be counted amongst India's foremost publicists. It could be said of him without exaggeration that what was a loss to the profession of law was a distinct gain to that of journalism. His success as a journalist must also be ascribed to his thorough grasp of Indian constitutional problems upon which he was looked upon as an authority. His books on that subject still take a very high rank in constitutional literature. As a nationalist Mr. Iyengar's heart was more with the Congress, of which he acted as a secretary for three years, than with the moderate school of thought. But during the last two or three years even the Congress did not seem to command his unquestioned loyalty. His membership of the Assembly during the days when the Swarajists dominated it was characterised by vigorous and meritorious work for the country. On the present constitutional discussions too Mr. Iyengar did not fail to leave his mark; for there is general agreement that his participation in the work of the R. T. C. and the Joint Select Committee was both useful and pointed. It is a serious loss to the country that the advantage of his sound constitutional knowledge should have been denied to it when it would have been most valuable.

Articles.

REJECTION.

WHEN a statesman of Mr. Sastri's moderate and balanced judgment condemns the White Paper Scheme outright, it is not unnatural for some people to ask why the constitution should not be

rejected and why the best men in the land should be persuaded to work it. It does seem paradoxical and self-stultifying. But it only seems so. On the merits of the Scheme nationalist opinion has expressed itself in unequivocal terms. The denunciation was so thorough that there cannot be the least doubt that nationalist opinion does not want the White Paper as it stands.

Then why not reject it? Certainly it should, if we could. But can we? If there had been enough political unity and purpose in India, rejection might have been attempted. But if India had the power to reject it, she could as well have utilised it to improve the White Paper in the direction she desired. If wishes were horses, beggars would ride. The tragedy of India is not that nationalist opinion has any illusions about the White Paper or has a sneaking fondness for it but that it lacks the sanctions either to reject it or to amend it as it likes. Today the communalists and the conservative interests influence Indian politics more than the nationalists and the radicals and they stand to gain by the White Paper constitution. They are supported by the Conservatives in England who control the British Government. The nationalists in India and their friends and supporters in England are unfortunately in a minority, as it were. They have been reduced to the impotence of the Labour group in the British Parliament. They have as much power to accept or reject what the communalists and the conservatives in India and England are determined to impose on India as the British Labour group in the British Parliament have to resist the will of the National Government. In the circumstances, the question of acceptance or rejection has but an academic value. And there is no reason why those who get some consolation by indulging in the academic discussion should be denied it.

But as a practical proposition, it is of no significance. It is quite unnecessary to talk of rejection if thereby it is only meant to express disapproval of the White Paper. The denunciation of the White Paper by Mr. Sastri, for instance, cannot be made more emphatic by an impotent threat to reject it. Rejection can have only one other implication apart from the expression of an adverse opinion; it is a negative action; the boycott of the constitution when it is put into operation. And it is significant that not many who would reject the constitution would boycott it subsequently. They too would submit to it ultimately.

There are however some who would boycott it because to them such action was the inevitable corollary of their disapproval. But is it in the interests of the country? Boycott can be justified only if it succeeds in holding up the constitution and compels the Government to withdraw it. If India can effectively boycott the White Paper, why, she can as well get it modified as she wants. After all, India wants a better constitution and not merely an escape from the White Paper and the *status quo*. As long as that power is lacking, it is no public service to boycott the constitution and let the worst people in the land

exploit it against the public weal. A bad constitution worked by bad people will do greater harm than the same worked by good people. Of two evils it is better to choose the lesser. The Indian National Congress, under the leadership of the Mahatma, boycotted the Montagu constitution. Has it been withdrawn? For the best part of the decade it has fallen into the hands of the communalists and the conservatives. And the nationalists, the boycotters as well as the non-boycotters, have had to suffer their government. They could neither hold up the constitution nor mitigate its penalties nor escape them themselves. The boycott has been a disservice, not a service, to the country.

The worse the constitution the better must the quality of the men who handle it if it is to do minimum harm and maximum good whatever that may be. Even from the point of view of enlarging in practice the powers that the constitution formally concedes, it is more profitable to grasp it than to boycott it. It will not improve because the nationalists boycott it. Mr. de Valera, much as he abhorred the Irish Constitution, was shrewd enough to grasp it and bend it to his purpose as far as possible, than to hold aloof with folded hands and disdainfully ignore it.

Nationalist opinion is free to express its opinion on the White Paper. It has done so and said that it was most unsatisfactory. It has not the power to reject it; it can only submit to the inevitable. It is free to work the constitution or to boycott it. Since it is a service to the Motherland to work it themselves than to boycott it and let it be exploited by the communalists and the conservatives, it advocates the working of the constitution. While it has no power to coerce the Government; it is free to plead. And it pleads that the White Paper constitution be improved.

SHIELDING MISGOVERNMENT.

THE Indian States' People's Conference did well to organise a special session at Delhi last week-end to protest once again against the Indian States' Protection Bill which at the time was being discussed in the Legislative Assembly. The organisers deserve to be congratulated upon their securing Mr. K. Natarajan, the veteran social reformer and sober politician, to preside over the session. Mr. Natarajan is no demagogue who revels in denunciation with questionable motives. He is no enemy of the Princes. If anything, he is inclined to be more charitable than just to them and more appreciative than critical of them. Being a social reformer first, he appreciates the good services done by some of the Princes to that cause. He would preserve the Princes in their States in the expectation and hope that social reform would gain thereby. When a man of his friendly leanings towards the Princes does not hesitate to take the strongest possible exception to the Indian States' Protection Bill, the Princes as well as the Government may well pause to consider and reconsider their attitude.

Sir Harry Haig had contended in the Assembly that the Bill did not interfere with legitimate criticism

constitutionally expressed. Whatever be the intentions of the framers of the legislation, the courts pay no attention to them but go by the wording of the laws. "Bringing the administration into hatred or contempt" is a singularly vague and elastic formula which in British India has been invoked in the past for purposes far beyond the intentions of the legislators. In the case of most of the States, the mere description of their administration is bound inevitably to bring it into hatred and contempt. Mr. Natarajan cited certain instances mentioned in a book published abroad which, if true, are enough, more than enough, to bring any administration into contempt. Moreover, governed autocratically as are the States, it is impossible to separate the Prince from the administration and to criticise the latter without touching the former, Mr. Natarajan pleaded that personal attacks on the Princes should be avoided. So they should. It is true that such criticism does no good and is mostly resorted to by blackmailers for whose attacks the Princes offer a wide front. The sins and failings of the Princes may be no worse than those of other plutocrats but they, unlike the latter, have an intimate effect on the quality of public administration in the States. The Prince is the State; and his virtues and vices are the virtues and vices of the State; it is impossible to dissociate the one from the other. As Mr. Natarajan put it, the only safeguard for the Princes against such personal attacks is to interpose a constitution between them and their subjects. A bill of the kind proposed will, if at all, protect them from criticisms in India; it cannot protect them from criticisms abroad, either in the empire or outside. There is yet no proposal to protect the Princes in England or in foreign countries. Stifling of criticism in India will only drive it to other lands. The British Government dare not propose a law of this kind in England or persuade foreign Governments to do so on the specious ground that the British Government, as the Paramount Power under obligations to the Indian Princes, cannot be indifferent to criticisms of their proteges.

