

# Servant of India

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Office : SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY, POONA 4.

Vol. XX No. 31.

POONA—THURSDAY AUGUST 12, 1937.

{	INDIAN	Rs. 6
	FOREIGN SUBSN.	15s.

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## Topics of the Week.

### Andamans Hunger Strike.

THE situation created by the hunger strike in the Andamans is naturally the subject of grave concern throughout the land. The number of strikers among the political prisoners which was originally less than 200 is now stated to be 250, which means that almost all political prisoners in the Andamans have by now joined the strike. Though nearly three weeks have elapsed since the beginning of the strike there are no indications yet of any official move to see it ended. If, as appears likely, it is officially believed that the fear of death will act as a deterrent and will eventually induce the abstainers from food to relax their resolve, it is obviously a very mistaken belief. Several Andaman prisoners who have recently come back after serving their sentence have stated that those who have launched upon this forbidding venture are among the most determined of men whom even the prospect of death will not terrify. If anything untoward happens as a result of the strike, India's ire will doubtless be roused against the Government to an unimaginable extent. Let the Government beware.

THE crisis with which the country is faced is extremely grave and steps must needs be devised to tide over it. The prisoners are asking for both release and repatriation. It is difficult to persuade oneself that their immediate release would really set the Thames on fire. But some delay in restoring them to full liberty due to the necessity of satisfying the requirements of official routine seems inevitable, though one feels that in such an emergency red tape should give way to humanitarian considerations. But why even their repatriation should not be immediately feasible we for our part fail to understand.

THE Home Minister of Bengal speaking in the Bengal Legislative Assembly put forward the bureaucratic plea about his inability to consider the hunger-strikers' demands till the strike was abandoned. How we wish he had not taken his stand on considerations of prestige. What matters is whether the hunger-strikers' demands are fair and just. If they are, as the whole country believes, despite the perversely adverse vote of the Bengal Assembly on the point, it stands to reason that they should be attended to without delay. Instead, to postpone action for no other reason but that a hunger strike is on is to proclaim oneself an utter stranger to humane considerations. If even the imminent prospect of a ghastly tragedy cannot spur the authorities to a sympathetic but prompt consideration of the prisoners' demands, we do not know what will.

BUT even the Bengal Government which have such a "large interest" in the Andamans can be shamed into action if only the other provincial Governments will do their duty. In this connection we are happy to find that the U. P. Government have asked for their prisoners being sent back. Their lead deserves to and will, we hope, be followed by other local Governments having any of their prisoners transported to the Andamans. In this case it may be presumed it will be difficult even for the Bengal Government to preserve its adamant attitude and not to follow suit. Let, therefore, provincial Governments concerned ask for the immediate return of their prisoners so that a large part of the public tension occasioned by the hunger strike would be relieved.

FOR coping with the extraordinary situation in the Andamans, a supplementary medical staff was to have left for the Andamans on Friday. We trust it has so left. The despatch of the additional staff is apparently to be treated as an indication of the determination on the part of the Government to resort to forcible feeding in case of need. We are sure the staff sent to the Andamans has been selected with a view to its familiarity with the technique of compulsory nourishment. It is greatly to be regretted that the offer of a non-official medical mission to supplement their efforts in the Andamans was unceremoniously turned down. Besides being a source of help, the presence of unofficial medical men in the Andamans would have helped to reassure public opinion that every possible care was being taken of the hunger-strikers. But unfortunately that was not to be, thanks to official obduracy. Let Government, however, while the prisoners continue to refrain from food, issue daily bulletins giving detailed information about their health. It is not enough, as is officially contemplated, to inform a prisoner's relatives when his health becomes precarious. What is necessary is that the public should be daily supplied with all relevant information touching the

health and well-being of the political prisoners at present on hunger-strike.

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#### U. P. Cabinet's Programme.

THE programme of the U. P. Government was adumbrated by its Premier, Mr. Pant, in the course of a long statement made before the Assembly. It is impossible to deal with all items in the programme within the limits of space allowed for an editorial note. We can briefly notice only some of its more important features. In doing so the pride of place must be given to the measures designed to deal with the pressing problem of agricultural indebtedness. Mr. Pant had of course no cut and dried scheme with which to confront the Legislature. The task will be remitted to one of the two committees whose appointment was fore-shadowed by the Premier. Pending the formulation of permanent measures for the relief of agricultural indebtedness based on the committee's recommendations, the Legislature would be asked to pass a law declaring a moratorium in the matter of recoveries of debts and authorising the stay of legal proceedings already instituted. This is the emergency action contemplated in U. P. for which the peasantry has reason to be grateful to the Ministry.

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THE other committee will be expected to examine the existing land and tenancy legislation with a view "to put an end to the distress among the peasantry." Both the committees are expected to conclude their labours with all possible expedition so that their reports may be made available by the end of the current year. But as in the case of indebtedness so here too immediate relief will be afforded to the peasantry by postponing all proceedings for ejection, enhancement of rent or for realisation of dues on land. What the nature of the committee's recommendations will be it is of course too early to say. But Mr. Pant said enough to give one the impression that the two things to which his Government attached great value were security of tenure and lightening of the burden of the Government demand. Who can deny that the U. P. cabinet has run to the rescue of the agriculturist with exemplary promptitude or that their emergency measures are of the right variety?

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IT is somewhat disappointing that Mr. Pant's statement contained no definite indication of the action intended to bring the goal of prohibition nearer. The same remark also holds good with regard to that part of his statement which dealt with the field of local self-government. He no doubt gave the assurance that legislation dealing with both urban and rural self-government would be closely scrutinised with a view to its improvement. Pending its revision, the postponement of all general elections to municipalities and local boards was announced. But as in the case of the agrarian problem Mr. Pant might well have roughly indicated the directions in which such reform was to be expected.

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#### ✓ Restrictions On Mr. Patkar.

A WELL KNOWN Bombay labour worker by name Mr. S. G. Patkar has written to Mr. Munshi, Minister for law and justice, informing him that unless the existing restrictions on his activities are withdrawn he would court arrest by breaking them. These restrictions are that he must report himself daily to the police, not leave Bombay without police permission and engage in no labour work. The condition about reporting to the police was modified nearly two months ago in favour of a weekly for daily parole.

There can be no doubt that this repressive action constitutes an undeniable invasion on the civil liberties of the citizen and as such calls for strong condemnation.

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MR. PATKAR, though a Congressman, belongs to that section which is opposed to acceptance of office by Congressmen. And his complaint against Mr. Munshi is that though he has lifted the ban on about two hundred public bodies, he has allowed it to stand in the case of really active and militant labour organisations like the Young Workers' League of which Mr. Patkar was a founder. And it may parenthetically be pointed out that it is this invidious distinction on the part of Mr. Munshi that is a subject of much adverse comment not merely in labour circles but even outside. It is Mr. Patkar's contention that since the Congress was returned to power on the strength of its promise to restore the civil liberties of the people in full it not only behoves but becomes the bounden duty of Congress Ministers to do away with all restrictions on civil liberty, wherever met with. The logic of Mr. Patkar's reasoning is unassailable. But will it have the desired effect on Mr. Munshi? Let us wait and see.

