

# THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS



## A Case for its Reorganisation

BY

S. K. PATIL

AUNDH PUBLISHING TRUST  
AUNDH 1945

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Rs. 1/8/-

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First Published, September 1945

*Sole Distributors in India :*  
**PADMA PUBLICATIONS LTD**  
**BOMBAY**

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Printed by V. R. Sawant at the Associated Advertisers & Printers Ltd., 505, Arthur Road, Tardeo, Bombay 7, and Published by Appasaheb Pant and Maurice Frydman for Aundh Publishing Trust, Swatantrapur, Aundh State.

## **A WORD IN EXPLANATION**

Whether great or not, whether historic or not, there can never be two opinions that 1942 was an unforgettable year. It has taught us a lot that we can never forget. The Congress has emerged, not altogether unscathed but definitely wiser out of this fiery ordeal. As practical men we must put our experiences to utmost advantage. It is with this object in view that I have been speaking and writing ever since my release a year ago on the subject of organisational reconstruction of the Indian National Congress. The pages that follow are just a humble effort to present the whole case in one place and I shall be happy if this effort at least provokes thought among my Congress friends.

**S. K. PATIL.**

Congress House,  
September 20, 1945.

## August 1942 And After

Whatever might be the net result in political values of our national movement of 1942, it cannot be denied that after 1857 it was the greatest mass movement with all the elements of people's revolution in it. After an event has taken place there are many political *Pandits* who can argue about its *pros* and *cons* and point out mistakes both of purpose and organisation. The real history of August 1942 has yet to be written. It will surely be written one day when the dust of the present political controversy has settled down and people are in a mood to judge things dispassionately and in their correct perspective. It is, however, the duty of those who had the good fortune of being the actors of this great national upheaval to survey the situation if only to get wiser by the experience. There is a vast majority of Congressmen in the country who are proud of this mass movement because of the supreme sacrifices and sufferings through which the nation had to pass and which it did with courage and faith which are the greatest assets of a national struggle. The top-most Congress leaders who have been released from their enforced detention after three years have been vying with one another to share the responsibility of this phenomenal mass awakening and mass action. It is neither the purpose of this *brochure* to discuss the details of the movement nor to pronounce any judgment on anybody's action. The purpose is to have an objective survey of the political developments that have taken place in this

country since August 9, 1942, the day on which India's national leadership was put under arrest *en masse*.

There are leaders and followers in the Congress organisation who might claim that the August movement has resulted in what may be called a political success. It may be so. If by success is meant that the nation has progressed towards our cherished goal of Complete Independence, we have no doubt achieved success in that limited sense. It is no use at this stage wasting our time in futile discussion whether the end of the 1942 movement was a success or otherwise. Nor would it serve any purpose at this stage to discuss whether the movement of August 1942 was a movement started by Congress or not. Whosoever might be responsible for starting the movement, the fact remains that there was in 1942 the greatest national movement of our times and it has left a distinct and indelible impress on the political life of this country. A large number of Congressmen and friends of the Congress who participated in this phenomenal mass awakening have done acts of bravery and sacrifice of which any people can be proud. And yet all this was done in the absence of any central or dependable guidance. The nation entered upon the movement in a spirit which was euphemistically described by Mahatma Gandhi as 'DO or DIE.' We were out to get our Complete Independence, no matter what it cost. We asked our rulers to QUIT INDIA bag and baggage so that this country should be free for the sons and daughters of the soil to live. If that was the immediate objective of this great national movement, surely we have not achieved it. The nation has failed

in reaching the great objective which it had set before its eyes when it undertook to make the colossal sacrifices which it made. We as a nation, conscious of our growing strength and pledged to win our independence by our sweat and toil, must examine the causes which robbed us of our expected success. It is no use arguing about the fact which is beyond dispute that we have emerged unsuccessful in this great movement. I do not deny for a moment that we have taken a few more strides on the way of our political emancipation. But that is not the real measure of success, and surely, it must not be the measure of those who gave their lives so that free India should live for ever.

Whatever may be the other reasons which ultimately contributed to our failure, the one which strikes me as the most important was our organisational unpreparedness. No doubt there was a great atmosphere for an all-out political movement in 1942. The world was on the parting of the ways. Great events had taken place and were taking place both in the world and in our own country. The Japanese Military Roller was mercilessly moving over vast tracts of land which for centuries belonged to the powerful Western nations. The historic Burmese land was completely run over and the hordes of Japanese army were at the Eastern gates of India. While all this was happening India could not have sat supine helplessly dependent on the military ability of Britain to stem the in-rushing tide. Such confidence in its military genius was not created by the British army anywhere in those years. This was the background of the movement of August 1942. If the Congress had



not taken any steps at this critical hour of our national history to organise the people of this country for country-wide national resistance against the Japanese aggression, the posterity would have been justified in condemning the Congress for its indifference and inaction. It is easy to be wise after the event. We are all glad today that victory ultimately went to the Allied Arms. But surely, it would have been dangerous to predict events with anything like accuracy in August 1942. The Congress, therefore, was perfectly justified in taking the step that it took in passing the Resolution of August 8. If Britain would have helped this country in organising a real national resistance which a people's government alone could have successfully done perhaps, the history of war would have been different, not so much from the point of view of success but from the contents of that success. Britain would not allow organisation of such national resistance, and hence the movement of August 1942.

It will take long to forget those hectic days of August 1942 when the whole nation was literally boiling with indignation born of its utter helplessness. There was a strong desire to do something and that too promptly. Mahatma Gandhi had stirred up the revolutionary spirit of the people by his inspiring writings in the *Harijan*. Everything was ready for a national upheaval. There was the atmosphere and even more than that there was the people's determination. What was lacking was the strength and ability of our organisation to control and direct a mass struggle of these immense dimensions.

Congressmen who are naturally and justifiably proud of the happenings of 1942 and the great part played in them by the nation as a whole and particularly by our younger generation ought not to commit the mistake of forgetting the wood for the trees. It must be realised after a close examination of these happenings that the organisational strength behind this great national upheaval was very little, if at all. The response came from the rank and file of the nation in a measure which was not expected by anybody. If a straight question is asked: what was the direct contribution of the organisation of the Congress in shaping these happenings, I am afraid, there is very little to our credit there. It may be argued that the Congress organisation was banned and hence it could not effectively operate in guiding and controlling the popular response. The argument is true but only in a qualified sense. If our organisation was sound and if its roots had gone deep into all the various sections of our masses, surely, we could have mastered the situation even in spite of the ban and a multitude of other difficulties. Our organisation collapsed as it were within the first few weeks of the imposition of the ban because unfortunately it was superficial and was not as widespread and deep-rooted as it should be.

Between 1934 and 1942 we Congressmen had done very little of real organisational work. Most of our energies were frittered away in party and group squabbles on so-called ideologies and methods of work which were mostly excuses, the real intention being the power politics.

The Congress began its fighting programme in

1920 by passing the resolution of non-violent non-co-operation at Nagpur. From that time right up to 1934, our discipline stood very well and successfully weathered many a storm inside our ranks. Mahatma Gandhi and his unique weapon of *Satyagraha* had fired the imagination of the people. Our patriotism in those years was in a formative stage and it was being formed on Gandhian pattern. There was not much scope in those years for different ideologies or even different methods of work. There was only one ideology and one method of work, and these were given to the Congress and the nation by Mahatma Gandhi. He had ennobled sacrifice for the country to a pitch where it had assumed a fanatical fervour. The young generation of the twenties was moved by Gandhian technique as by nothing else. It was entirely due to this great experiment of mass awakening that Gandhiji brought about during those years, under the Flag of the Congress, that we had the successful movements of direct political action such as the Flag *Satyagraha* of Nagpur, the Bardoli *Satyagraha* and the first Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930. We had the second Civil Disobedience Movement in 1932 but it was by no means an unqualified success. The forces were now gathering inside our organisation which clamoured for a reorientation of the Congress policy and programme.