The number of interventions of the Paramount Power in the internal affairs of several States during the last decade very fully justifies the criticism of the administrations in the States. It is notorious that the Paramount Power does not step in until things become either adverse to British interests or much too, too rotten to be tolerated any longer. Long, unbearably long, have the subjects of a State to suffer before the Paramount Power intervenes. What have the unfortunate subjects of a State done that they should be condemned to suffer the worst of tyrannies for an intolerably long period before relief arrives? Much of the sins of the British Indian Press may be forgiven if thereby one single State has had its maladministration put right. The subjects of most of the States have no constitutional method of ventilating their grievances except through the British Indian Press and platform. And to block that only vent is indeed a piece of cruelty which the subjects of the States do not deserve.

It is most disconcerting that almost all the Provincial Governments who cared to express an opinion on the Bill more or less approved of it. But it is not surprising considering that the voice of the Provincial Governments is that of their British element. The bill is a pact between the

British Government and the Indian Princes to buttress each other's reign of autocracy in India. Sir Harry Haig asked India to be reconciled to autocracy in the States; he thought it superfluous to add, British India too.

A SCHEME OF DEBT REDEMPTION.

THE scheme which Lieut.-Col. E. W. C. Noel, Director of Agriculture, has outlined for the redemption of the accumulations of debt of agriculturists in the North-West Frontier Province is of more than local interest. The Banking Inquiry Committee has estimated the total rural indebtedness of the Province at 11.33 crores of rupees, on which Col. Noel says 1.20 crores is paid annually as interest. The receipts from land revenue amount every year to about 20 lakhs. Thus the ryot pays six times as much to the moneylender as to the State, and even so he contributes nothing to the lightening of the burden of debt, for the principal remains at the same old figure. Of course, as Col. Noel says, the amount of interest is "out of all proportion to the services rendered by the moneylenders" and must undergo a sweeping reduction. More or less the same conditions obtain in other Provinces as well and need the same kind of heroic remedy as the one proposed by the Director of Agriculture for the Frontier Province.

The first thing that occurs to one in reflecting on this question is the necessity of forming Conciliation Boards for the purpose of effecting a drastic downward adjustment of the agriculturist's debt, and Col. Noel of course suggests it as the first step. But whether, in the hands of these Boards, the composition of debt is to be brought about on a voluntary or compulsory basis is not known. The Central Provinces Government first contemplated the compulsory system, but abandoned it later in favour of the voluntary, though so many concessions are given to those who would agree to a settlement and so many handicaps are placed on those who would not, that in practice the voluntary system does not leave much choice to the creditor. Conciliation Boards, wherever they are instituted, are still in an experimental stage and are not allowed to conciliate debts of more than a certain amount. Such is not the case, however, with Col. Noel's scheme. He proposes to tackle, almost at one stroke, with the whole rural debt. All debts, large or small, will be compounded simultaneously. Such a scaling down of debts may appear at first sight to be hard on the moneylender, but in fact it is not. For the fundamental fact to be remembered about these debts is that a large proportion of them (Dr. R. K. Mukerjee puts them at 30 to 40 per cent. in the United Provinces) are wholly irrecoverable. It does no harm to anyone to write off this portion of the debt. On the contrary it would be to the distinct advantage of the moneylender to rub it off completely and to allow his debtor to start afresh. The Agricultural Debt Enquiry Committee of the United Provinces therefore recommended, in the case

of unsecured loans, that "it should be enacted that, on the application of an agriculturist debtor or on the filing of a suit against him for the recovery of a loan, the court will be required to hold a summary inquiry into his debts, his assets, and his probable income and reasonable expenditure, and will grant a decree limited to the amount which this inquiry shows that he ought to be able to repay within five years (in the case of debts incurred after the commencement of the Act) and seven years (in the case of debts incurred before the commencement of the Act); and will dismiss the balance of the claim or claims," which means, as Mr. Knox pointed out as Chairman of the Sub-Committee, which considered the question, that the court will fix the amount which it is within the capacity of the debtor to pay "after allowing for the expenses of cultivation and reasonable subsistence." The portion of the debt which the ryot is unable to pay may as well be cancelled to the advantage of creditor as well as debtor.

It is no use, however, reducing a debt either through a Conciliation Board or a court, unless steps are taken to insure its repayment. For this purpose the formation of land mortgage banks is generally recommended. But these banks, where they exist, are at present in a position to help only the smaller ryots, because they are unable to make large advances. In Madras Presidency, where the movement of land mortgage credit is strongest, the banks' usual loans do not exceed Rs. 500. Col. Noel therefore suggests that an agricultural bank be established and the moneylenders' compounded loans be repaid in its shares. These shares the moneylenders may sell in the open market or retain them, in which case the money lenders would receive $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. interest and recover their capital in 32 years. Col. Noel thinks that in order to establish such a bank, the Government of the Frontier Province will have to secure a loan from the Government of India for a crore of rupees to cover the initial cost and to serve as working capital. The compounded debt will be recovered from the ryot as arrears of land revenue. Col. Noel says that "if the peasant is freed from debt, he can and will pay three times the present land revenue, which will be a great alleviation of his present burden." Needless to say that the whole of India will watch with great interest the progress of this scheme, for in all provinces men's minds are turned to some such scheme. For instance, Sir Moropant Joshi only the other day put forth the following suggestions in the *Daily News* of Nagpur:—

(1) Present secured debts to be taken up and interest being calculated at 4 per cent. per annum, irrespective of original agreements, should be lumped and only *half* should be payable in full satisfaction. The sowcar to get a Government bond at 4 per cent. compulsorily for the amount.

(2) Only such fields mortgaged are to be dealt with as leave a margin to repay principal and interest at 5 per cent. per annum spread over 25 to 40 years.

(3) Repayments to be exacted each year at the

rate of Rs. 4 for principal and 5 for interest on every Rs. 100—thus for a debt of Rs. 1,000 Rs. 90 yearly will be repayable to the State.

(4) The land so redeemed will be under mortgage to Government and till complete repayment the ryot will not be able to mortgage or encumber the same.

The problem of agricultural indebtedness has become very acute and we have to apply almost desperate remedies to solve it. The schemes that are being suggested therefore deserve the careful and earnest attention of all well-wishers of the country.

THE TEXTILE STRIKE.