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#### ✓ Proscription of Books.

A REPRESENTATIVE deputation consisting of well-known public men interested in literature waited last week on Mr. Kher, the Bombay Prime Minister. Its object was to ask for the removal of the ban on proscribed books, publications, etc. The wide extent of such restrictive action could be gauged from the list of such books which was appended to the statement submitted to the Prime Minister by the deputation. But the list, though fairly long, was far from complete, as the deputation was careful to make clear.

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IT is generally felt that such proscriptions are thoroughly uncalled for in some cases and could have been avoided if the authors concerned had been allowed an opportunity to expunge from their productions passages or words considered objectionable. Such opportunity was not given in most cases. In some cases a book was compulsorily put out of circulation not because its contents were in any way objectionable but because the author was disliked by the then Government. In others proscription took place because of the inability of the functionary concerned to appreciate the subtleties of the vernacular. It is a great pity that books which are not only not objectionable but positively good should be made inaccessible to the reading public only because of the idiosyncracies of the proscribing authority. And the deputation has really done a distinct public service by calling attention to the matter in so pointed a manner.

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IT is the common experience that the existence of the Press Act acts as a serious stumbling block in the way of authors and publishers. The deputation fully shares the universal feeling that the Act should no longer be allowed to disfigure the statute book. But it could not obviously ask the local Government to erase from the statute book a law of all-India application. This is obviously beyond the power of the local Government. But press legislation being a subject of concurrent legislation, the deputation was on firm ground in asking that action be taken for its amendment or repeal with the previous consent of the Central Government. In any case it is open to the local Government to refuse to take action which it does not itself approve or considers ill-advised and

unjustifiable. The deputation suggested that the least they expect from the local government is to refrain from arbitrary action under the Press Act. This is an eminently reasonable request which Mr. Kher's cabinet should have no difficulty in conceding.

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**"Ill-Advised."**

IT will be remembered that, while welcoming the idea, initiated by Dr. Pattabhisitaramayya, of opening an office in Masulipatam for receiving and voicing the grievances of the people of Hyderabad State we said that the *Hyderabad Bulletin*, which was opposed to it, could not be regarded as a faithful exponent of public opinion in the State. For this we have been severely taken to task in a recent issue of the paper and warned that we have no knowledge of local feeling. All that we can say on this point is that we do try our best to keep in touch with local opinion by the usual means open to outsiders. And we have yet to meet leaders of public opinion in Hyderabad who, like our contemporary, set their face against Dr. Pattabhisitaramayya's move.

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AND why should they really disapprove of it? It is by no means designed to add to the disabilities from which they suffer. On the contrary, it is expected to help them in giving vent to their hardships and grievances whose existence cannot be doubted even by our contemporary. For want of an independent and fearless press and due to severe restrictions on the elementary right of free speech their grievances at present fail to receive public expression, to say nothing of their redress. Which human being knowing his own interest would in such circumstances dislike a move calculated to achieve his emancipation? Unless the people of Hyderabad are to be taken as deficient in an understanding even of their own self-interest they must be presumed to be in favour of the move. To make a different assumption, as our contemporary does, is an insult to their commonsense.

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THERE can, however, be no doubt that public opinion freely expressed at public meetings can alone give an authoritative answer to the question whether the subjects of Hyderabad like Dr. Pattabhi's "interference", as our contemporary is pleased to describe the move. But public meetings are taboo in the State. How then can public opinion in Hyderabad be ascertained? It would be helpful if at least for the sake of the expression of public opinion on this new move our contemporary is able, through its great influence with H. E. H.'s Government, to secure a withdrawal of restrictions at present in force on the citizen's right of freedom of public meeting. The popular verdict expressed at public meetings must of course be taken as decisive. But till this happens we must be excused if we refuse to attach equal value to what our contemporary writes in the name of Hyderabad public opinion.

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OUR contemporary now tries to explain the ground of its opposition to the move. It considers the move "ill-advised"—or ill-timed?—because it comes to be made at a time when the Hyderabad State is hesitating to join the Federation. Whether the move would have received a more cordial reception at its hands if it had emanated after the Nizam's entry into the Federation was assured, it is needless for our present purpose to inquire. What is pertinent to note is that our contemporary's attitude towards federation is fundamentally different from ours. While our

contemporary is anxious to save the Federation, we in common with British Indian opinion are not. If Dr. Pattabhi's move makes the Nizam take fright of the Federation and to keep aloof from it to its jeopardy, it is not a contingency on which any body in British India, least of all ourselves, would shed a single tear. If our contemporary does not like Dr. Pattabhi's move, it is, of course, welcome to hold that view. But let it not, in the name of truth and common sense, make it appear as if its opinion is shared by the voiceless people of Hyderabad State.

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**Conditional Release of Prisoners.**

AN official bill will be brought before the Assam Legislature, which provides for the release of prisoners on certain conditions. It will have effect only in the case of prisoners whose record is good, as can be seen from its title "the Good Conduct Prisoners' Probationary Release Act." The idea underlying the measure is that those who by their antecedents and behaviour in prison give evidence of a desire to turn over a new leaf in their lives and become respectable members of society would be given the opportunity by being set at liberty under proper safeguards. Such prisoners will be given a licence at the time of their release which will set forth the conditions on which their restoration to freedom has taken place.

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THE only thing to be guarded against in all such cases is that the released prisoner does not relapse into criminality. To this end the scheme of the bill provides for his being placed under the supervision of some authority or servant of the Crown or secular institution, person or society, professing the same religion as the prisoner. The name of such authority or society or person will be mentioned in the prisoner's licence, and the licence would hold good for the remaining period of the imprisonment to which he was sentenced or till the licence is revoked, whichever may be sooner. This means that though released, the licensee would be virtually considered a prisoner, being entitled to remission of sentence for good conduct in the same way as a regular prisoner. Any breach of the conditions of the licence will make the offender liable to a maximum of two years' imprisonment or fine or both. We have no hesitation in welcoming the measure as being a step in the right direction.

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**Demand for further Reforms in Cochin.**

A CUT was recently carried in the Cochin Legislative Council which was designed to impress on Government the desirability of a forward political move. It appears from the speeches in support of the cut motion that what is desired is that a council of ministers who would be responsible to the legislature should be appointed, as in British Indian provinces, to manage the affairs of the State. It is difficult to see how the demand can be withstood on any reasonable grounds that can be thought of. Educational progress is generally considered a *sine qua non* of political progress. This condition is more than satisfied in the case of Cochin which holds the palm in the whole country in the matter of the spread of education and has the whole of its school age population in school. The desire for self-rule which is another requisite condition seems to be fairly general and insistent in Cochin. No more convincing proof of this need be given than the fact that the demand for extended political rights was being voiced in the Council itself for about twelve years.

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WITH all these favourable conditions making for the success of a liberal measure of political advance it does not please the authorities to find means of satisfying the political hunger of the people! The antecedents of the present Dewan naturally raised high expectations among the people which have unfortunately been falsified. This point was repeatedly stressed in the course of speeches on the debate. It is

a wonder to many that Sir Shanmukham Chetty does not realise the dangers of allowing political discontent to grow. If not properly handled in time, it might, as he must know, get out of hand and create for the Government problems of far greater magnitude and seriousness. Have not the happenings in British India a lesson for all administrators in Indian States?