There are always two mentalities in every big national movement. They can be described as the "Parliamentary" and the "Revolutionary." It is not correct to say that these mentalities raised their heads in our Congress history for the first time in 1934.

They were there even before but the conflict between them had not come to an open clash owing to the great influence which Gandhiji wielded on the rank and file of Congressmen. The Civil Disobedience Movement of 1932 proved to be of a longer duration and for that reason, among others, it became impossible to successfully arrest the demoralisation in the ranks that it had brought about. It then became impossible to avoid the open clash between the Parliamentary and the Revolutionary mentalities. The year 1934 proved to be a fateful year for the Congress in more than one way. The Civil Disobedience Movement had come to a stand-still. The Congress was wholly suppressed and a wave of pessimism had come over the country. Gandhiji had directed his energies to the great Harijan activities which he speeded up with a velocity of which he alone is capable. The leaders of the Parliamentary mentality had their way and they succeeded in taking the Congress with them, with the blessings of Gandhiji, to parliamentary politics. A Parliamentary Board was appointed and elections to the Central Assembly were successfully fought. Perhaps as a counterblast to this came the Congress Socialist Party in the same year, which claimed to be the exponents of the Revolutionary mentality. The open conflict between these two mentalities in this year was the beginning of many of the evils from which our great organisation has been suffering ever since. The party politics which was unknown to our organisation until then now came in with a vengeance. The Congress Socialists did not stop with merely an additional stress on their special

ideology or its different methods of action, if they had any such method. The leaders claiming to be the exponents of the Revolutionary mentality created what later on became a water-tight and fool-proof organisation within the Congress ranks. They had a constitution of their own and a special loyalty and a special programme for their organisation. However attractive these might have appeared to a section of the younger generation infuriated by the conduct of the Parliamentarians, it inevitably resulted in creating lack of faith and indiscipline in the rank and file of the Congress workers.

Close on the heels of the Congress Socialist Party came the Communist Party, also as an independent party in the Congress organisation. The reasons for this are not far to seek. The Congress Socialists came into direct conflict with the Communists in the labour field. Being a Party within the Congress, the Congress Socialists were using the Congress name and influence for getting a foothold among the workers. The Communists thought that they could also repeat the experiment to their advantage and hence the entry of the Communists into our national organisation. After the Communists, came the Royists as a separate Party with its plan and programme. The storm then went on gathering. The forces of indiscipline and disruption went on gaining momentum. Then came the episode of Subhas Babu and the formation of 'Forward Bloc' within the Congress. This was followed by an agglomeration of these dissident parties into a solid bloc which came to be known as the 'Left Consolidation.' The Congress was now fast heading to-

wards an organisational disaster. The Tripuri Session of the Indian National Congress was the height of the forces of indiscipline and disruption within our ranks. During all these years, the Congress organisation was hopelessly suffering for want of adequate attention. There was no attempt made to put the organisation on a sound and scientific basis. Most of our leaders, both old and young, had allowed themselves to be exploited by one or the other party within the Congress and so they had no time to look to the work of proper organisation of the Congress.

Right in the middle of this organisational weakness of the Congress almost amounting to chaos brought about by dissident forces, came the Parliamentary elections to the Provincial Assemblies. Here again I maintain that if the Congress succeeded in winning these elections in seven out of eleven Provinces, very little credit for this great result goes to the organisational strength of the Congress. It was the magic of the name of Mahatma Gandhi and the lightning electioneering campaign of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru with his supreme hold on the mass mind, which contributed more than anything else to this great success of the Congress in the provincial elections. The country will never forget the most wonderful work done by Jawaharlal by his country-wide election tours. What I maintain—and that too with the knowledge of the working of our organisation—is that Congress as an organisation had very little to contribute to this success.

The functioning of the Congress Ministries in seven, and for some time eight Provinces, did not

result in consolidating the organisational strength of the Congress. We had taken the Ministries with the two main objects, namely, to break the Act of 1935 and to serve the people through the Congress organisation by strengthening that organisation. We must admit that we succeeded in neither of these two objects. We did not succeed in breaking the Act of 1935; the loss, in my opinion, is not as great as the national loss of our having ignominiously failed to consolidate our own ranks. After this great Parliamentary experiment, of 27 months, the Congress emerged as a much weaker institution than it was ever before. In most of the Provinces the differences between the Congress Ministries and the Provincial Congress Committees were very acute. If they did not explode in a conflagration, it was because of the great influence of the Central Parliamentary Board headed by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Congress Working Committee and last but not the least, Gandhiji.

Before the Congress had any time to set its house in order organisationally, the great World War II broke out in 1939. We were taken off our feet and any organisation of our institution became almost impossible. Event after event followed in rapid succession giving us neither any chance nor breathing space to build up our ranks. Our wily rulers who have perfected the art of living and prospering on our weaknesses did not allow this opportunity to slip without taking fullest advantage of it. This is the reason why the movement of Individual *Satyagraha* of 1940 could not gather sufficient momentum in spite

of the masterly guidance of our great Leader. Many of our colleagues in the Legislatures who had joined us in fair weather, could not stand the test of a real trial when it came. It was in these circumstances that the Individual *Satyagraha* movement came to an end in December 1941 after the release of Congress prisoners.

Even the short period of 8 months that was at the disposal of the Congress between December 1941 and August 1942 was not judiciously used by us in re-organising our forces. We acted as if we had lost complete control over ourselves. There was no move for any national programme which would consolidate our ranks and arrest the growing fissiparous tendencies. During these 8 months we did take part in some good activities such as helping the people in organising themselves for self-protection against dangers from aerial bombing. But this was neither here nor there because we were not able to remove the organisational weaknesses which had taken hold of our Institution. Before we could set ourselves to do any organisational work, came the famous Cripps offer in April 1942 and our rejection of it for very sound national reasons. Events were now heading for a crisis of the first magnitude; the clouds in the political horizon were gathering fast and threatening to break out any moment. The leaders like Gandhiji, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and others were making herculean effort to keep up and even to increase the spirit of resistance in the people. It was this spirit of resistance created by the Articles of *Harijan* and mass meetings



addressed by leaders like Sardar Patel which was responsible for the political tempo of August 1942. I do not think that the Congress organisation as an organisation could take any credit for it. In these circumstances, if the nation did not emerge successfully out of the struggle of 1942, we have not to blame the nation for it. In all conscience, we have to blame our machinery during the last 10 years. It is no use blaming the past. Like practical men we must rise to the occasion and make the present and future completely ours. The experiences of 1942 have given us many lessons. They have opened our eyes. They have shown us where our strength lies and what and where our weaknesses are. The Congress leaders must submit themselves to a process of serious heart-searching if they want their organisation to become a really efficient and fighting organisation capable of delivering the goods for the country. They must immediately set themselves to reconstruct it organisationally on very sound and scientific lines. This brings us to the essential basis of re-organisation.

## II

### BASES OF RE-CONSTRUCTION

According to me, the fundamental bases of our organisational reconstruction are :

- (i) A unified Congress, loyal to its great mission of Complete National Independence without any party or group formations within its ranks.
- (ii) Active and unswerving faith in the national leadership of Mahatma Gandhi in all its

implications and particularly those of truth and non-violence.

- (iii) A well planned national programme of a limited period to the fulfilment of which all Congressmen must pledge themselves.