THE Conference of the textile workers that was recently held in Bombay was both an indication and a warning. It indicated in some measure the deplorable plight to which the workers have been reduced by the employers' ruthless attacks on wages and employment and it warned those concerned against the danger of allowing the present situation to drift any longer. Its resolution also showed the present temper of the workers. It may be that the Conference was not as representative as it could and should have been. It may also be that its resolution was a hotchpotch of relevant and irrelevant matters and was not happily and logically worded. But it cannot be denied that the Conference and the resolution have begun to focus public attention on the state of affairs in the textile industry and that they have helped the public to realise the gravity of the situation.

It was, however, unfortunate that neither the resolution nor the speeches thereon gave an adequate picture of the extent of unemployment and wage cuts which have been made the grounds for the organisation of a general strike. For this, however, the organisers of the Conference cannot be held to be wholly responsible. The non-recognition of the Union which organised the Conference and its own depleted strength have shut out the possibilities of collecting accurate statistics through trade union machinery; and it is not in the interest of the mill-owners to publish the figures of employment and wage reductions. The absence of a Statistics Act precludes Government from compulsorily collecting the necessary information. But they have a Labour Office which collects industrial statistics from time to time and it was the duty of Government to publish them for the information of the public. As a matter of fact, the Labour Office, whose efficiency and promptness is second to no other department in this Presidency, has collected such information as it could by voluntary efforts, and Government owes it to the public that it is published as soon as possible. In the meanwhile, I desire to place before the public such information as is made available to me by the courtesy of the Labour Office and by other sources, so that the public may know how serious the situation is and how dangerous it is to allow it to continue.

Taking the City and Island of Bombay, it is seen that 5 out of 84 mills have been scrapped and have thrown out of employment nearly 10,000 workers. Twenty-nine mills have been closed down and over 50,000 workers have lost their employment. Three mills have been officially reported to be working partially and thereby reduced 1,300 workers. I have, however, reason to believe that many more mills have been working partially; but the extent of unemployment caused thereby it has been found difficult to ascer-

tain. The total number of unemployed among workers is thus easily more than 61,000. The average number of workers in the Bombay mills on the 1st of January 1931 was 1,36,700, of which only about 75,000 are expected to be working in the 50 mills which are not closed. Fourteen mills which are working night shifts have employed about 10,000 workers. There are thus 86,000 employed as against 61,000 unemployed workers. In other words, for every 100 persons employed, there are 70 workers who are thrown out of employment. It is impossible to assume that such serious unemployment is due entirely to trade depression so long as the crash of the Currimbhoy group of mills is still fresh in the mind of the public. The argument of trade depression also loses much of its force when it is realised that in the midst of the closure of 29 mills, no less than 14 mills are working night shifts. It should also be remembered that while Bombay is going down and down, Ahmedabad and other up-country centres have increased their mills and the all-India production of cotton piece-goods has increased by nearly 300 million lbs. during the last ten years. It is only those who refuse to look facts in the face who will be bold enough to assert that Bombay alone is singled out for this misery.

It is true that there is hardly any textile centre in India, except Ahmedabad, which has not reduced wages. But the cuts made vary in their percentages to such an extent that they cannot be said to have any intelligent basis behind them. To take only a few centres, Madras has reduced wages by about 15 per cent. and C. P. by about 20 per cent. Sholapur, which pays the lowest wages in the Bombay Presidency, has cut wages by 12½ per cent.; but Ahmedabad, which, it is claimed by its employers, pays the highest wages in the whole of India, has made no cut whatever. And its industry is still flourishing. In Bombay City and Island, the position of wage cuts is highly provoking and irritating. It may be emphasised that the factors of trade depression, foreign competition and central taxation are common to Bombay and up-country centres and other factors of inland competition, provincial and local taxation are common to all the mills in the City. And yet what a diversity in the conditions of the mills and wage cuts do we find! The conditions of mills can well be understood by some of them being closed, some working partially and a few others working night shifts. Of the 29 mills that are closed down, 15 were in such a state that they had to be simply closed down before their management could think of making any wage cuts; and the remaining 14 were closed after making cuts, in some cases, more than once. Forty-eight out of the remaining 50 mills, which are working, have made cuts varying from 7 per cent. to 44.5 per cent. The Labour Office figures show that 56 mills made wage

cuts and 12 of them were subsequently closed down, whereas my figures for the same are 62 and 14 respectively. This slight difference does not, however, make any appreciable difference in assessing the extent of wage cuts in Bombay City; and in order to err on the safe side, I take the Labour Office figures to make out my case.

There are only two mills in Bombay which have so far made no direct cuts in wages. But these have been put on the rationalisation basis by giving more looms and spindles to the workers. An indirect cut in wages even in these two mills is thus inevitable, though its extent has been found difficult to ascertain. As against this, the E. D. Sassoon & Co., which control 11 mills, have reduced wages to the pre-war level in the case of those weavers and spinners who have not been put on the rationalisation basis. For those working on rationalisation basis, a consolidated wage as on 1st January 1933 plus 35 per cent. allowance for weavers and 30 per cent. for spinners has been fixed; and for workers other than spinners and weavers, consolidated rates at 35 per cent. more than the pre-war rates have been fixed. Having regard to the fact that the Sassoons themselves considered 35 per cent. more than pre-war rates as a fair wage for non-spinners and non-weavers, the only inference one can legitimately draw from some spinners and weavers being given prewar wages, is to force them to accept rationalisation. It is clear that the cut in the case of these unfortunate men of the latter category is 44.5 per cent. for piece workers and 41 per cent. for time workers. As one does not know what the consolidated wage was on 1st January 1933, it is very difficult to ascertain the extent of the cut in the case of workers put on rationalisation. It is equally difficult to ascertain the extent of the cut made in the wages of non-spinners and non-weavers. But that there is a cut can hardly be disputed. And in spite of these novel and ingenious methods of wage reductions and forcing rationalisation down the throats of the workers, the Sassoons have had to close down 7 out of their 11 mills.

Two other mills have made unspecified reductions, the extent of which even the Labour Office has not been able to ascertain. The remaining 44 out of 56 mills have made reductions, the extent of which will be more easily understood if they are given in a tabular form, thus:—

WAGE REDUCTIONS IN 44 MILLS.