## PRE-REQUISITES OF FEDERATION.

IT is widely believed that federation formed the most important topic of conversation between the Viceroy and Mahatma Gandhi last week, and that the question will receive attention in the Working Committee of the Congress which is to meet at Wardha this week-end. The provincial part of the new constitution having begun to function in all the provinces, Lord Linlithgow must be very anxious to get the federal part going. He feels certain, it may be presumed, that the requisite number of States, and more, will complete their instruments of accession, and the only difficulty he feels about the Royal Proclamation on the subject being issued is the uncertainty about the temper of British India. In strict law, it is unnecessary to consult any more with the various sections of British Indian opinion. The British Parliament is competent to take the final decision independently of what British Indians think about the desirability of federation. But Lord Linlithgow knows full well that if only the requirements of law were met and opinion in British India were not somehow conciliated, a deadlock would ensue, from which an honourable retreat would become impossible. It is, therefore, only natural that he should now use his best endeavours to coax British India into acceptance of federation. Here he has indeed a most difficult, or to speak bluntly, a desperate task to face. In six provinces the Congress is in an overwhelming majority, and the Congress is committed by a resolution, repeated a dozen times over on various occasions, which enjoins upon Congressmen to do all in their power to torpedo federation. In the remaining five provinces the Muslim community dominates, and this community is known to be equally antagonistic to federation, though perhaps for somewhat different reasons. Thus the Viceroy is faced with what is so rare in Indian politics—a united opposition of all the major parties and interests in India. And yet possibly he is not without hope that, if only Mahatma Gandhi could be won over, the Mahatma would devise a formula which would stultify the fundamental part of the Congress policy and would make the Congress work the federal constitution, as in regard to provincial autonomy he devised a formula about office acceptance, which, though not accepted by Government, has made the Congress work the constitution loyally, without any immediate thought of creating deadlocks. The Mahatma's power of making detours is undoubtedly great, but we doubt if even he will succeed in carrying the Congress with him in the matter of federation where men's convictions are so firmly held. Here he will meet with an irremovable block of opposition.

It will soon be known as to what the Congress Working Committee's intentions are on this question. In the meanwhile it is heartening to know that the Princes are being advised by some of their closest counsellors not to sign their names to the instruments of accession until they are sure that there will be no cause for regretting the decision at any time in future. Our readers are aware that *United India and Indian States* has been taking a magnificent line in this connexion. It has been urging the Princes to postpone giving consent to federation at least for a year and in its issue of 31st July it has gone very much farther. It lays down three conditions without the fulfilment of which it would be extremely unwise in its opinion for the Princes to enter federation. The first condition is that the British Government as overlord must agree to exercise its rights of paramountcy in accordance with certain fixed rules of procedure which would give no power of arbitrary discretion to the officials to whom it would fall to represent the paramount power. We do not propose to say anything about this particular condition on this occasion. But the other two conditions are relevant to our present purpose. *United India* says that Parliament, in moving an address to the King, on federation, ought to satisfy itself that political conditions, among other things, that are "necessary for the successful establishment of federation upon a sound and stable basis should be fulfilled. And, as a corollary to this, we suggest it is involved that the autonomous provinces must agree to come into the federation." The provinces can, it is true, in a strictly legal view of the matter, be coerced to join federation; they are supposed not to have an independent opinion of their own. The British Government is the only authentic spokesman of their views on a question like this. But a pedantic adherence to this doctrine will not work. A federation can be established on this basis, but it cannot be operated successfully. If the federal structure is not to come to grief, it must be built on the foundation of the hearty consent of those whom it will affect. It should be noted that *United India* does not merely ask that the British Indian provinces should be consulted. It goes one better and asks that their consent should be secured. It says: "The consent of the provincial legislatures to the federation occurs to be involved in any successful scheme of federation on a sound and stable basis." The necessary implication here is that the British Government itself should move the legislatures to express an opinion on federation and should not go to Parliament until it is in a position to say that the authoritative organs

of opinion in all the provinces with one accord have signified their willingness to enter federation. While Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru was anxious to delay provincial autonomy till federation had been decided upon, lest, having obtained independence, they should throw federation overboard, we are glad to see that *United India*, which might well have been expected to take such a line, urges the British Government not to proceed with federation till it has obtained the free consent of the legislatures of all the autonomous provinces.

*United India* does not rest here. "For similar reasons," it says, "we think it reasonable that the States should consult enlightened public opinion in their areas before committing themselves to federation." As the British Government has the legal right to speak for the British Indian people, so the rulers of Indian States have the legal right to speak for their subjects. The British Government, on the one hand, and the Princes on the other, can between them concoct a federation and force their respective peoples into it. But such a forced federation will never be a success. And as *United India* suggests that the consent of the British Indian people be taken as a condition precedent to the formation of federation, so it suggests that the people in the States be consulted. Here it is true it does not go the whole length; while it would require the positive consent of the provincial legislatures, it would appear to be content, in the matter of the States, with a favourable opinion expressed by a few hand-picked men. The reason for this differentiation may be that in the States there are no representative bodies to which as expressing definitive views the same weight cannot be attached as in British India. But, however the particular mode of ascertaining the opinion of the people in the two Indias may differ, we have no doubt that *United India* would make genuine agreement of the States' people as rigid a pre-requisite of federation as that of the people in British India. For tendering this advice both to the British Government and the Governments in the States the paper deserves the thanks of all well-wishers of India.

That the actual establishment of federation should be made contingent on receiving the consent of all the units is so obviously desirable that no elaborate justification of it is required. But the back-peddalling that has now become necessary in British policy in Palestine should bring home to everyone that coercion will not work. A Jewish National Home was forced on the Palestinian Arabs. They never acquiesced in it; they made up their minds to upset it, cost it what it might. First they made con-

stitutional and peaceful attempts; when these failed, they resorted to violent methods, to rebellion. And, as St. John Philby says in *Time and Tide*, "without rebellion the Arabs would have got nothing!" Coercion only leads, and leads inevitably, to violence, and suppressed violence to more violence till ultimately coercion has to be swept away. The Jewish National Home necessarily meant want of political freedom for Arabs. But "no Arab element in all that huge peninsula will willingly submit to any form of foreign government. Such submission is repugnant to their ineradicable love of independence. It is repugnant to their religion." They have thus secured, at least in part, by violence what they could not secure by non-violence. The British Mandate is to be abrogated and the Balfour Declaration about the Jewish National Home to be cancelled. Fancy the Jews now crying out against the Peel Commission because it says that the pledge contained in these instruments cannot be fulfilled without Arab support. We read in the latest issue of the *New Judea*: "The contention (of the Commission) that the working of the Mandate was conditioned on Arab-Jewish understanding is without any foundation. Arab consent to the Jewish National Home was, and is, of course desirable, and the Jews themselves sought and still seek it; but the claim of the Jews in Palestine was recognised internationally irrespective of Arab approval. The main obligation as provided in both the Balfour Declaration and in the Mandate, while safeguarding the interests of the other inhabitants, was and is to the Jews," and the Jews claim their pound of flesh. But they cannot have it, for the simple reason that an arrangement based on force cannot last. Similarly, if federation is forced upon British India against its wishes, the Princes may ask the British Government for their pound of flesh when British Indians wreck the federation. But they will get little satisfaction then as the Jews are getting now. As the Mandate has to be terminated and the Balfour Declaration thrown to the winds, so will federation too go by the board. If the Princes force federation on their subjects, again the same result will follow. The only safeguard is to take both British Indians and the States' people into consultation, and they should be consulted in the way in which the natives of the South African Protectorates are to be consulted in the matter of their transfer to the Union Government. The transfer would be effected only "with the full acquiescence of the population concerned"; so should federation be brought about only with the full acquiescence of the populations concerned.