The political issues before the country are now as clear as crystal. We are, whether we will it or not, heading towards the ultimate climax of our political struggle. India cannot afford to be a slave any longer. The urge for freedom is hourly stiffening. It must find expression in a political movement. If the Indian National Congress is not going to formulate and regulate that expression, who else will? The Congress alone can claim the legacy of the nation's will to freedom. The Congress must not fail the country in this supreme hour of her need. The fight before us is very straight and there is no room for any doubt as to the issues involved. Our rulers, clever as they are, are systematically and inexorably consolidating their forces to give a battle to the forces of resistance. Those who could not go the whole hog with us have already taken their places with the Government, directly or indirectly. The confusion of party politics within the Congress has also considerably cleared. I have not a shadow of doubt that the Communist and the Royists will not be with us in the struggle to come. They have left us for good. There is such a fundamental difference between the ideologies and more particularly, the methods of work, between us and them that any forced union is bound to result in unsavoury consequences. If the Communist Party is really honest about the ideology of Communism its

place is outside the ranks of the Congress. To remain outside the Congress ranks does not necessarily mean conflict; much less does it mean any enmity. The Communists will be rendering a real service to the principles of Communism if they operate as an independent party outside the Congress organisation. Incidentally they will be doing useful service to Congress also. There is nothing much to argue about the Royists. Their influence in country's politics is almost negligible, and what little was there is fast dying.

I am absolutely certain that after the great experience of these fateful years of war, the leaders of the 'Forward Bloc' will once again come into the Congress fold and will give us the benefit of their great influence and drive. There remains then the Congress Socialist Party. In this great national movement of 1942, the members of this Party and the Congressmen have been comrades in arms. We have identified our interests and our political aspirations in a common struggle. We have lived together, bled together and even died together in this great struggle. I do not think there is any difference in our ideologies which we cannot adjust for common good. In fact, there is only one ideology for both of us and that is to wrest our complete freedom at the earliest possible moment from the unwilling hands of our rulers. If there were any small differences as to the method of work and loyalty to leadership, these have also completely disappeared in this great movement. Is there anything now that should keep us apart as separate parties quarrelling among ourselves and thereby weakening discipline and solidarity of our organisa-

tion? My experience of the last 12 months has confirmed my conviction with which I came out of the jail that hereafter in Congress politics what are known as the orthodox Congressmen and the Congress Socialists are going to work hand in hand with a common programme, and for a common goal. Even if there should be any small differences as to the emphasis on this or that item of a national programme, these can be relegated to the cold storage during the time India is struggling for her national emancipation. Let these small differences and small quarrels be suspended until we achieve our goal of complete independence. I, therefore, believe in a unified and united Congress in which there is enough scope for free political expression and no conflict of political ideologies. I have great hopes about the leaders of the Congress Socialist Party. I am sure they will dissolve the Party and take their rightful place in the hierarchy of the Congress organisation.

### **The Leadership**

Then comes the question of leadership. The proper leadership for a revolutionary struggle is the most important factor. Luckily for us we have got a leader who has for the last quarter of a century become biggest rallying point for all forces which stand for national resistance. I do not think that the question of leadership for the Congress is a point in dispute at all. Mahatma Gandhi's leadership is the greatest good fortune of this country. When an appeal is made to people asking them to rally round this leadership and to develop an unswerving faith in it, our usual critics and fault-finders read in that appeal

what they like to call 'a familiar ring of Fascism or Nazism.' It has become a fashion of these days both in this country and outside that whenever critics want to run you down they must begin by calling you a 'Fascist' or a 'Totalitarian.' I maintain that there is nothing fascist or totalitarian in the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. If there is any leadership in the present-day world which is thoroughly democratic and which entirely depends on moral sanctions, it is the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. More millions of masses follow him today than any single leader in the world, not because he holds any power of which they are afraid but because his leadership and the way of his life appeal to them. So far as the Congress is concerned I do not think there can be any dispute about his leadership. It is he, more than anybody else, who has turned the Indian National Congress into a 'gigantic mass organisation.' It is he who has given us the conception of *Swaraj*. It is he who has taught us to walk erect as patriotic sons and daughters of this country. What is independence is very often a vague idea to ignorant masses who form the bulk of the population of any country and particularly of this country. Gandhiji has removed the vagueness of Indian independence (*Swaraj*) by explaining it to the masses in terms of its concrete contents which even the ignorant masses can understand. He shuns all authority and even popularity. By no stretch of imagination his leadership of the forces of resistance in this country can be dubbed as Fascist or authoritarian. The Congress has accepted his leadership, and we Congressmen are developing an increasing faith in it. He has been leading the

country for the last 25 years from one success to another. The proud heritage of national consciousness and strength which the Congress possesses to-day are mostly, if not entirely, of his making.

Gandhiji's leadership has been universally accepted by all Congressmen. But the mere acceptance of a leadership is one thing, and the readiness to follow it unflinchingly and in all circumstances is quite the other. This fact does not seem to have been realised by all those who claim to accept Gandhiji's leadership. As we march on to our goal we notice some confusion of thought about the essence of this leadership. I am afraid there is much too loose thinking on this subject. The happenings of 1942 have given us considerable food for thought on this question. Since the Congress took to direct action for the attainment of our Independence, Gandhiji has been unanimously chosen as the leader to guide and direct every campaign of direct action. He is the master of technique so far as *Satyagraha*—the only weapon with which Congress fights—is concerned. It was no wonder, therefore, that the Congress chose him to lead the historic 'Quit India' struggle. That leadership was unanimously accepted by the All-India Congress Committee in the Resolution of August 8, 1942. Although Gandhiji was arrested and put under detention long before he could give any guidance or direction to the country, there was nothing to doubt the general principles of his guidance. The one principle which he has taught the country to follow in all struggles of direct action he has hitherto led, is the principle of non-violence in thought, word and deed, as he puts it. In the numerous articles that he wrote

in *Harijan*, creating a proper atmosphere for an all-out national resistance, he was never tired of emphasizing strictest adherence to non-violence in whatever they did. To him any departure from non-violence is almost the end of the struggle. Congressmen and others who participated in this struggle had no doubt whatsoever in their minds that their conduct in this struggle had to be perfectly non-violent if they expected this great struggle to succeed in the end.

In the light of the experiences of all that happened in 1942, we have to examine whether we were, truly loyal to the leadership of Gandhiji in some of our actions. I am not raising this point simply with a view to criticise or find fault with what happened. I have always maintained—and that is the correct position for anybody to take—that whosoever did anything in this movement although not always in conformity with the strictest code of non-violence, did it in a mood of uncontrollable excitement and not out of any intention of knowingly disobeying the leadership. Those who might have acted even outside the four corners of non-violence did so with a patriotic motive because they thought that it was a quicker way of reaching their objective. But it must be recognised at the same time that no amount of defence that we may give for our actions can absolve us from our responsibility to loyally carry out the instructions of our leader. We must develop and show in our actions unflinching faith in the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, if with the help of that leadership we mean to attain our Complete Independence. The historic struggle of 1942 has once again demonstrated, if any such demonstration were necessary, the unique revo-

lutionary character of Gandhiji's leadership. That leadership is our greatest national asset. Let us capitalize it as much as we can and speedily reach our goal. This is the reason why I consider Gandhiji's leadership as one of the important bases of the organisational reconstruction of the Congress.

I am sure nobody seriously believes that what we have come through is the last struggle in any sense. The final struggle for *Swaraj* has to be fought in the near future if it becomes necessary. And who can say that it will not be necessary, looking to the present attitude of our rulers? All our efforts for re-organisation of our forces must, therefore, be directed to that one central fact, namely, the final struggle for our Complete National Independence.