No. of Mills.	REDUCTIONS IN			TOTAL REDUCTION	
	Basic Wages (all workers.)	80% dear food allowance. (Piece-Workers).	70% dear food allowance. (Time-Workers).	Piece Workers Col. 2-3.	Time Workers Col. 2-4.
1	2	3	4	5	6
2	6½%	40%	30%	26.8%	22.0%
1	12½%	30%	20%	27.0%	22.8%
1	12%	...	...	12%	12%
1	12½%	...	...	12½%	12½%
2	15%	...	...	15%	15%
1	17%	...	...	17%	17%
2	30%	...	...	20%	20%
2	...	20%	20%	11.1%	11.7%
2	...	20%	15%	11.1%	8.8%
1	...	20%	12%	11.1%	7.0%
1	...	25%	20%	13.9%	11.7%
13	...	25%	15%	13.9%	8.8%
6	...	30%	20%	16.6%	11.7%
1	...	40%	30%	22.2%	17.6%
2	...	50%	40%	27.7%	23.5%
4	...	50%	45%	27.7%	26.5%
3	...	55%	45%	30.5%	26.5%

The table will show that 3 mills have cut both the basic wage and dear food allowance, 7 mills have

cut only the basic wage and 34 mills only the dear food allowance ranging from 12 p. c. to 55 p. c. The maximum and minimum cuts are 30.5 p. c. and 11.1 p. c. for piece workers and 26.5 p. c. and 7.0 p. c. for time workers in the case of these 44 mills. Can it be seriously contended that cuts varying from 7.0 p. c. at the one end and 44.4 p. c. at the other in the case of the Sassoons have any basis behind them? If anything, the only basis one can see is that of the degree of incompetence and mismanagement, for which the workers have been asked to pay the penalty. In a large number of cases, the workers protested against the cuts by resorting to sectional strikes; and they generally failed. The workers also waited for nearly a year in the fond hope of the Millowners' Association taking some concerted action or of Government taking suitable steps to stop these attacks. But nothing has been done and the situation is going from bad to worse. Is it any wonder that, under these provocative circumstances which hold out not the slightest ray of hope, the workers should proclaim themselves in favour of a general strike? Who will deny that with 70 persons unemployed for every 100 employed persons and with baseless and ruthless wage reductions, the workers are entitled to draw out their last weapon of a general strike when other weapons have failed them and when Government and the public are watching the situation with folded hands? If only I had the strength and resources of 1928 and 1929, I would not have waited for a textile Conference to make a proclamation, but would have advised the Union to resort to a general strike. And even today, if a general strike takes place, I shall be the last person to blame the workers and denounce the strike. It is human nature that in moments of utter despair and despondency, people take a plunge without reckoning the cost.

There is, however, a large body of public opinion which may not view the consequences of a general strike with feelings of equanimity. People are naturally anxious to see that the scenes enacted in 1928 and 1929 are not repeated. I sympathise with them. But it is up to them to suggest an alternative to a general strike and press for that alternative with a united voice. The alternative should be such as will not only prevent any further mischief being done but should help to improve the present position. No case has yet been made out for a wage cut. The individual millowners have gone on cutting wages according to their whims and caprices, while their Association was engaged in negotiating pacts with Lancashire and Japan. It should not also be forgotten that the textile industry is today a most highly protected industry in India and that the protection is still being increased by, *inter alia* fixing the quota of imports from Japan. The workers have a legitimate right to claim a fair share of the benefits accrued from protection. They have so far received not only no benefits, but their conditions have steadily worsened with the grant and increase of protection during the last decade. I may further point out that the efficiency of the workers has greatly increased during the last ten years as is evident by increased production coupled with the reduced number of workers; and the latter are entitled to a share of the benefits that may have accrued from increased efficiency. If there is any case for a change in wages, it is in favour of an increase, and not decrease. If, however, the millowners have any case for a cut, let it be placed before an impartial tribunal for investigation. I, therefore, urge that the Government of Bombay should forthwith appoint an ad hoc committee of experts to examine the present position of the textile industry with special reference to the prevailing unemployment and

wage reductions. Its terms of reference should be both simple and wide and can be fixed in consultation with the workers' and employers' representatives. The committee should be asked to report within the shortest possible time. I have no doubt that the appointment of a committee is the only solution which may induce the workers to stay their hands. Otherwise, to oppose a strike and at the same time to do nothing to stop the onslaughts of the employers is nothing short of playing with the lives of the workers.

The Government of Bombay owe a duty to the public as well as to the workers. Their silence has been cruel; its continuance will be criminal. They are the custodians of the lives of the people and it is one of their important duties to protect them from unfair attacks on their poor standard of life. The doctrine of non-intervention in industrial disputes is good enough in normal times. In abnormal times and when the social life of a large number of people has been violently disturbed and when workers have begun to starve, it is the duty of a civilised Government to protect the weak against the strong. I appeal to them with all my earnestness to appoint immediately a committee such as I have suggested and satisfy themselves as to whether the workers are rash or the employers are selfish.

R. R. BAKHALE.

Our London Letter.

(BY AIR MAIL.)

(From Our Correspondent.)

London, January 26.

MOVEMENT AGAINST UNTOUCHABILITY.

IT would appear that interest in Mahatma Gandhi's campaign on behalf of the Harijans is beginning to attract the attention in this country that it deserves. A short time ago, as I reported, the *Times* published what was on the whole a sympathetic appreciation of the purpose of his campaign. A few days ago a similarly appreciative article from the Indian Correspondent appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*. The following passage gives the key to the article: "Untouchability is bound to disappear in the not distant future from India, and Mr. Gandhi will be remembered for this as the greatest of his many-sided achievements for India."

THE PRINCES AND THE NEW CONSTITUTION.

A special correspondent of the *Morning Post* reports that the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes has decided to request the Viceroy not to summon the Annual Session of the Chamber before next autumn, by which time the Report of the Joint Select Committee will be available, that the Princes remain apprehensive of and dissatisfied with the White Paper, and that before committing themselves finally to the Federal Scheme they insist upon the inclusion of a very considerable number of safeguards. The special correspondent adds that British Indian interests disapprove of these safeguards and that consequently the Government will find it impossible to satisfy both the Princes and British India. He concludes that the absence of most of these safeguards in the White Paper suggests that the Government are inclined to favour British India rather than the Princes. If this policy is reflected in the Report of the Select Committee it is certain, says this correspondent, that the Princes will not consent to the proposed Federal Scheme. My only comment upon

this previous article is that in all likelihood it is another instance of the wish being father to the thought.

MR. PATRICK ON THE INDIAN SITUATION.

Mr. Mark Patrick, M. P. for Tavistock, has communicated an important article to the *Daily Telegraph* upon his return from a short but extensive travel tour in India. He declares that the views expressed to him on the whole by all kinds of officials whom he consulted in India, and by important sections of British opinion in the commercial community and in the Army are that there has been a very great advance since the War in Indian public opinion, that we are held to be committed to substantial constitutional advance, that a large majority of those in a position to judge believe that the time has come to give India much wider political responsibility, and that, speaking generally, the proposals contained in the White Paper are acceptable to nationalist opinion in India. He concludes: "Our choice in reality lies between a long step forward and a longer step back. I have no doubt, after going to India, that the prevailing opinion is in favour of going forward." Mr. Peter Agnew, M. P., replying to a similar article published in the *Western Morning News* and without having gone to India is quite certain that Mr. Patrick knows nothing of what he is talking about, and he rehashes all the old stale arguments against any effective advance towards responsible government.