## INDIAN LABOUR IN BRITISH GUIANA.

### I.

**I**N view of the news published by the *United Press* on the 7th inst. from Simla that the Government of India have under consideration the Report of the Labour Disputes Commission of British Guiana which was published on the 16th of December last, it

is worth while to draw public attention to the Report and its recommendations.

The Report concerns the people and the Government of India because the great bulk of the labour force on the sugar plantations in British Guiana is Indian in race, and Indian labour was introduced into British Guiana under the Indenture system with

the consent of the Government of India. The Indian population in British Guiana, estimated in 1934, was 136,000. Nearly 54,000 Indians reside on the sugar plantations, and, according to the Commission, form "over 90 per cent." of the "resident" labour employed on the sugar estates. Besides the "resident" labourers, there are many "non-resident" Indian labourers who work on the sugar estates. It may be said that the great bulk of labour employed on the sugar estates, both resident and non-resident, is Indian in race.

## II.

The genesis of the Commission was referred to in the columns of the *SERVANT OF INDIA* of the 9th July 1936. It may be recalled that for three consecutive years there were labour strikes on the sugar plantations which led to armed police intervention, and that, as a result of great public agitation and pressure, the Government at last agreed to appoint a commission to enquire into the nature of the disturbances and their underlying causes. The composition of the Commission failed to satisfy the Indian Association as well as the leaders of the Negro labour population, who insisted that the Commission should contain a representative of labour inasmuch as labour was unorganized and resourceless and, therefore, unable to present its case and defend its interests adequately as against those of the sugar planters with their well-knit organization and large financial and technical resources. The Government preferred a judicial commission on which neither the employers nor the employees were represented and declined to make any change in the personnel, which consisted of the then Attorney General, a West Indian Negro gentleman named Mr. Hector Josephs and two Europeans, Mr. F. B. Henderson, Attorney to the Demerara Bauxite Co., and Mr. A. H. Hill, retired Immigration Agent General. Whereupon the Indian and Negro leaders boycotted the Commission. With the result that labour interests were inadequately presented and defended before the Commission. The General Conference of Indians, organized by the British Guiana East Indian Association and held on the 21st May 1936, took note of this fact.

The contention of the Indian leaders is fully borne out by the admission of the Commission in its Report when it referred to the "unequal situation" between capital and labour.

The interests of the proprietors of the Sugar industry are watched and protected by the highly organized Sugar Producers' Association. On the other hand, labour is entirely unorganized and is incapable of formulating its grievances in proper, logical and reasonable form and without the organized power which is necessary for securing a reasonable and just consideration of its representations by the employers. (para. 66 of the Report.)

The Indian and Negro labour leaders were not unreasonable when they hesitated to anticipate with confidence the report of the Commission.

The Report of the Commission, on the whole, has happily belied their apprehensions. And the second General Conference of Indians organized by the British Guiana East Indian Association on the 27th May last expressed its satisfaction with the Report, and request-

ed that the recommendations of the Commission be given early effect. It is possible to hold that if labour interests had been represented on the Commission and adequately presented and defended before the Commission, the general tone of the Report and its findings might have been more specific and more adverse to the sugar planters and the recommendations more favourable to labour.

## III.

It has been said that Indian labour was introduced into British Guiana under the Indenture system. It is hardly necessary now to dwell on the evils of that system, which has happily been terminated in 1921. What is surprising is that the present situation is, according to the Commission, worse in some respects than under the Indenture system.

With the termination of the indenture system labourers living in estates' houses under the plantation system have to all intents and purposes taken the place of indentured immigrants but are without the supervision, safeguards and assistance which both indentured and unindentured estates' labourers had enjoyed under the Immigration Ordinance. (para. 63.)

The present system has all the evils of the Indenture system without its relieving features. One of the relieving features was the Department of the Immigration Agent-General. The Agent-General had the primary duty of enforcing the Immigration Ordinance which contained several provisions in the interests of labour. As he was an agent of the local Government which has been all along dominated by the all-too-powerful sugar planters, the Immigration Agent-General had his limitations in enforcing the Ordinance. Though all existing indentures were abolished in 1921, the office of the Immigration Agent-General was continued till 1932, when, as a measure of retrenchment, it was abolished, and its duties were distributed among the District Officers. The District Officers had too many other things to do and, moreover, did not appeal to the labourers in the same friendly light as the Immigration Agent-General and his assistants. The situation is thus well summed up by the Commission :

What the indentured labourer was to the employer under the 'indenture system', the resident estates' labourer is today under the 'plantation system,' but he is without the assistances, safeguards and means of ventilating grievances which indentured and unindentured East Indians alike had enjoyed from 1846 to 1932, for although the provisions of the Immigration Ordinance became inoperative with the cancellation of indentures in 1921, the Immigration Department continued to function as Protector of East Indian labourers until the year 1932 when the post of Immigration Agent-General was abolished, and the duties of Immigration Agents distributed among officers of the District Administration Scheme. (para 9.)

The new system was not a success. Says the Commission :

The reason why estate labourers do not go to District Officers in their capacity of Immigration Agents, as they did under the old regime, will be understood when it is remembered that the former as Tax collectors institute legal proceedings against persons for non-payment of licenses and village rates, whereas the whole-time Immigration Agent not only had no such duties to perform, but on the contrary frequently made representation on

behalf of labourers to Government through the Immigration Agent-General where it was found that measures being taken bore hardly upon an individual or upon East Indians of the labouring classes as a whole. (para 10.)

The abolition of the Department of Immigration Agent-General has led to a *deterioration* of the situation. Acts which were illegal under the old system have since become legal, to the disadvantage of the Indian labourer. The chief complaint of the Indian labourers was that employers refused to let the labourer know *before* he began a task as to the rates of wages he would be paid. It may be explained here that the great bulk of the work on the sugar estates, other than the work in the factories, is done on the task system or piece-work system, and not on the daily-wage system. In the old days it was an offence if an employer failed to inform labourers of the rates of wages before the commencement of their tasks, but now failure has become so common that it has become the chief complaint of the labourers. Similarly, the deductions from the wages of labourers were also illegal under the old regime. Now it is being increasingly practised. Observes the Commission :

The main grievance, neglect or refusal of employers to inform labourers of the rates to be paid before commencement of work to be performed by task and deductions from the earnings of labourers were offences under the Immigration Ordinances. With the discontinuance of supervision provided by Government, irregularities have crept in, and an accumulation of minor grievances without easy means of ventilation has been responsible to a great extent for recent labour troubles on estates. (para 10.)