### **The National Programme**

The third important basis of our re-organisation is the National Programme. We have had many programmes in the past. Under the dynamic leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the Congress has been continuously kept in action. We have built up our national life by following the national programmes which Gandhiji has given us from time to time. We have, however, not critically examined the organisation of the Congress as we find it today. In my opinion, that organisation has become very weak and loose. As I have explained elsewhere, the magic which is in the name of 'Congress' for millions of masses in this country is not the result of the working of our Institution. That magic is mostly, if not entirely, due to the immense personal popularity of our leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana



Abul Kalam Azad, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and others. We are exceptionally lucky in having such galaxy of first-rate leaders for our country. But how long can a nation of 400 millions live almost entirely on the reputation and the popularity of its leaders? We must, no doubt, use the popularity of our leaders for strengthening our organisation. But that alone will not suffice. In all the movements of direct action that we have undertaken during the last 25 years we notice that the spirit of resistance and sacrifice does not go beyond a limited scope. We must seriously examine if it is so and why is it so. Unless that spirit catches millions of our people it is impossible for us as a nation to make any real headway towards our goal. Here comes in the strength of the organisation. What generally happens is this: The Congress decides to go for a direct action and elects Gandhiji as the General of the 'National Army.' Gandhiji gives the call and lays down the programme of action. Other leaders promptly follow the lead of Gandhiji and are immediately arrested and locked in prisons. A couple of other Congressmen who have always remained loyal to the Congress take part in the struggle and go to jails. After this the struggle abruptly comes to an end. There is all the sympathy and good-will in the country for the Congress. Millions hope and pray for its success. But somehow or other they do not act. We have not yet created sufficient stamina in the nation to continue the fight until it ends in a success. We cannot ignore these factors any more. It is not enough that our spirit of resistance should always remain only skin-deep, and it should refuse to go beyond that. We have

something like 50 lakhs of Congressmen on our register. But at no time more than a couple of lakhs came forward to take part in a programme of direct action. We have to find out why it is so and that is, in my opinion, the work of the Congress organisation. We cannot afford to keep Congress organisationally weak. We have always claimed that the Congress is the Nation. The time has come to substantiate that claim in action. We must make Congress the most gigantic institution capable of delivering the goods for the nation. It is for this purpose that we must have a dynamic plan of action during peaceful times. If we do not toil hard during times of peace, we shall have to bleed more during times of struggle. The Congress must, therefore, formulate a programme of activities which will help in building the organisational strength of the Congress. We must go in for as complete and all-sided a programme as we possibly can make it. Gandhiji has given us his 15-point constructive programme. Even for the fulfilment of this programme we must have a well-planned scheme of making our organisation much stronger and much more representative of the various sections of our masses than it is at present. A mere talk or a resolution about the programme would not do. We must have something on the model of a Five-year Programme of Soviet Russia. I am not suggesting any slavish imitation of any country. A time-limited programme has its own dynamics. It has a thrill of its own and Russia has successfully demonstrated this to the world. We are a fighting nation impatient of our Independence. We cannot afford to have a programme spread over a long time. Very often we are

not the choosers of our circumstances. We may not be given a respite of a five years by the Government for the completion of our programme. But surely we must make a beginning in real earnest. I would suggest that the Congress should make a programme of organisational re-construction and constructive activities of a period limited to three years in the first instance. Anything less than three years would not be a programme because we may not be able to see the good results of it in a shorter time. If we are serious about our programme, there is no reason why we should not complete it during three years and build up as a result formidable strength for the Congress. This programme can be periodically reviewed and necessary adjustments made. I shall now try to indicate what should be the main features of this Three-Year National Programme.

### Changes in our Constitution

Our Programme of reconstruction of our organisation must naturally start with our Constitution. The Constitution of the Indian National Congress has had quite an interesting and chequered history. First made in 1920 at the Nagpur Session of the Congress, it has gone through occasional changes, very often of a revolutionary type. When the Constitution was first drafted in 1920 we had a very few patterns of democratic constitutions of non-official institutions to draw from. However, the scheme of the Constitution was intended to be as democratic as it possibly could be. The subsequent changes that have been made in the Constitution had pronounced trend towards democratization. There has always been an attempt

to give wider powers to lower strata of our constitutional structure. At the same time the changes made from time to time are also designed to make the administration as efficient and business-like as possible.

For a fighting organisation such as ours it was necessary to introduce safeguards in the Constitution against doubtful elements entering in. The first five years' experience of the Constitution showed that some bad elements had also come in because it was easy to do so under the provisions of the Constitution. It was to stop these elements and introduce greater discipline and honesty in the organisation that the Khaddar Clause was introduced in the Constitution. Under this Clause a primary member could not vote at any Congress election unless he was a habitual wearer of hand-spun and hand-woven Khaddar. The restriction imposed by means of this Clause was to discourage the mal-practices that had entered in our elections. That Khaddar Clause did not succeed in achieving the purpose for which it was intended. On the contrary, its execution brought in more mal-practices than before in the elections. Clever people made systematic efforts to circumvent the clause in as many ways as they could. Honest people who were loyal to the Congress would not vote at the elections because they were not habitual wearers of Khaddar. This resulted in reducing the primary membership of the Congress, with the result that the Khaddar Clause was ultimately withdrawn. During the years 1925 to 1934 there were so many complaints all over the country about corrupt and dishonest practices that Gandhiji and the Working Committee

were seriously thinking about some revolutionary changes in the Constitution which would effectively put a stop to all these doubtful practices. Thus came the big change in the Constitution in 1934 at the 48th Session of the Indian National Congress held in Bombay. The changes brought about this time were of a very sweeping nature. Mahatma Gandhi was the sole author of these changes. The underlining idea of the amendments that he proposed to the Constitution was to make the Congress organisation a neat and efficient body capable of functioning as a fighting organisation. Gandhiji was of opinion that only those people should enrol as primary members who had sincere love for the Congress and who were prepared to make some sacrifices, however small, towards attainment of *Swaraj* which was the Congress goal. The most radical of these amendments was : that a person desirous of enrolling himself as a primary member of the Congress had to go to a Congress Office to fill in the form and register his name. The idea behind this registration at the office was to put a stop to bogus membership which was being enrolled in previous years merely for the purpose of election and which naturally encouraged all manner of corrupt practices. So also an attempt was made to restrict the number of delegates to a small number of not more than 2,000. The sessions of the Congress were year after year becoming so unwieldy that it was impossible to carry on any real deliberations at these sessions. It was thought that if the number of delegates was reduced to a small figure the essential deliberative nature of the session could be preserved. The reduction in the number of dele-

gates would also reduce the number of the members of the All-India Congress Committee. Another important change introduced for the first time in our Constitution in this year was to make some sort of manual labour an obligatory duty for every Congressman holding an elective position in the Congress organisation. According to this amendment nobody could hold an elective position unless he was doing some kind of manual labour personally. The manual labour prescribed by Gandhiji was spinning although later on many other forms of manual labour were suggested and accepted by the Congress. If this scheme of the Constitution was given a fair and honest trial for a period of 5 years, possibly, out of its working could have emerged an energetic and efficient organisation. As it happened, attempts were immediately started by those who did not like the rigorous nature of this Constitution to water it down in every possible manner. The very next year the number of delegates was increased, the Clause relating to Manual Labour was so circumvented that it became almost inoperative and was consequently dropped. The purpose for which Gandhiji sought to introduce these radical changes was completely lost sight of and we once again went back to our old habits.

The movement of 1942 has, I am sure, left many of us wiser even as regards our Constitution. It is becoming increasingly evident that our Constitution must be radically altered. While keeping intact the essential features of democracy, we must make our Congress executives really business bodies capable of running the Congress administration very efficiently

and carrying out the programme and instructions of the Indian National Congress. We have before us the experience of a quarter of a century of the functioning of a democratic Constitution. We have seen its good points and bad ones too. Since we are now on the threshold of big changes we must take up the question of amending our Constitution to suit these changes. In Constitution-making, we must avoid the mistakes which we committed in the past. The masses of this country are being increasingly drawn towards the Congress. Their love and loyalty to the Institution have got to be encouraged in every possible manner. The simplest and the most practical method of demonstrating that love is to become a 4-anna member of the Congress and thereby subscribing to its creed of attaining *Poorna Swaraj* by all peaceful and legitimate means. Any attempt, therefore, to restrict the primary membership will not be a sound policy. Our Constitution, therefore, must be very broad-based so far as the primary membership is concerned. We must make systematic efforts to get as many members on our registers as we possibly can. But as we go on higher and higher, the constitutional structure must assume the form of a pyramid. The essential restrictions to secure efficient working of the administration must, therefore, apply to the higher strata of our hierarchy. We must impose certain obligatory duties on those who choose to occupy elective posts in the organisations.