Our Parliamentary Letter.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

New Delhi, February 4.

IMPERIAL BANK ACT.

THE Legislative Assembly passed during this week the Imperial Bank Act Amendment Bill. The Finance Member moved its third reading last week, and during the debate all the amendments moved by Dr. Ziauddin Ahmed and other members were defeated one after another. They fared no better even during this week and the Bill emerged intact, as reported by the Joint Select Committee. Dr. Ziauddin's amendment to enable the Bank to advance money on immoveable property found a good deal of support from landholders, who held that short terms loans was a legitimate right of theirs. The tardy manner in which Indianisation of the Bank was going on came in for a good deal of criticism during the debate, but members had to satisfy themselves with criticism as they could not command a majority against Government to defeat them on any point. The debate, however, was responsible for Government's announcement that they would be prepared to give sympathetic consideration to any sound scheme put up by provincial Governments for the establishment of a land mortgage bank; and that they contemplated introducing a small measure at the instance of the Madras Government during the present session. The Finance Member also further announced that a conference with the representatives of Provincial Governments would be convened next month to consider the matter in all its aspects.

PRINCES' PROTECTION BILL.

The Indian States Protection Bill which has raised such a storm of protests throughout the country came up for discussion on Wednesday, when the Home Member, Sir Harry Haig, moved for its reference to Select Committee. The Home Member in his speech said that the opinions received so far have been on the whole favourable as was expected

by Government, but did not disclose that most of the opinions received were from high Government officials, as in the opinions circulated to the Assembly members there have been none from private persons or bodies from Bombay, U.P., and Punjab. The Bombay Government, it should be noted, in their letter, say that the Governor in Council did not consider it necessary to consult private persons or bodies. The Home Member thought there was unnecessary nervousness in the press that the Bill would make impossible any criticism of even the worst abuses in the States. The States, he said, were bound to be responsive to public opinion and it was not meant to put down any legitimate criticism. Mr. Sitarām Raju led the attack on the Bill, quoting Justice Niamatulla that the State subjects had no other place except British India to ventilate their grievances and once that safeguard was taken away the condition of the States' subjects would be too miserable. Sir Mahomed Yakub gave a conditional support to the Bill; he wanted States to be protected from being blackmailed but desired that they should reform their administration. Raja Bahadur Krishnamachari also gave support to the principle of the Bill, but asserted that so far as he knew, no demand had been made for such a measure by any Prince. The debate will be continued and Government are sure to carry their point. The State's People's Conference is being held here to record an emphatic protest against the Bill, but they are fighting a last cause; for before long the measure will be on the Statute Book.

THE ABOLITION OF UNTOUCHABILITY BILL.

The discussion on the Removal of Untouchability Bill was resumed on Thursday the 1st inst. and the motion for its circulation for the purpose of eliciting public opinion was passed. Mr. C.S. Ranga Iyer and Diwan Bahadur Harbilas Sarada accused Government of blocking a social reform measure and much heat was created during the debate. Mr. Ranga Iyer said Government played into the hands of orthodoxy when it disallowed the Madras Legislature to pass such a measure. Diwan Bahadur Sarada asserted that Government wanted to kill the measure, by taking it out of the purview of the Madras Council and bringing it to the Assembly, where they could command a majority and the Sanatanists had a strong hold. The Law Member, Sir B. L. Mitra, however, explained the legal position of the Bill and said it could not stand legal scrutiny, as it was too vague and indefinite. He said its wording was too faulty to be remedied in the Select Committee and no amount of expert legal knowledge could improve it there. He characterised it as infringing upon the well-established customs, ideas of ownership and the

law of trusts. He ended by asking if it was a pious propaganda or a serious attempt at legislation. The Bill was stoutly opposed by Mr. Goswami, Mr. B. R. Puri and Mr. Amarnath Dutt who thought that the reformers' zeal would break Hindu society into pieces. The Home Member explained Government's position and denied the charge brought against them, saying that they had a fine record behind them in this sphere. He said that fullest examination of the measure was necessary and as the Bill was defective, public opinion should first be consulted. The Bill was therefore sent for ascertaining public opinion.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND WAGE REDUCTION.

Mr. N. M. Joshi moved a resolution on the 30th of January asking Government to take immediate steps to protect industrial workers of the country against unemployment and wage-reduction. In support of his resolution Mr. Joshi laid before the House some salient facts and figures and showed that unemployment was increasing year after year; and that wages were being reduced all round. He then referred to the way in which the problem was being tackled in Europe and America, and asked the Government to take a lead in the matter. He said Government could create employment by undertaking large public works and giving loans to local bodies and municipalities to undertake various utility schemes like drainage, water-works and slum-clearing. He asserted that the unemployed in India were being maintained by the employed and not by the Government as was being done in Western countries. He hoped Government would follow a bold policy and not merely give its lip sympathy. The Finance Member however differed from the view of the mover of the resolution saying that the real problem was not so much of industrial unemployment, as that of lack of purchasing power of the masses as a whole; but he did not say what Government were doing to increase it. He thought the remedies suggested by Mr. Joshi—like building railways and undertaking public works of the kind—would merely pile up the Public Debt and the taxpayer of tomorrow would have to share the burden. He then talked enthusiastically of the high credit of Government and said that they would have no difficulty in providing money at reasonable terms to help the people of Bihar—an announcement which was greeted with cheers. Other speakers who followed spoke of the necessity of systematically 'planning' India's industries, without which the problem could not be satisfactorily tackled. There were some members who did not understand what Mr. Joshi exactly wanted the Government to do. The discussion will be resumed on coming Tuesday.

UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF.

MR. JOSHI'S RESOLUTION IN THE ASSEMBLY.

Following is the full text of the speech made by Mr. N. M. Joshi in moving his resolution on Unemployment and Wage Reduction in the Legislative Assembly on January 30th.

SIR, I beg to move :

This Assembly recommends to the Governor General in Council to take immediate steps to protect the workers in the country against increasing unemployment and reduction of wages.