Under the old regime, employers were under a statutory obligation to maintain pay lists and accounts in prescribed forms. Today there is no such obligation, and the practice varies from estate to estate. While some managers maintain the old forms, "other managers", says the Commission, "exercise no great care in regard to these matters and frequently enter the earnings of several persons under one name." (para 51) Thus making the accounts practically worthless for purposes of comparison.

While under the old order Immigration Agents had a statutory right to enter on any plantation and make enquiries, under the present order nobody has the right. Says the Commission :

We understand that no legal right is now conferred on anyone to enter upon estates, examine pay lists, and endeavour to settle labour disputes. The section of the Immigration Ordinance which conferred the right is now inoperative. (para 51).

Here is another instance of the deterioration of the position.

The control of housing and sanitation on estates is now vested in the Central Board of Health (Ordinance 15 of 1934), but we understand employers are no longer compelled to provide hospitals for their labourers as under the indenture system. (para 52.)

There is yet another instance of deterioration. Under the Immigration Ordinance, labourers were entitled to free housing, or what goes for housing, and frequently enjoyed free grants of land for growing provisions for domestic use. With the cessation of the Indenture system, the law governing the relations between employers and employees is the Employers

and Servants Ordinance (No. 1 of 1853). The position under the present law is thus described by the Commission :

As no written agreements are entered into between resident labourers and Estate Authorities with regard to either free housing or free grants of land for rice or provision growing, it will be observed that either may be terminated by 3 days' notice on application being made to a Justice of the Peace. (para 44.)

#### IV.

It is evident from the findings of the Commission itself that since the cessation of the indentured system the relations between the sugar planters and their Indian labourers have not improved; in fact, they have deteriorated. The planters had taken undue advantage of the weak position of their labourers and had not hesitated to exploit them. The claim of the planters that their relations with the labourers were cordial is untenable. Observes the Commission :

Admission by all Managers of estates who gave evidence before us that they had no knowledge whatever that trouble was impending on their estates, and that neither then nor since had they been able to discover the causes that gave rise to them, forces us to the conclusion that complaints of inaccessibility of Managers to labourers are not entirely unjustified and points to the possible delegation of a very important function. (para 10.)

There were strikes during three consecutive years and yet the Managers informed the Commission that they had no knowledge of the impending trouble even on the third occasion. That the grievances of the labourers were of some standing is borne out by what the Commission says :

It is evident from the evidence adduced before us that for years past the labourers have been more or less dissatisfied with certain conditions, economic and otherwise, prevailing on sugar estates. (para 5.)

The Commission has made certain admissions in favour of the planters, particularly as regards living conditions.

From the evidence given before us and from our own observations on the estates which we visited we are of opinion that there has been considerable improvement made in medical and hospital facilities, housing, drinking water supply and other amenities. (para 47.)

Sugar planters are entitled to ungrudging thanks for such improvements as they have effected in living conditions. It would have been more satisfactory, however, if the Commission had given some *quantitative* estimate of the improvements effected, and estimated the percentage of the labourers who had the benefit of such improvements and the rate of progress. It is only in the case of water supply that the Commission says that "practically all estates" had artesian wells in place of the old open canals. With regard to other amenities, the Commission observes :

As might be expected, on small estates, which are finding it difficult to carry on operations, little or nothing has been done in the way of improved housing. On the larger and better equipped estates, however, schemes for the replacement of ranges with mud floors by modern ranges raised from the ground and even cottages, are being given effect to and there is evidence of this on all the estates we visited.

If most of the estates are small, and only a small minority of labourers has had the advantage of these new amenities, it will be far from justifiable to speak of *considerable* improvement in living conditions, as

the Commission has done. In order to know the true state of affairs, the undersigned had requested the Sugar Planters' Association to furnish him with statistics of housing, etc., as in 1925, 1930 and 1935, which they kindly promised to supply as far as possible. No information has so far reached the undersigned. In the absence of such information, it is not possible to be sure of the extent of the improvements effected. The presumption cannot be in favour of the planters. One swallow does make the spring.

## V.

Under the Immigration Ordinance the hours of work were 7 in the field and 10 in the factory. The practice since has been anything from 12 to 18 hours in the field and 18 hours in the factory. The Commission remarks, significantly that "the hours of work in sugar factories had been 18 hours per day but that since the disturbances 9-hour shifts have been introduced on most estates" and adds, "we recommend the application of this system to all sugar factories." (para 48.)

The question of wages is, as usual, more complicated. The following findings of the Commission are relevant to the issue. "The supply of labour is in excess of the requirements of the estates"; "the standard of living of the labouring classes has improved since the War"; "it is more than probable that the present larger earnings of estates' labourers over pre-War earnings barely suffice to meet their increased expenditure" (para 6); "the cost of living in the Colony is largely dependent upon taxation and taxation in this Colony is high in comparison with other Colonies of the Empire. High taxation creates a high cost of living and the labourer in his effort to make both ends meet attempts to obtain what appears to him to be the only solution of his difficulty, viz., an increase in wages" (para 19); "the one and the only dependable source of employment for labourers in agriculture is the sugar industry" (para 25); "no alternative means of earning a livelihood is readily available" (para 64); and "the insecurity of tenure of houses and plots of land granted free of rent to labourers in consideration of labour to be performed" (para 67). Under these circumstances, it would be surprising if the highly organized sugar planters did not exploit the unorganized and ignorant labourers.

On the question of the rate of wages, the Commission observes :

We agree with Sir Edward Davson in his statement that the rate of wages could only be settled in the end by the price of sugar and that the cost of living is a matter which is outside the Sugar industry.

The sugar planters submitted in evidence a statement prepared for them by Mr. Stanley Heald, Chartered Accountant, which went to show that

during the six year period 1929-34 the sugar industry, as a whole, made a profit of 0.41 per cent. upon the estimated invested capital. And in consequence the Commission concludes as follows :

It is evident from the results disclosed by the report that the sugar industry as a whole cannot afford at the present time any general increase in rates of wages; and an addition to the labour costs of production would seriously prejudice the economic position of the industry and might possibly result in the closing down of some of the smaller estates. (para 60.)

It is not clear from the Report of the Commission if the evidence of Mr. Heald had been submitted to competent cross-examination. It would seem that the Commission too naively accepted without adequate examination the evidence of the sugar planters in the matter of the economic position of the sugar industry. The Commission speaks of "considerable" improvement in living conditions. Were these large improvements made when the industry was earning no more than 0.41 per cent. profit? The Commission speaks of the drastic reduction of hours of work in factories from 18 to 9 since the disturbances. Was this step possible with a profit of 0.41 per cent.? The Commission advocates certain reforms, most of which are bound to increase the cost of production. Has the Commission calculated the cost before making those recommendations?

In any event, such estates as can afford to pay higher wages might have been asked to do so. If in the matter of providing amenities to labourers all the estates do not act as one unit, should they do so only in respect of wages?

## VI.

The pivotal recommendation of the Commission is about the creation of a department to watch over the interests of labour.