The members of the Congress executives are in every sense the leaders of the organisation. The leadership ought to be regarded more as a responsibility than a privilege or a mere fruit

of labour. It must be realised that that organisation becomes weak of which the leadership is weak. The creation of a proper leadership, therefore, is a problem which must be scientifically studied and correctly solved. The proper leadership cannot be created unless we have a Constitution which helps in the process of its creation. Those who come to assume this leadership by contesting the elective positions must undertake to loyally carry out the resolutions and the instructions of the Congress. If they have any mental reservations about these they must be made to resign their executive posts. Furthermore, the members of the executives—and I regard every delegate of the Congress as an executive—must be prepared to give some time regularly to the work of the Congress. Our work is day by day becoming so intensive and hard that it cannot be efficiently done by holiday workers who make their appearances at Congress Offices only on important occasions.

When we are making radical changes in our Constitution we must not forget that our organisational weakness during the last 10 years is largely due to the formations of parties and groups inside our institution. These tendencies which must necessarily result in doubtful loyalty and divided allegiance must be immediately put a stop to by making such party formations impossible under the Constitution. In the larger politics of the country whether we have to fight with communalists on the one side and the communists on the other, we have to behave as a well-knit and well-organised political party. Such being the position, we cannot afford to have other parties and other groups in our organisation. The existence



of these other parties in our organisation seems to me a contradiction in terms. There is a considerable amount of loose thinking on this subject among many Congressmen. Critics of this proposition bring forth arguments of democracy which have no bearing on the subject. What is sought to be suggested here is not that the Congress should become an undemocratic or an authoritarian institution. Of course, it cannot become so. But we must also remember that these big talks of democracy without a disciplined democratic conduct do not lead us anywhere nearer the democracy. It simply makes us appear more hypocritical in the eyes of others. In tightening our Constitutional structure at the top, it is not intended in the least to impose any artificial restrictions either on democratic thought or action. The liberty of democratic thought and action ought not to degenerate into an unchecked licence for saying and doing anything one likes. Our experience of the last few years must teach us better than that. There is one more argument in favour of the removal of party formations from within the Congress, which requires to be seriously considered. Why do these separate parties become necessary in our organisation? Because, perhaps, their sponsors feel that the ideologies they represent may fare better by forming separate parties inside the Congress than otherwise. This is an entirely wrong presumption. I am prepared to join issue with any one who says that Socialism has had any better chance in the Congress because of the existence of the Congress Socialist Party. On the contrary, I maintain that it could have certainly had a better chance for its success if it did not suffer from

the handicap of inevitable party prejudices. I am sure, Congressmen will ponder over this question in an unbiased mood and decide once for all what is best for the Congress.

### **Full-time National Service**

The big programme of mass education and constructive activities that we contemplate requires for its successful fulfilment a very large body of Congress workers. We must create this army out of those who are prepared to give their whole time for National Service. The experience during the last twenty-five years, and particularly of recent years, has taught us that we cannot run such a gigantic fighting machine like the present-day Indian National Congress with the help of a few occasional workers. The duties and responsibilities of our organisation have increased beyond imagination. Unless we run our organisation like a business institution demanding highest efficiency from those who serve it, we cannot succeed in achieving anything big or concrete. We must keep the nation active and always on the alert. A time has come when we must start thinking in terms of running the administration of this country. Surely, the task of running that administration is going to fall on our shoulders the moment we achieve our independence. Our work today among the masses will afford us the necessary training for the important role which we must be playing in a free India. For that purpose we must enrol and train a large body of workers prepared to give full-time service to the Congress. This must be regarded as a national service, and no efforts must be spared to make it as in-

formed and efficient as possible. This would require lakhs of young men and young women voluntarily coming forward and offering their services to the organisation. The creation of such a National Service is bound to cost us a very heavy expenditure and we must from now think of the ways and means of meeting it.

### **Decentralizing the Financial Responsibility**

We must produce a practical scheme of meeting our commitments of the National Service that we shall have to immediately organise. Suggestions have been made in the past creating a large all-India fund for the purpose. To me it seems a very difficult and impracticable proposition. Our requirements are very great and no central fund, however great, can meet even a small percentage of them. There are other difficulties besides. Every second year of our life we run the risk of being declared an unlawful organisation and our funds and property confiscated. We do not want to build up a large fund so that one fine morning it should be swallowed by an alien government. The task of collecting that fund, besides, is beyond the reach of our present machinery. The proposal of creating a central fund must, therefore, be given up as being utterly imprudent and impracticable. We must devise some sort of a practical scheme of decentralizing the financial responsibility of our National Service scheme. The process of decentralization has another advantage and that is of making the scheme self-sufficient and self-reliant. It will also help in creating self-confidence among our

workers. The outline of the scheme may be as follows :

We have seven lakhs of villages in this country. No scheme of national reconstruction can have any chance of success unless every village is made to stand on its own legs. Most of our political movements have failed in achieving their objects because we have not been able to take these movements right into the villages. We talk a lot of villages and villagers but we have not yet made any systematic and large-scale effort to get these villages in our scheme of things. A time has now come to start that systematic effort. If the villagers are made to understand their responsibilities we shall create out of them a strength which will be simply formidable. It is possible for every village to feed, to clothe and otherwise maintain a worker for that village. In most of our villages there is an ancient practice still in existence in spite of the ravages of our so-called civilization that the village maintains many of its essential services by making payments to artisans in kind. A village carpenter, a blacksmith, a barber, a washerman make their honest living in the village itself by rendering service to the villagers. Can't we get some benefit out of this system? It is possible to introduce a little orientation in this ancient habit of people and make it conform to new standards and new requirements of our political life. If a sufficient consciousness is created among the villagers, surely, they will then take the responsibility of paying for their own national service. We can make a beginning by having a national worker for every five villages. These, together with the workers serving in urban areas

will give us anything like a lakh and a half to two lakhs of national workers in this country. It is not in any sense a utopian scheme. It can be brought within the range of practical politics if only we are serious about our politics. A time has come when that seriousness must be brought in our politics and public life. If we succeed in decentralizing our financial responsibility in this manner it will produce a thousand and one good results. One such result would be to take the spirit of resistance deep into the masses. It would be then impossible to repress it. Once the Congress starts functioning on these lines we shall be doing many activities which can be made to pay their way. Most of the items of Gandhian Constructive Programme have the potentiality of becoming completely self-sufficient. With the obligation of paying for the National Service on the one hand and with the potentiality of making some of our essential activities self-paying on the other, I maintain, we shall be able to solve the question of meeting our financial requirements.

### **The Working Committee**

Our process of organisational reconstruction must, in my opinion, begin with the re-organisation of the Congress Working Committee, popularly known as the 'Congress High Command.' The Working Committee has had a very romantic history during the last 25 years. It is also known as the 'Cabinet of the Indian National Congress' and, in a sense, it does function in the capacity and with the authority of a Cabinet. Speaking strictly constitutionally, the Working Committee ranks third in the constitutional

authority of the Congress. The first is the Plenary Session of the Indian National Congress; then comes the All-India Congress Committee which is the 'Parliament of the Congress' and after that the Working Committee which can be called the Cabinet of that Parliament, following the model of the British Parliament. Although in rank it is the third biggest authority, in the actual exercise of authority the Working Committee, according to me, is the most powerful single unit of the Indian National Congress. It wields authority and influence which are second to none. Never during the last quarter of a century has its authority been challenged even once by anybody. An incident which looks like an exception to this rule was the election of Babu Subhas Chandra Bose as the President of the Tripuri Session of the Congress. Subhas Babu contested this election against the wishes, more implied than express, of the majority of the Working Committee and got elected to the highest position of the Congress. This was a real challenge both to the authority as well as the popularity of the Working Committee. But the success achieved by Subhas Babu proved to be short-lived. Within a few months of his election, he had to resign his presidency because he could not carry the majority of the A.-I.C.C. with him. This incident has successfully established the fact that the authority of the Working Committee in Congress affairs is supreme and unquestionable.