This Assembly discussed the question of unemployment in the year 1926, when a resolution was passed recommending the appointment of a

committee to consider the question of unemployment in general and the question of middle class unemployment in particular. So far as I know very little has resulted in action from that resolution except that certain investigations were made by a few provincial governments. The resolution which I am moving today is much wider in terms and I have made it so deliberately. I feel that unemployment among various sections of the population is interdependent; unemployment amongst agricultural workers is bound to affect the employment of industrial workers and vice versa; unemployment amongst industrial and agricultural workers is also bound to affect employment of the middle classes. Moreover, I have included in the terms of my resolution the qu es

tion of wages as unemployment is generally followed by a reduction of wages. There is a difficulty in dealing with this question on account of the want of statistics as regards employment and unemployment and the various factors which are involved in this question. Various schemes for the collection of statistics have been thought out; a committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Sir M. Visvesvaraya; some plans were recommended by Sir Arthur Salter for the establishment of an Economic Council and now we see that two economists from England have come to make certain recommendations—I suppose on the subject of collecting statistics and allied subjects. Nothing has come out of the various schemes which Government have so far thought out. I hope something will come out of their recent efforts.

UNEMPLOYMENT.

In spite of want of statistics, it is quite possible to prove not only the existence of unemployment, but the degree of unemployment. There are certain indications from which we can infer the prevalence of unemployment. There is unemployment for instance in the whole world at present, including the most prosperous countries. If there is unemployment in those countries we can reasonably infer that there must be some unemployment in our own. Prices are low all over the world and they are low in our own country; and low prices is one of the indications by which the existence of unemployment can be inferred. The production in the whole world has gone down. Unfortunately we do not have a census of production in our country. It is true that in some of the organised industries production has gone up, such as in cotton textiles; but in certain others production has gone down, such as in mines. Figures of export trade will clearly prove that on the whole our production must have gone down: the export trade has dwindled during the last three years from 330 crores to 131 crores.

I need not give any more indications of the existence of unemployment in our country. I shall try to estimate the degree of unemployment. So far as agriculture is concerned, it is a well-known fact that in our country agricultural workers do not get more than 4 to 6 months' employment in a year, and this unemployment is increasing year after year. I shall give certain figures from the latest census reports. In 1911 the ratio of the number of workers to dependents was 47 to 53. In 1921 the ratio was 46 to 54, and in 1931 the ratio is 44 to 56; that is, the number of dependents is increasing, which clearly shows that unemployment in agriculture is also increasing. At present agriculture is not paying, with the result that the number of agricultural wage earners employed is bound to go down. The agriculturist cannot afford to engage wage earners. He either works himself and takes the help of members of his family or, if he was already doing some work before, he does more work; but he tries to do without the services of wage earners.

If we take industry, there again there is the difficulty of want of statistics for non-regulated industries. We have statistics for regulated industries. During the last few years the number of people engaged in factories regulated by the Factories Act has gone down by 1,43,000. The number of people employed in Indian mines has gone down by 65,000; the number of railway staff has gone down by 87,000. The Royal Commission on Labour definitely recognised unemployment existing in the shipping industry in various ports. They also recognised that in certain ports the dock workers were unemployed and they estimated that in Karachi the dock worker does not get more than 10 to 12 days' work in a month. They also estimated that in Rangoon

on an average for the year the dock worker does not get more than 12 to 13 days' work in a month. This unemployment is felt more at certain centres, such as Bombay. In Bombay today more than 40,000 textile workers alone are unemployed. Besides the textile workers there are other unemployed in Bombay. If you take Calcutta the number of unemployed will not be smaller. Besides total unemployment, the workers suffer from short time work as some mills do not work full time for the whole week. Now, I feel that the existence of large and growing unemployment will not be challenged even by Government.

REDUCTION IN WAGES.

So far as the second question which I am raising is concerned, namely, the reduction of wages, I feel the same difficulty for want of statistics, but we can have some statistics collected in various places. Moreover, we can infer the reduction of wages from the very fact of unemployment. Unemployment generally leads to reduction of wages, and it has led to reduction of wages. I should give only a few figures on this subject. These figures are collected by the Bombay Labour Gazette. The urban field labourer in Bombay was getting Rs. 0-9-6 per day in 1927, whereas to-day he is getting Rs. 0-6-10. The wages of the rural field labourer have gone down from Rs. 0-7-6 in 1927 to Rs. 0-5-7 in 1932. The wages of the urban skilled labourer have gone down from Rs. 0-12-0 in 1927 to Rs. 0-9-5 in 1932. The wages of the rural skilled labourer have gone down from Rs. 0-9-3 in 1927 to Rs. 0-7-1 in 1932. The wages of the urban skilled labourer have gone down from Rs. 1-13-0 in 1927 to Rs. 1-8-3 in 1932. I am told that at present in some of the seasonal factories in Bombay labourers are hired for Rs. 0-2-0 to Rs. 0-3-0 per day.

Now, Sir, I shall give only a few figures more. These figures relate to the mining areas, and they are taken from the Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines. The miners' wages have gone down from Rs. 0-13-6 in 1929 to Rs. 0-9-9 in 1932. The wages of loaders have gone down from Rs. 0-11-0 in 1929 to Rs. 0-8-6 in 1932. The wages of women have gone down from Rs. 0-8-6 in 1929 to Rs. 0-6-6 in 1932. In the mining areas the average wage for raising one tub of coal was about Rs. 0-7-0 when the Royal Commission made their investigation. That wage itself was very low, and I am told that at present in the Argada colliery the rate paid for raising one tub of coal is only Rs. 0-2-3.

Mr. S. C. Sen: Did you say one tub?

Mr. Joshi: Yes, one tub.

Mr. Sen: Then you are mistaken, because I have to pay Rs. 0-6-0.

Mr. Joshi: You are not paying Rs. 0-6-0. I have got information from one of my sources.

Mr. Sen: What colliery is that?

Mr. Joshi: Argada colliery.

Besides this, Sir, in the railways the wages have been cut down. In Bombay in the textile industry the wages have gone down from 25 to 30%, and let us remember that this is a protected industry. In Calcutta a similar reduction has taken place in wages. In Ahmedabad, where the mills made huge profits till last year, they are threatening a wage cut.

CAUSES OF UNEMPLOYMENT.

Mr. President, this is the position as regards unemployment and wages in our country at present. I do not wish to discuss the causes of unemployment at any length. I feel that the chief cause of unemployment is the capitalist system based upon competition. Periodical unemployment is an inevitable concomitant of the capitalist system, and it has often

been proved, but it is agreed by all that unemployment is due to world depression, whatever may be the causes of that depression. The second cause of unemployment is the measures taken by the employers for what they call rationalisation. I am not altogether against rationalisation if measures are taken to protect the workers, as has been suggested by a conference held under the auspices of the League of Nations. It has been said that in India the effects of unemployment are not very much felt on account of two reasons. It is said that the workers in towns who are engaged in industries go to villages when there is unemployment in towns, and workers in villages go to towns when there is unemployment in villages. Unfortunately we are now living in times when there is unemployment both in villages as well as in towns, and therefore this escape, if it really exists, is not now open to workers. It is also said that in India the effect of unemployment is not felt, because we have a joint family system. Thank God, we still have a joint family system, but, Sir, that joint family system is fast crumbling down owing to the impact of modern civilization and nobody need shed any tears for the crumbling down of that system.