We recommend that Government take early steps to create some authority clothed with such powers as are considered necessary for the efficient safeguarding of the interests of both employed and employer.

It is to be hoped that the British Guiana Government will not hesitate to seek the assistance and co-operation of the Government of India in the setting up of such an authority and that inasmuch as the great bulk of labour on sugar plantations is Indian, they will employ a considerable proportion of Indians in that department either locally recruited or borrowed from India. The Malay Labour Department may offer a good model for British Guiana to follow.

But much depends on the personal equation of the officers concerned. Nothing will contribute more to the success of such an organization as the presence in British Guiana of an accredited and high-placed and responsible Agent of the Government of India.

P. KODANDA RAO.

## SPANISH DEADLOCK.

A COMPLETE deadlock has resulted in the negotiations between the various powers on the British plan for localising the war in Spain. The Chairman of the Non-Intervention Committee, Lord Plymouth, instead of declaring that the plan has

broken down, has resorted to the usual face-saving device of adjourning the Committee *sine die*, but there is no hope that agreement would be reached on the plan and that it would be put through effectively so as to leave the war to be fought out exclusively by

the Spaniards themselves. Three such schemes were tried before; all have failed. They have only operated in giving an immense advantage to the rebels. It is calculated that while the Valencia Government has only about 12,000 foreign volunteers—and they are real volunteers who have enlisted in the army for love of democracy—the Burgos junta has as many as 80,000 or 90,000 foreigners in its forces, most of them conscripts of the Fascist powers. Similarly the rebels have an overwhelming superiority in guns, aeroplanes and all the mechanical appliances. That the Fascist governments are rushing all the men and material they can get to General Franco is no longer a matter of conjecture or inference; they have themselves admitted it and they glory in the fact that they have been able to render such valuable assistance. In an article in the *Popola d'Italia* supposed to be written by Mussolini himself at the end of June we read: "In this great fight which has brought face to face two types of civilisation Fascist Italy has not been neutral but has fought, and victory will be ours." He gives public praise to the achievement of the Italian forces at Bilbao and publishes casualty lists, and General Franco thanks him for his words of praise. The so-called non-intervention that has been practised now has been intervention in favour of the rebels and to the disadvantage of the loyalists. But even this farce of non-intervention could not be kept up because of the withdrawal by Germany and Italy from the naval patrol system, and the British Government had to formulate a new scheme to take its place.

The scheme itself is not bad; if it could be agreed to and honestly worked it would be more effective in insulating the war than any of the previous schemes which failed miserably and worked so disastrously to the cause of the legitimate Spanish Government. What Germany, Italy and Portugal wanted was that naval control should be abandoned altogether, that land control should be continued, and that General Franco should be accorded the status of a belligerent. It is obvious that if this were done it would be extremely injurious to the Spanish Government. While France would be unable to send contingents in aid of the loyalist forces along the Pyrennes, even when Spain is being converted into an Italo-German protectorate to the serious detriment of France's own security, the Fascist powers would be enabled to supply to General Franco by sea all the personnel and war material that he might need. The grant of belligerent rights to Franco at sea would also be of the utmost military advantage to him, because it would help the rebel fleet to establish an effective blockade of the loyalist coast. France and Britain, however, and particularly France, wanted the naval control to be maintained and both the combatants to be stripped of all foreigners taking part in the deadly combat, without recognising the belligerent status of General Franco. This would have worked evenly if the Fascist powers had agreed to the scheme. But since they do not, the British Government produced a compromise plan, and as a compromise it is not unfair. But there is no possibility of its being accepted by Germany and Italy. The plan provides

for renewal of land supervision and for substitution of another scheme for naval supervision for the one that was previously in force. Instead of the naval patrol system from which Germany and Italy have withdrawn, the British proposed that observers would be placed in Spanish ports whose only duty would be to verify the presence of the other international observers on board ships belonging to non-intervention powers reaching Spain, the ships carrying these observers not being liable to interference by either side engaged in war. This naval control, if agreed to, would be more effective than the former one, for even when the coastal control system was set up in May, no observers were placed in the Spanish ports. The system now proposed of placing observers to carry out the duties hitherto performed by the naval patrol would be more efficacious.

The British plan also contemplates a grant of belligerent rights to both the contending parties, but the rights that it is proposed to accord are restricted and the grant is conditional. Contraband lists are to be identical with the Non-Intervention Committee's lists, and ships carrying observers are not to be liable to visit and search on the ground that they are carrying contraband. "Any such limitation of belligerent rights," as was remarked by Mr. Eden, "is not only unusual but unprecedented." The result of it will be that "the two parties, in the absence of a regular and effective blockade of a particular port, will be expected to allow ships to sail to ports of the enemy with any cargoes that are not prohibited under the Non-Intervention Agreement." The recognition of belligerency is subject to the condition that the withdrawal of volunteers is accepted not only in principle by the powers concerned, but that the withdrawal is actually carried out. It is proposed that a Commission should be sent out to both sides to supervise the withdrawal, and belligerent rights will not become effective until the Non-Intervention Committee have placed on record their unanimous opinion "that the arrangements for the withdrawal of foreign nationals are working satisfactorily, and that this withdrawal has in fact made substantial progress." As there are on the Non-Intervention Committee the representatives not only of the British and French Governments but the Russian Government and as the Committee has to arrive at a decision by a unanimous vote, there is no question of the decision being biased in favour of General Franco. The linking of the grant of belligerent rights to the rebels with the withdrawal of foreign nationals is sound. When a rebellion assumes the proportions of a war and the rebels are able to act as a sovereign state in the part of the country occupied by them, it is the practice to grant them the status of a belligerent. International law allows it. The British Government explained that in proposing to give belligerent rights to Franco, it was not intended to give any kind of approval to his revolt. The conditions on which such rights are granted to insurgents were mentioned by Lord Cranborne as follows: "The first is that the revolt is a serious one which is not likely to be rapid-

ly suppressed, so that what may be regarded as a real war is in existence; secondly, that the insurgents are in possession of a considerable portion of the territory of the state concerned; thirdly, that they have set up a Government; and fourthly, that they carry on hostilities in a regular manner." General Franco has under his control more than a half of Spain, and there is an organised government in that portion. But General Franco, to be entitled to belligerent rights, must be able to maintain his position with the help of Spanish insurgents and must not have to depend in large measure on the support of alien forces from outside.