The main reason why Working Committee assumed and successfully held such an enormous power is the unique influence of Gandhiji's personality in the Congress organisation. Ever since he has assumed

the virtual leadership of the Congress in 1920, all Working Committees are selected after taking his advice. All Presidents of the Indian National Congress since 1920, barring the President of the Tripuri Session, have been elected on Gandhiji's advice. Gandhiji himself used to be a member of the Working Committee until 1934 in which year he resigned even the 4-anna membership of the Congress. Although he is no longer himself a member, his influence over the Working Committee and the Congress in general has been even more after 1934 than before. The position that the Working Committee enjoys today in the affairs of the Congress is entirely due to the unmatched popularity of this great man.

In spite of the position which the Working Committee occupies today, there is a need for reorientation in the composition of that body. The Working Committee consists of 15 members, more than half of whom have been sitting in that body ever since 1920. Until 1934 the members of the Working Committee used to be elected by the A.-I.C.C. But since the present Constitution was passed in 1934, it is the Congress President who nominates his Cabinet members for the year, of course, in consultation with Mahatma Gandhi. This is a perfectly democratic procedure because the Congress President is elected by a direct vote of 3,000 and odd delegates chosen in their turn by nearly 5 million voters from all parts of the country. There is nothing wrong in the procedure so far as the composition of this Committee is concerned. The reorientation which I am venturing to suggest is not in respect of the composition of the Committee but in respect of the distribution of responsibilities.

In the cabinet system all over the world there are two principles, namely, individual and joint responsibility on all questions of administration. Every member of the Cabinet is individually responsible for a particular portfolio and all are jointly responsible for the general policy of the state. Of course, the analogy cannot be exactly appropriate because the Working Committee is not a Cabinet in the strict sense of that expression; nor is Congress yet a state. The analogy is taken only with a view to explain the position. There is no allocation of responsibility as between the various members of the Working Committee. All are supposed to be responsible for every thing that the Congress has to do. This is not, in my opinion, a very ideal state of affairs. No doubt the members of the Working Committee are the tallest men in our public life so far as ability and popularity go. I am not detracting from their greatness as leaders in suggesting this reform. The Congress affairs during recent years have become so varied and complex that the allocation of responsibility of various heads of our programme and administration among the members of the Working Committee is highly necessary in the interests of efficiency and smooth working. The volume of our work and responsibility has become so heavy that the old practice of leaving everything to the entire Cabinet has no longer remained a safe or a practical policy. For instance, the Congress has now undertaken the responsibility of guiding the organisations and activities of various important elements in our society such as the Mazdoors, the Kisans, the Students, the States, etc. Almost every day some sort of consultation or



guidance is necessary from the High Command. We have got to formulate policies and take decisions in regard to many questions as they crop up from day to day. There are a thousand and one complicated questions with reference to which expert advice may become necessary. Whom to consult for necessary guidance and advice unless there is some definite arrangement about it which is known to most of our workers? This is a handicap at the present moment. The situation has been further complicated after the great struggle of 1942. The Congress once again under Gandhiji's inspiration has decided to undertake and work among all sections of the society. All this means organisation and expert advice from day to day. So long as the Working Committee was in jail and Mahatma Gandhi was out, Congressmen used to consult him whenever any need for advice arose and he used to give such advice. After the release of the members of the Working Committee it is not proper nor always practicable to rush to Gandhiji for advice on every question. This is a responsibility of the Working Committee and it must be undertaken by that body in as best and efficient a manner as possible. The fact that the whole of the Working Committee is responsible for everything does not conduce to efficiency of our organisation or facility of work. There must be division of responsibility amongst the various members of the Working Committee. There are two ways of doing it. One is the distribution of portfolios among the 15 members of the Working Committee. It will then be easy for Congress Executives and other workers to refer their difficulties to the member in charge of that portfolio. Of course,

the general policy and the principles would be determined as hitherto by the High Command as a whole sitting together from time to time. But it is not possible to hold such meetings except 4 or 5 times a year. Advice and direction, however, will have to be given almost every day and hence the necessity of the creation of portfolios and proper allotment of responsibility to individual members of the Working Committee.

It may be argued that some of the members of the Working Committee although they enjoy the greatest popularity in the country are not in a position to undertake any strenuous duties by reason of their age and health. Their influence, however, is a national asset and the country can ill afford to do without their advice. It is, therefore, necessary to find some *via media* by which we can have our trusted leaders in the Cabinet and at the same time we can arrange to distribute responsibility by creating different portfolios.

There is something to be said, incidentally though, about the composition of the Working Committee with reference to various provinces. No doubt, by convention, the members of the Working Committee are chosen from different Provinces so that most of the Provinces may get representation on that important body. There are, however, 20 Congress Provinces and the number of the Working Committee is only 15. Some Provinces, therefore, have got to go almost permanently unrepresented. There is a growing feeling among the Provinces that every Province should have a representative on the High Command of the Congress. There is nothing wrong about

this feeling. The Congress has become so powerful during recent years that it is natural for a Province to feel that it should be represented in the highest counsels of the country. We have, therefore, to find out a compromise between these two systems. I make bold to suggest that compromise. While the High Command should continue to remain as at present constituted and exercise the authority as has hitherto been exercising, it is possible for our organisation to create an outer ring of the High Command consisting of persons selected by the High Command in charge of the various constructive and administrative activities. This means that there will be the Working Committee of the Congress as before and it will be responsible for laying down the general policy of the Congress. The Working Committee, however, will appoint one responsible person in charge of every important activity or group of activities. Such heads of activities will form what I call the outer ring of the High Command. The officials in charge of activities will be under the disciplinary jurisdiction of the Working Committee and responsible to that body. In this outer ring it is possible to give representation to every Province. We have surely at least 20 heads of our activities and there can be one man for every Province. We need not restrict our number to 20. If competent people for doing this kind of work are available, in certain cases there can be even more than one seat for a single Congress Province. Among others I can suggest the following portfolios to be created almost immediately:

1. The Congress Organisations.
2. The Foreign Affairs.

3. Information and Propaganda.
4. Mazdoors.
5. Kisans.
6. Students.
7. States.
8. Volunteers.
9. Organisation among Women.
10. Harijans.
11. Khadi and Gramodyoga.
12. Basic Education.
13. Rashtrabhasha.
14. Liquidation of Illiteracy.
15. Communal Unity.
16. Economic Equality.
17. National Service.
18. Health and Hygiene.
19. Prohibition.
20. Local Self-Government and allied institutions.
21. Parliamentary Activities.

Other items can be added to this list whenever we are able to organise more activities. We can have occasional meetings of the men in charge of these various portfolios. They should work in the capacity of advisers to the High Command in respect of the portfolios entrusted to their charge. If the Congress Working Committee is reorganised on this model, I am certain, it is bound to lead to greater efficiency and better facility of work.

### **The Efficiency Drive**

The experience of the functioning of the Congress has shown that Congressmen have not evinced any special regard for ability and efficiency. Those who

form our executives in different Provinces are not particularly noted for their ability and efficiency. These two qualities are *sine qua non* of successful organisation. We are now living in a world in which these qualities are regarded as being absolutely necessary for the success of an organisation. In the selection of the members of our executives we must take care to see that we do not sacrifice quality for quantity. The quantity has, no doubt, its place in a political struggle. But it is the quality which will score in the long run. For the last several years most of our Committees are manned by people many of whom are less than average in the essential qualities of ability and efficiency of work. One often witnesses a sorry spectacle of office-bearers sticking like limpets to the various organisations in the Congress although they know that they are not fit to occupy the positions which they occupy. They won't move themselves nor would they allow anybody else to move. This has made many of our subordinate committees stereotyped both in composition as well as in the nature of their activities. This state of affairs must go if Congress is to live as a popular and fighting organisation. We must purge all our Committees which are useless and out-moded.