If there is unemployment, as I say there is, and if the workers are also suffering from a reduction of wages, let us consider what steps we should take to free the workers from its effects. I shall not raise the question of the capitalist system and its abolition, but certainly we must consider the various plans some of the countries in the world have adopted for getting rid of the depression. There, is for instance, the Soviet plan, there is the plan made by Mussolini to increase employment, there is the plan made by Hitler, and there is also the most important plan made by Roosevelt. I don't wish to go into the details of these plans, but two things become quite clear if we study these plans. The first thing is that we cannot get rid of depression by merely depending upon the automatic adjustment of the various factors in the world. Time is past when we can have what is called self-adjustment. Sir Arthur Salter has very wisely said that the world's economic mechanism has lost its self-adjusting quality. We must therefore now deliberately adopt plans to get rid of the crisis from which we are suffering. His Excellency the Viceroy in the speech which he made in this Assembly last year recognised this principle. He also repeated his recognition of the principle in his recent speech in Calcutta. The second principle that comes out of the study of these plans is that all plans must be co-ordinated by an international effort. This principle was also recognised when His Excellency dealt with the Roosevelt plan in his recent speech in Calcutta.

SUGGESTED REMEDIES.

Now, Sir, without going into these principles, I would like to make certain definite suggestions to the Government in order that the misery from which the workers are suffering both from unemployment and from reduction of wages may be reduced. My first suggestion is a constitutional one. We are living in a time when our constitution is undergoing a revision. I would suggest to the Government of India that in the new Constitution they should lay down the fundamental right that the workers shall have a right to live, and in this connection I shall quote only a few lines from a very valuable Report issued by the Director of the International Labour Organization. That Report was published in 1933.

"In fact, it may be said that the right to work or maintenance, which has been claimed by the workers for many years past, is now more generally recognised than at any previous time, as the author of the World Economic Survey points out."

Then there is a quotation from the World Economic Survey :

"The 'right to live' if not the 'right to work' has been much more firmly established. . . The widespread acceptance of the notion of 'Standards of living' and the associated concept of a 'minimum standard,' which society should in some way guarantee to every normal individual, is one of the most remarkable social developments of recent years. The contractual idea which it embodies is of profound importance and marks a distinct departure from theories of individual enterprise and free competition. It establishes, in economic organisation, a new social right comparable in many ways with property rights."

During the last session, the Assembly decided that there should be a fundamental right for the protection of property. May I ask the Assembly now to guarantee to the workers this right to live? Then I shall suggest to the Government of India that in order that they should be able to deal with questions like unemployment and wages and the bigger industrial questions they should immediately give effect to the suggestion of Sir Arthur Salter for the establishment of an Economic Council. I shall suggest to them that they should give immediate effect to the recommendation made by the Royal Commission on Labour for the establishment of an Industrial Council. Unless these organizations are established it will not be easy for the Government of India to deal with large questions which are coming up for solution.

When we discuss the question of improving the economic condition two proposals are generally made. The first is that we should inflate our currency and the second is that we should raise tariff barriers. In my former speeches in this Assembly I have made it quite clear that by the inflation of currency and the raising of tariff barriers the workers are placed on the horns of dilemma. They are benefited in one way, but they suffer in another way. But we are living in desperate times, and if nothing else is done, in sheer desperation I would prefer this inflation of currency and the raising of tariff barriers to inaction. At the same time I would suggest to the Government of India that they should favourably consider what the economists call reflation instead of inflation. The report which I have just mentioned—Mr. Butler's report—explains reflation in this way :

"Hence the doctrine of reflation, that is to say, of adopting concerted measures to restore the vast sums of money now lying idle to circulation in order to raise prices, is now gaining ground."

I therefore suggest to the Government of India that instead of thinking of inflation they should take steps to effect reflation, that is, greater circulation of the money now lying idle in the various banks in this country. In order to do that, the Government of India should take steps to create employment and to see that adequate wages are given to the workers. That is the only way to create what I call reflation.

PUBLIC WORKS.

Now the Government of India can create employment in various ways. The Government of India should follow an active policy to establish State-owned and State-managed railways. At one time they followed that policy and built our railway system. I suggest to them and I suggest to the Railway Board that they should give up their timid and hesitating policy and adopt a bold and forward policy of new construction of railways.

(AFTER RECESS.)

When we adjourned for lunch I was suggesting to the Government of India that they should follow

an active policy as regards creating employment and suggested that they should undertake the construction of railways and I suggest now that, besides constructing railways, they should try to develop all the railway industries. They should build their locomotives, their carriages, their wagons and make their sleepers. I also suggest to the Government of India that they should take steps to develop a mercantile marine in India. India is not going to have a mercantile marine through private capitalists. If ever we are going to have a mercantile marine, it will be through the efforts of Government. I also suggest to the Government of India that they should undertake public works such as roads, bridges and even buildings, canals and drainage works and the clearing of sums. Several countries are at present following this policy. The United States of America, Germany and Italy are spending huge sums of money in undertaking public works. The Government of India starts public works during famine time. The times in which we are living are very similar to famine times. The Whitley Commission has recommended that during times of unemployment Government should start public works even in towns. I suggest to the Government of India that they should take immediate steps to give effect to this recommendation of the Royal Commission on Labour.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE.

Then I would suggest to the Government of India that they should also undertake some scheme of unemployment insurance, but much water has flown under the bridge since the Whitley Commission wrote its report. There was a time when the United States of America was against unemployment insurance schemes. They have changed their views and I am quite sure that if the Whitley Commission had been meeting to-day they would make a different report. As regards unemployment insurance, the Fawcett Committee that inquired into a dispute in Bombay made a recommendation that whenever unemployment is created on account of the employers taking up rationalisation schemes some steps should be taken to protect the workers against the unemployment that is created. I would also suggest to the Government of India that they should follow what the world is doing to-day to prevent unemployment, namely, reduce the hours of work. I am aware that the Government of India have placed legislation before this legislature for reducing hours of work. I wish to suggest to them that they should come into line with the world by reducing the hours much more than they are prepared to do. I also suggest to the Government of India that as regards the unemployment in docks they should immediately give effect to the recommendation made by the Royal Commission on Labour by starting a system of registration and thus decasualising the employment of dock-workers.

WAGE INCREASE NEEDED.