General Franco, however, is known to depend so much upon Fascist reinforcements from abroad that he will be unable to give up this foreign aid and will therefore not be entitled to recognition as a belligerent. He is perhaps prepared to part with the Italian infantry, which is no more efficient than his own, and he is perhaps tired of it too. But he cannot do without Italy's artillery, which has saved him so far. If the foreign volunteers are really withdrawn from the rebel area, General Franco will be rendered wholly impotent. It is, therefore, exceedingly unlikely that he or the Fascist powers will agree to the British plan. Questions were asked in Parliament as to what proportion of volunteers would have to be withdrawn before belligerent rights could be granted. The answer given by Government was that although it was not

stipulated that all the volunteers should be withdrawn, a majority must be. Lord Cranborne said "Until the majority have gone it is impossible to ensure that the destiny of Spain shall in fact be decided by Spaniards, and that is the idea behind the scheme." Several members proposed that the number of volunteers to be withdrawn as a condition of recognition of belligerency should be roughly in proportion to the number of troops on either side. If Germans and Italians fighting for Franco are 80,000 and the International Brigade fighting on the side of the Spanish Government 12,000, the numbers to be withdrawn should be in the same proportion. These conditions are not likely to be fulfilled. Germany and Italy have agreed to withdrawal in principle; but what is required is not agreement to principle, but actual practice. The reality of withdrawal is very remote from possibility. The British plan is thus good if it could be honestly carried out, but it would not be. Upon the whole, what Miss Rathbone said of the plan is true: "If the proposals are worked courageously and impartially they might not be too bad; but the British Government have never yet shown courage, or even impartiality. They have subordinated everything to their desire to avoid provoking Germany or Italy." And, therefore, even if the plan is agreed to by the Fascist powers, which is not probable, there is little chance of its being worked equitably.

## FASCIST POWERS IN SPAIN. SPEECH BY THE DUCHESS OF ATHOLL.

*The Duchess of Atholl, in a weighty speech in the House of Commons on 19th July, described, while commenting on the British Government's proposal for making non-intervention effective, to what extent the Fascist powers were interfering in purely Spanish affairs. The full text of the speech is given below.*

I WISH, in the first place, to endorse two appeals made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill). First, that there should be stricter regulation of foreigners coming into this country (Spain). More especially, I should like to see a stricter regulation of persons coming in under what is called the *au pair* system. His second appeal was that the Government should give us information as to this serious matter of the guns said to be commanding Gibraltar and the Straits. This has been causing me deep anxiety as my right hon. Friend knows, for at least the last four months. I wish, however, to join issue with my right hon. Friend, the Member for Epping in his suggestion which is, I understand, that General Franco should be recognised as the ruler of Spain. Any action of that kind would be knuckling down to lawlessness and an encouragement of a regime which he himself admits has brought about a situation which seems full of danger to us. I believe that that suggestion and, in part the suggestion for recognising General Franco as a belligerent, is based upon an exaggerated belief in the extent to which he has the population of Spain behind him. It may be that General Franco controls more than half of Spanish territory, but it is important to remember that he does not control the Provinces which are richest from the point of view of industrial or agricultural production. We may also ask why, if he

felt he had the people behind him, he needed not only Moors, but Italian aeroplanes with him from the moment of his insurrection, and German aeroplanes from two or three weeks afterwards.

*Vice-Admiral Taylor*: That applies to the other side as well.

*Commander Agnew*: There were the Russians too.

*Captain McEwen*: What about the Russians on the other side?

*Duchess of Atholl*: My hon. and gallant Friends are quite mistaken. At the time there was no Soviet Ambassador in Spain.

*Captain McEwen*: How many agents were there?

*Duchess of Atholl*: There may have been Communist propaganda in Spain although I have no evidence of its extent. I am prepared to believe that there was some; I only say that there was no Soviet Ambassador in Spain when the insurrection broke out, so that I do not suppose the Soviet Government were concerned in it. Again, I have never seen any evidence to the effect that there were Russian troops in Spain until October, and there was no International Brigade in Spain until October or November. I would also say this, which is a very important matter and is not sufficiently known, that although no doubt there was Communist propaganda in Spain before the insurrection, to what extent I cannot say, there certainly was very serious Nazi propaganda and intrigue. Over 4,000 documents were seized in a Nazi headquarters in Barcelona after the insurrection broke out, and articles summarising those documents appeared in the "Manchester Guardian" as long ago

as last August. A few months later, a book, "The Nazi Conspiracy in Spain," gave full translations, and in some cases photographs of the most important of those documents. These show that from 1930 onwards the organisation was corrupting the Spanish press, influencing politicians, influencing officers of the army and air force. There was the smuggling in of propaganda through the consulates and embassy, and, finally, smuggling in of a great consignment of so-called potatoes in the spring of 1936, which obviously must have been arms.

It is also well-known that there were Fascist groups after the election in February 1936, which openly said that they would not recognise the results of the election, and the Fascist party greatly increased in numbers in the months between February and July, 1936. Taking that fact into account and the facts disclosed in "The Nazi Conspiracy in Spain" (a perusal of which I recommend to my hon. Friends), they confirm all that I have read as to such work by agents provocateurs in those months between February and July and this, I believe, accounts for much of the disorder and violence. There was certainly murder on both sides. Among others a well-known judge was murdered by the Fascists. As to the figures with regard to the burning and damage of churches between February and July, to which my hon. and gallant Friend referred, I understand that those figures were shown by President Azana in the Cortes to have been very much exaggerated.

I come back, however, to my original point, namely, that if General Franco had so many of the people behind him before he began his insurrection because they objected to Communist propaganda, why was it necessary for him to have foreign aid at so early a date? Why as the months went on did we hear less and less of the Spanish people fighting for General Franco and only of Moorish and Italian troops and of German and Italian aeroplanes? Why has it recently been stated in the "Manchester Guardian", I understand on reliable information, that since the fall of Bilbao General Franco has not felt strong enough to finish the war without applying to Signor Mussolini for 125,000 more men and 500 more aeroplanes? Sometimes it is given as evidence that General Franco has the people with him, that it is not necessary for him to guard his lines of communication, but the same applies to the territory of the Spanish Government, from what I saw of the lines of communication in their territory, and I venture to express my belief that the order and acquiescence which appear to exist in General Franco's territory are due to a reign of terror which he expressly enjoined on his officers in orders published on 28th July last year, a copy of which was found on an officer who was taken prisoner in the Guadarramas. More than one person has testified to me personally to this reign of terror and it was the subject of a striking indictment given by the President of the Anglo-American Press Association in a public speech in Paris last November. In this he spoke of hundreds of thousands of men in General Franco's territory having been killed mostly by being put against the wall. Moreover, in view of what was said by some hon. Members the other night about the quiet that is said to have reigned in Bilbao since General Franco's entry, I should like to point out that so far as I know no newspaper correspondents have been allowed in the town since then, and my information is that a few days after his entry no fewer than 40 courts martial had been set up in order to try people who were opposed to him.

Another indication of the extent to which the two sides can show that they are trusted by the people is this. When in April my companion and I had an interview with Senor Caballero we asked him what would be his policy at the end of the war if the Gov-

ernment won, he at once said that if he were successful he would provide for a plebiscite. On the other hand, General Franco, when questioned on the same subject a few months ago, said that that was a plan not to be thought of for some time to come. I submit, therefore, that there is evidence of several different kinds which should lead us to accept with great caution any suggestion that General Franco really has behind him the people in his territory, as some hon. Members think. This is a very serious question which should be considered before giving him belligerent rights, as they, of course, would enhance his status and authority.