After the Working Committee comes the second-line leadership of the Congress, namely, the office-bearers of the various Provincial Congress Committees and District Congress Committees. The present second-line leadership in the country has remained in office in most places for well nigh 25 years. It is almost a generation. It is not suggested that these people have not played their part in the making of our

organisation. They have done it to the best of their abilities. But they have now reached the last limits of their utility to the organisation. It is no use sticking to a job if you cannot make a success of it. The executives all over the world rise or fall by the measure of success or otherwise they are able to achieve. The ability to successfully carry out the programme of the Congress should be made the test for the continuance or otherwise of a person in an executive office. The standard of public life must be made very exacting if that public life is to result in a real benefit to the society. In the selection of its executive officers the Congress must show a decided preference for talent, ability and efficiency. At present there is hardly any fear in the minds of office-bearers that they will have to quit their posts if they are not able to deliver the goods. Such a fear must be created in their minds if our affairs are to be conducted in an efficient manner.

### **Our Future Administrators**

There is an important aspect of re-organisation on which the Congress must concentrate its attention from now. For the last 60 years the Indian nation has been struggling to be free. Although we are not yet able to completely achieve our freedom, nobody dare deny that we have come very much near to it. Within the next few years, earlier than later, we are bound to be a free nation. What then? Free India will require thousands of able, intelligent and honest young administrators who will have to undertake the duties of carrying on the administration of this country, in an able and efficient manner. How and

where are these young administrators to be got when the need for them arises? That need is coming very soon and we must try from now to be able to supply it. The creation of a large army g-f-ted with talent and initiative is not a simple task. It will require years of concentrated and well-directed efforts as also good deal of imagination. It is high time the Congress realised its responsibility in this respect and set about fulfilling it.

The work that we have been doing in the name of the Congress during the last 25 years under Gandhiji's leadership was of one type. Hitherto we required thousands of men and women with courage and sacrifice, who would heroically fight the battle of Independence regardless of consequences. We had no administration to run and naturally we were not prepared for it. We have had in our midst great men and women who have made immense sacrifices and have gone through untold sufferings in the cause of freedom. So far as our work was restricted to the achievement of our Independence we could do very well with these men and women. But in future we shall have to prepare a new set of people to perform different sets of jobs. People who are good fighters may not necessarily be good administrators. In fact they are not so and we had enough experience of it when for the first time in the history of our political agitation the Congress had to undertake the responsibility of forming governments in seven out of eleven administrative Provinces. We were not a free nation yet. Our responsibility for administration was also limited both in space and real authority. Even then we had to find out several hundreds of able admini-

administrators of character and integrity. Congressmen everywhere in India are well aware how far we succeeded in finding these administrators. This was our first experiment of running provincial administrations which we ran for a period of 27 months. We did our best to run that administration as efficiently as we could but I am afraid we were not always successful in fulfilling the expectations of the people. It was then that we realised that a time had come for the Congress to create future administrators for this country. Hitherto we have been able to draw in the Congress young men of courage, sacrifice and suffering. Of course, these qualities are still essential and we shall always need them even in a free India. But alongside these qualities we must also be able to draw talent and ability into our organisation. When we think of filling the important administrative posts our list of such persons proves to be very short. The cream of intelligentsia in India has not yet been drawn towards the Congress for reasons into which we need not go. It is our duty in future to so manage our affairs that we may be able to attract that cream towards the Congress. We must create conditions for this to happen.

Our workers in the Congress must understand to distinguish between the brave fighters and able administrators. It is possible there may be a few people who are able enough to play both the roles equally well. But their number is bound to be very small and this fact has got to be recognised. In our scheme of re-organisation, therefore, we must give an important place to the task of training young men and women whose services will have to be



recruited in the near future for the purposes of administration in a free India. There are lakhs of young students today who are anxious to serve their country in any capacity. We must take advantage of the unbounded enthusiasm and patriotism of these young people. We must arrange for a systematic and scientific training of these young men and women from now. Efforts in this direction must start immediately and the initiative must come from the High Command of the Congress.

### **Broad-basing Our Organisation**

We shall now consider several important items of our national programme, which call for immediate re-organisation. The new spirit of enthusiasm and determination that has been created by the mass awakening of 1942 must not be allowed to run waste. We must take the best advantage out of it in strengthening our organisation. The most elementary thing and yet the most essential in the scheme of re-organisation is the primary membership of the Indian National Congress. Millions of our countrymen who sign the Congress creed and enrol themselves as primary members form the broad base of our organisation. We have never made any systematic and well-planned attempt so far, to increase our primary membership. It will be remembered that in the year 1922 when Gandhiji gave a call for one crore of rupees for the Tilak Swaraj Fund and also for one crore of Congress membership, our membership registers had shot up to a figure which was more than a crore. In 1930 again, there was a big mass movement for enrolling Congress membership when most of the leaders

were in jail. Then also our membership had gone to a crore. But these were temporary phases and we could not keep up the enthusiasm created on these special occasions. Our average membership all over the country has remained between 4 and 5 millions. No doubt this is numerically the biggest membership of any single organisation in the world. But that ought not to be our only satisfaction. India is a country of 400 millions. 4 million membership is only 1% of the population. That only 1% of people should enrol themselves for such a big cause as the national independence is not a very creditable thing either for the Congress or the country. We have to think out some plan of expanding this membership more or less on permanent lines. We always take pride in the fact that we have seven lakhs of villages. But to how many of these villages has the Congress gone? How can we succeed in any movement of direct action unless the Congress organisation has gone deep into seven lakhs of our villages? This is the first task, therefore, which we must undertake. In the Three-Year Programme which we will be formulating we must take care to see that at the end of the third year there will not be one village in this country where Congress has not established a Village Committee. Then alone we can style ourselves a real people's organisation. There are small villages and there are big villages in this country. If on an average every village enrolls 25 primary members we shall have a crore and three quarters of members on our primary registers all over the country. This is not impossible. There are certain villages which enrol something like two to three thousand members each every year.

While there are villages where there has been no enrolment at all. Taken by and all the average of 25 per village is, in my opinion, a very practical proposition. Added to this, there will be concentrated membership from the urban areas. We have hundreds of towns and scores of cities in this country. They can surely enrol about half a crore of membership. For the Three-Year Plan I would suggest that at the end of the first year we should aim at one crore membership; at the end of the second year a crore and a half and at the end of the third year two crores complete. This will be just five per cent of our population. If we succeed in doing this on a systematic and well-planned basis we shall be immensely strengthening our institution. Out of 25 primary members in a village, 5 can form a Village Committee. When we are able to establish seven lakhs of Village Committees in this country our movement for national freedom is bound to go deep into the masses. It will then be impossible to suppress it.