I shall now turn to the question of wages. I think I made it quite clear that if the purchasing power of the country is to be restored, there must be better circulation of money, and in order to do that we must give not only employment to the workers but we must give them adequate wages. Unfortunately we are now faced with reduction of wages in almost all the industries. The justification for the reduction of wages that is alleged is that prices have gone down and that therefore real wages have not gone down. It is true that prices have gone down. I do not deny the fact and in some cases real wages also may not show any reduction. In some cases it may even show an increase, but I would ask the members of

the Assembly and the Government to consider this question. The standard of life of the workers of this country is extremely low. What we want is that that standard should be immediately raised and if that standard is raised that is one of the means by which prosperity will be brought to the country. Therefore every step must be taken to see that the standard of life of the working classes is raised. If you reduce the wages the standard of life cannot be raised. You may remember that a few days ago my friend Mr. Mody made a speech in which he said: What right have the consumers to expect to get things below the cost of production? May I ask, what right has the employer to get labour for wages that are below a reasonable standard of life? They have no right to get labour for wages which do not provide a reasonable standard of life to the working classes.

Raja Bahadur G. Krishnamachariar: What is that reasonable standard? Will you tell us?

Mr. Joshi: I have not the time to go into that. I will only content myself by saying that they should get a reasonable standard of life. It is quite true that when prices go down the individual workers get more for the wages they get. At the same time let us remember that the total wages bill of the industry is not increased, but is reduced on account of the number of people employed being reduced. Who bears the burden of the unemployment? Real wages may not have been reduced, but the responsibilities of the people who are employed have increased because it is they who somehow have to bear the burden of unemployment.

Sir Frank Noyce: May I ask the Honourable Member how they discharge their responsibility?

Mr. Joshi: They discharge their responsibility as best as they can and they discharge it much better than some of us do.

Sir Frank Noyce: That is not an answer to my question. I put a definite question to the Honourable Member and I should be extremely grateful for a definite answer.

Mr. Joshi: My definite answer is that the unemployed in India today are maintained by the employed workers in this country and by nobody else. Government is doing nothing for them. That is my answer. I hope my answer is satisfactory.

Sir Muhammed Yakub: Quite unsatisfactory.

Mr. Joshi: I would also suggest to the Government of India to consider this, that wage reduction does not even help industry.

Wage reduction will not help in getting rid of the depression existing in the country to-day. If we study this question, we shall find that in America where wage reduction was the largest the depression was the greatest, and in Great Britain where wage reduction is the lowest the depression is the least. Let us therefore remember that wage reduction is not going to help industry. I would therefore suggest to the Government of India to take very vigorous steps to see that the wages in India are not only not reduced but increased, and for that purpose I would suggest that they should follow the policy which Roosevelt is following in America. He insists upon an increase of wages, and the Government of India should take power to see that wages are increased in this country and not reduced.

A MINIMUM WAGE.

I would also suggest to them to lay down a minimum wage for all industries. Sir, the theory that minimum wage legislation can apply only to unorganised industries is an exploded theory; it no longer holds good to-day. I therefore suggest to them to establish minimum wages in all industries. Mr.

President, I would also suggest to the Government of India to see at least that an inquiry is made before any wage-reduction takes place in any industry. This at least is not too much to ask. I would also suggest to them that they should give special attention to the case of protected industries. If an industry receives protection from Government, that industry is bound to give that protection to the workers engaged in that industry (Hear, hear). I would also suggest to the Government of India that they should change the Indian Companies Act and put a limit to the dividends that are distributed to the shareholders and compel the companies that run factories and industries in this country to establish a wage equalisation fund. Sir, many of the companies have established what are called dividend equalisation funds. Now if they have such a fund, why should they not be compelled to establish a wage equalisation fund? Mr. President, I have one more suggestion to offer on this point and that is that the Government of India should take steps to give effect to the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Labour and insist upon a fair wages clause being put in in all public contracts.

Sir, I do not wish to take up much time of this House, but before I close I shall say only one word, and it is this. The misery which the working classes in this country are suffering from due to unemployment and to reduction in wages is great. We cannot imagine, nor am I able to describe, that misery in an adequate manner; but let us remember this, that the working classes are suffering in many ways, not only financially, but in other ways. Sir, if a man remains unemployed, he loses his skill, he loses his working capacity, he is demoralized. That is a greater loss to him and also to the country than even the financial loss caused to the worker himself. I would therefore suggest that the Government of India should take vigorous steps to see that the workers are paid adequate wages, and I suggest that they should take steps very promptly. A policy of dilatoriness and hesitation is fatal. They should give up that policy so that not only the workers will benefit but I am sure the industries and the whole country will benefit. Sir, I have done. (Applause.)

Correspondence.

POST OFFICE ECONOMIES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SERVANT OF INDIA.

SIR,—Although England and many other countries have long ago brought down their rates of postage to the pre-war level there is no sign that India will witness any reduction in its rates in the near future. A new enquiry committee will sit, for which an expenditure of Rs. 60000 has been sanctioned. Its scope of enquiry seems, however, limited. It is to investigate and overhaul the present methods and standards of work and not perhaps to go again into the question of the desirability of the present staff of supervising officers. The Jehangir retrenchment sub-committee of 1931 brought about a phenomenal reduction of 20% in the staff of the Superintendents of Post Offices, but it practically left the staff of the Deputy

Postmasters-General undisturbed. The cry of the hour still is that the staff is top-heavy, and the Deputy Postmaster-General furnishes apparently a vulnerable point for attack. One can understand the need for one Deputy to the Assist. Postmaster-General, but a second such Deputy seems of the nature of a luxury. Each such officer costs about Rs. 15,000 a year and if the post of a second such officer at Lahore, Lucknow, Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay is brought under reduction a saving of three-fourths of a lakh of rupees a year will at once follow. Can the new Committee look into this?

The Postmasters-General of Bombay and Calcutta are given a special allowance of Rs. 250 a month. In the present state of deficits is this addition to regular pay a real necessity to an already highly-paid officer?

In towns like Bombay and Calcutta where the Presidency Post-Master has an inspecting staff of Postmasters to assist him, where is the real need of having gazetted Postmasters in charge of sub-post offices? Some sort of justification can be found for each measure of increase in the public expenditure, but the point is whether that increase is really necessary.

These are just a few suggestions to rouse the public interest in the affairs of the Post Office. Unless an all round overhauling is made, there does not seem to be much prospect of coming back to the old cheap rates.—Yours, etc.

A. B. C.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

- THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION. By PRATAPAGIRI RAMAMURTY. (The Bombay Book Depot, Bombay 4.) 1933. 18cm. 228p. Rs. 1-8.
- PILLARS OF LIFE. By SHRI VISHVANATH KESKAR. (Author, Rambag, Kothrud, Poona.) 1933. 18cm. 119p.
- DR. ANNIE BESENT: A TRIBUTE. By K. S. VENKATARAMANI. (Svetaranya Ashrama, Mylapore, Madras.) 1933. 14cm. 26p. As. 4.
- A SURVEY OF THE MARKETING OF FRUIT IN POONA. By D. R. GADGIL and V. R. GADGIL. (Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Poona 4.) 1933. 24cm. 184p. Rs. 2-8.

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