I recognise, of course, that the granting of belligerent rights is to depend on a substantial withdrawal of foreigners on both sides, but obviously it may well be a very difficult matter to carry this out, because I understand that General Franco is still trying to keep up the fiction that he has no foreigners on his side. That statement appeared in an interview in yesterday's "Sunday Times". In this connection it should not be forgotten that the Spanish Government have made no difficulty whatever about saying that they would allow all foreigners on their side to go. The German Government, on the other hand, have indicated that, while they accept the proposal in principle, they want modifications, though it is not known in what direction. Evidently great pressure is likely to be put on our representatives on the Non-Intervention Committee to whittle down to the smallest possible extent the requirement that foreigners should be taken out before belligerent rights are granted. In my opinion no belligerent rights should be granted until it can clearly be shown that the vast majority of foreigners have gone, and have gone in the proportions in which they are engaged on the different sides, as we must recognise that the granting of belligerent rights will give an advantage to General Franco.

Then we have to remember that, from the wording of the scheme, it seems likely to be extremely difficult to provide any air control. I must express my disappointment that the paragraph has not been more strongly worded, in view of what my right hon. Friend said to me in reply to a supplementary question which I put to him about a week ago. One has only to look at a map to see that Italian and German aeroplanes can fly into Spain quite easily at night, via Sardinia and Majorca, whereas planes from Russia must come by sea and can easily be intercepted. French commercial planes, of course, can fly into Spain—I do not know if they have done so—and they can be converted into bombers, but not into fighters. Moreover, I cannot remember any correspondents having mentioned that any aeroplanes of a French fighting type have been seen on General Franco's side, whereas we have heard of many Junkers, Heinkels and Fiats—

*Vice-Admiral Taylor:* While there is certainly no difficulty about German and Italian planes getting into Spain to help General Franco, Russian planes also have managed to get into Spain to assist the Spanish Government.

*Duchess of Atholl:* If belligerent rights were granted to the insurgents, it would, I fancy, be much more difficult for them to get into Spain. We all want to keep out of trouble if we can, but it seems to me to be one thing to be neutral and quite another to join in fastening on the combatants an arrangement which will act unfairly against one party, and that party which, I believe, is united by an historic friendship to this country—I mean the democratic party. It is all very well for my hon. Friends to smile, but I would remind them that the hallmark of democracy is freedom of political association, whereas the hallmark of dictatorship is that only one

political party is allowed to exist, and it will stand no criticism. To my mind freedom of political association and freedom of religious belief are among the criteria of democracy. Freedom of religious belief is laid down in the Spanish Republican Constitution, and President Azana, since the insurrection, has declared his intention of maintaining that article in the Constitution once the war is over. On the Government side there is indeed a multiplicity of parties, which may mean weakness in an hour of emergency, but at least it means that they are a democracy, whereas on the other side only a single party exists, which, of course, is the hallmark of dictatorship.

I wish to say in conclusion that General Franco's statement a little while ago to a "Times" correspondent that Gibraltar would not be likely to be a subject of dispute between him and this country, because it had lost most of its importance for us, seems to me to be very ominous in connection with the guns which are alleged to be in position near Gibraltar, and, therefore, I welcome warmly what my right hon. Friend (the Foreign Secretary) said about the importance of our arteries through the Mediterranean. I only hope he will do his utmost to see that this scheme is made as fair as possible to both parties, and in particular that he will do his utmost to see that the great majority of the foreigners are withdrawn before any belligerent rights are granted, in order to ensure that one day we do not have to defend those arteries against overwhelming odds.

## Correspondence.

### PROHIBITION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SERVANT OF INDIA.

SIR,—In your article on "Prohibition" on the 5th August, you have brought out almost all the salient points concerning that major problem and have laid particular stress on the very difficult situation before the Congress Ministries created partly by their over-enthusiasm in the past.

I am afraid, however, that you have not laid sufficient stress on the dangers of illicit distillation if the drinkers are almost suddenly deprived of their toddy as Mahatma Gandhi proposes to do. We must not forget the failure of the great American experiment simply because the sentiment against drink is more prevalent in India than in the U. S. A. So much of law-breaking was the result of the 18th amendment that the American statesman thought that the evils of drink were preferable to the habits of general lawlessness that followed 'Prohibition.' Our preventive staff is, when compared with the American, not so efficient in organisation and equipment. It is also more open to 'graft' and further is seriously discredited in its morale by the political ferments of the last sixteen years. It would be too much to expect that it could stand the strain especially if the problem is not tackled on an all-India basis including the enormous frontiers due to the intermixture of British and Indian States' territories. Congressmen may be persuaded or even compelled to take heroic steps by the Gandhian drive but the other provinces and the States are not going to sacrifice their revenue so quickly even when they are in favour of prohibition.

There is another danger which has been pointed out to me by a senior officer in one of the provinces of Eastern India. Drinks even more intoxicating than toddy can be manufactured at home from rice,

nagli and other food grains. If the drinkers are locked out from the shops they may very easily take to brewing at home. This would certainly extend the drink evil to women and children who are happily free from it at the present moment.

I have come to the conclusion that death alone can keep the drinker away from his toddy. It may be a cry of depression but facts have to be faced if prohibition is to be successfully achieved.

I would not obviously like to end my observation at this stage and feel that I am morally bound to suggest a better plan even if it be a slow one. I am sure you would allow me a little more space for describing it at some length.

My plan, in brief, is as follows :

(i) Permits are to be issued only to those habitual drinkers who are prepared to sign a declaration to that effect.

(ii) No fresh permits are to be issued to any new persons and old permits are to be cancelled if the holders voluntarily surrender them. In case they die, the permits are automatically cancelled.

(iii) Coupon-books are to be issued each year at the rate of only one coupon for every day to the holders of the permits. Toddy is not to be sold except when a coupon is surrendered to the salesman who is to send these coupons to the excise department.

(iv) Approved temperance-workers are to be given powers to see that these rules are not infringed. The coupon-holders would die out in a generation and the reduction in excise revenue would be spread over a number of years so that the legislatures will have ample time to find out new sources of revenue. There would be no new recruits to the drinking fraternity. These are generally introduced by the old 'habituals' but my plan would prevent this as no habitual is expected to surrender his coupon in order to introduce a guest. Again there would be no serious incentive to illicit distillation with all its unpleasant consequences.

The plan does not preclude the simultaneous employment of the well-known methods of prohibition such as (a) reduction of shops ; (b) reduction in the hours of sales during the day and reduction of days of sale during the year; and (c) reduction of the strength of the alcoholic content of the liquor.

Temperance workers will also have work for them if they try to secure voluntary cancellation of permits.

Similar methods may be followed in the abolition of the use of other intoxicants. Care will have to be taken, however, to secure a small supply to the medical profession for strictly medical purposes.

If you, Sir, find the plan worth while you will, I hope, try to bring it to the notice of the excise ministers in your own way.—Yours etc.

R. H. KELKAR.

Poona, Aug. 10.

### BOOKS RECEIVED.

- IMPERIAL PREFERENCE. By BENOY KUMAR SARKAR. (N. M. Ray Chowdhury & Co., Calcutta.) 1934. 24cm. 164p. Rs. 5.
- CONFLICTING TENDENCIES IN INDIAN ECONOMIC THOUGHT. By SHIB CHANDRA DUTT. (N. M. Ray Chowdhury & Co., Calcutta.) 1934. 24cm. 225p. Rs. 5.
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