The money that we get from membership has never been regarded as an important factor. However, the money has its own value and it does play part in politics as in everything else. With two crores of membership, the Congress organisations all over, from cities to villages, will annually get fifty lakhs of rupees to spend on various Congress activities. This is not a small sum. We shall be able to do a lot of activities with the help of so much money in our hands. Besides, there will be at least two crores of people who will have openly declared their loyalty to the Indian National Congress and their faith in the cause of freedom which the Congress represents. As

we go on higher there will be Taluka and Tahsil Committees, and after these, the District Congress Committee. We shall have a complete plan about the formation of these Committees as well. At the end of the third year there should not be a single Taluka or Tahsil which has not an elective committee of its own. All our Provincial Congress Committees cannot boast today of having such organisations in their respective territorial jurisdiction. The Provincial Congress Committees should start a regular survey of villages in their Provinces and also Talukas, Tahsils and other groups by whatever name they are known. On the basis of this statistical information they should make their plans of re-organisation. While selecting the executive committees for the higher grade of our organisations we must be particularly careful in choosing the right type of men. Bad men make bad organisations, and this is true everywhere in the world. The higher we go the greater must be our precaution in the choice of persons. The executives of the District Congress Committees are very important Congress bodies. Each executive has under its jurisdiction a population ranging from 5 to 50 lakhs. To organise such a large population for Congress work is, indeed, a very responsible and difficult job. We must, therefore, lay down some obligations for those who offer themselves for the executive positions. An unqualified undertaking to carry out the resolutions and the instructions of the Congress and giving regular time to the service of the Congress ought to be among these obligations. Our local Congress leaders must be made to realise that Congress work has now become a full-time job. I am sure, in

the new drive that we shall be making, we shall get enough young men and women who would be prepared to shoulder the responsibilities of these District and subordinate organisations.

Our Provincial Congress Committees have, during the last 25 years, grown into very powerful organisations. They are capable of influencing the policy of the organisation. They do maintain some full-time workers. But that is not enough. We shall require a very large number of devoted full-timers for our work in future. The members of the Provincial Congress Committees are the delegates of the Indian National Congress and as such there is a heavy responsibility on their shoulders. Speaking constitutionally, they are the persons who lay down the national policy of the Congress. In making selection of these delegates we must take extreme care and precaution. Nobody who is not prepared to discharge the obligations incidental to a delegate's position ought to be selected for the job. The ability to 'deliver the goods,' that is, to carry out the allotted measure of programme, ought to be the test for every delegate. If he fails to carry out his obligations he must not find a place in the next election. Then come the office-bearers and the members of the executive of the various Provincial Congress Committees. These are, in fact, persons from amongst whom the membership of the Working Committee, i.e., our top leadership is recruited. No precaution is too great in making the right kind of selection for these top-grade Congress offices. Many of these are also the members of the All-India Congress Committee, and this makes a live contact between the Provincial Congress Com-

mittees and the All-India Congress Committee possible.

There is one more aspect of our scheme of organisation which calls for special attention. Our present leadership of the Congress, almost all over the country, is the leadership which came into the organisation as far back as 1920. With the beginning of the non-violent non-co-operation movement in that year, many young people from colleges and public life came forward to serve their country under the banner of the Indian National Congress. Many of these now occupy very high positions in the Congress organisation. They have remained at the helm of affairs for well-nigh 25 years. They have taken part in all the movements of direct action and have suffered great hardships for the cause of freedom. They were young, some of them in their teens and early twenties, when they joined the movement. Today they are middle-aged men and women and quite a number of them old persons. It is not fair to expect from these people the same active and energetic services which they were able to render in their younger days. A time has come in the affairs of the Congress when we must re-organise our second-line leadership as well. More arduous duties are waiting for us and for them we require younger and more energetic persons. I do not mean that we should be so imprudent and foolish as to lose the services of these veteran leaders. What I suggest is that we must introduce a lot of young blood in our organisation. There are hundreds of young men amongst us who are capable enough to undertake the responsibility of leadership. We must take these men and put them in right places. If there are any inactive office-bearers they must immediately quit the

posts of responsibility. There is no room in the Congress hereafter for inactive and inefficient people. It must be our constant endeavour to bring as many young people in our organisation as we possibly can. We must train these young men and young women for the great responsibilities we want to entrust to them. All this requires a well laid-out plan. The Congress Working Committee must take the initiative in this planning and issue instructions to the Provincial Congress Committees and the subordinate bodies to do likewise. If we do this essential reform taking advantage of the new spirit that is born in the country after 1942, we shall be rendering a very excellent service to our organisation.

#### The Constructive Programme

The 15-point Constructive Programme of Mahatma Gandhi is one of his greatest gifts to the nation. It is a mistake to imagine that this programme is intended to be merely ameliorative in its scope and intensity. It is a dynamic programme specially designed by its architect for reconstruction of the Indian nation on a very sound basis. Its potentialities are many and wonderful. Congressmen have been taught—and rightly so—to look upon this programme as leading to their national independence. There is not the smallest doubt that the Constructive Programme has had a tonic effect on the *morale* of Congressmen who badly needed this energizing influence after what they had gone through during 1942 and after.

Gandhiji is a unique leader in respect of planning wonderful nation-building programmes, and then helping the nation in implementing them. They are

his speciality. No other leader in the known history has given so much to his people by way of their moral and material advancement as he has done. His philosophy of *Satyagraha* knows no defeat and no frustration. He is ever ready with new plans and new programmes so that the nations may not stagnate. His leadership is continuous, unremitting and comprehensive. He would not leave out even a small detail if it has potentiality of adding to nation's strength. Like a clever physician he has always his hand on the pulse of the nation. He instinctively feels the nation's wants and surprisingly reacts to them. Congressmen must have noticed that every time he has come out of jail he has given us something new which would speedily resuscitate the spirit of the nation. This, in my opinion, is the greatest attribute of his leadership. After the fearful repression of 1942 accompanied by leonine violence, the spirit of national India had gone down for the time being. For a period of well-nigh two years there was no leadership and no guidance. People were feeling helpless having nothing to do. It was in the midst of such depressing situation that Gandhiji was suddenly released for reasons of health. It did not take him very long to regain his hold on the pulse of the nation. Within a few weeks of his release, he came out with his wonderful Constructive Programme. He displayed uncommon resourcefulness and tact in pushing that programme in the country. Within a short time, the programme miraculously rallied the scattered forces of the Congress under the National Flag. It is for the nation now to work on this programme and build out of it a dynamic energy for winning national freedom.



## **Volunteer Movement**

In our programme of reconstruction it is impossible to underestimate the importance of volunteer movement. A fighting organisation like the Indian National Congress needs a strong and well-disciplined volunteer organisation. I am afraid we have neglected this question in the past much to our cost. When we began our movement of mass action in 1920 we at once felt the need of a volunteer organisation. All those thousands of young men and women who joined the movement at Gandhiji's call were, in a sense, volunteers. In the beginning we had no arrangements for training these volunteers for the various tasks which we entrusted to them. We had to hurriedly improvise camps all over the country for giving training to the bands of our young workers. The volunteer organisation thus came to stay and it has since the beginning of our movement been regarded as an integral part of our struggle for Independence. At Cocanada Congress in 1923 we laid the foundation of a well-trained and well-disciplined volunteer organisation. The Hindustan Seva Dal was the first organised Corps of the Congress. Its branches were started all over the country and it produced thousands of energetic and well-trained volunteers. This Dal remained almost as an official volunteer organisation of the Congress until 1930, the year of the first Civil Disobedience movement. The Dal used to be banned along with the Congress organisation and after 1934 when the second Civil Disobedience movement was withdrawn, it functioned no more. Since 1934 up to date, the Congress has had no centrally directed volunteer organisation. No effort has been made by

the Working Committee of the Congress to give a lead to the nation in respect of this very essential activity of the Congress. No doubt the organisation has suffered in the absence of such a lead. The Provincial Congress Committees have in some cases their own volunteer organisations but in the absence of central directive there is neither uniformity nor sufficient vigour in their efforts. Whenever there are sessions of the Congress or the meetings of the All-India Congress Committee, the Provincial Congress Committees improvise some sort of volunteer organisations for the occasion. But this cannot be called a well-planned and well-directed volunteer movement which a fighting organisation very badly needs. The Province of Bombay in this respect is ahead of others in that we have always had a powerful volunteer organisation in this City. Along with the men's organisation, we have built up a very powerful women's organisation and it has developed into an achievement of pride for this City. Under the very able and energetic leadership of Mrs. Safia Khan, the women volunteer organisation in this City has grown into a model which other Provinces can copy to their advantage.

In our scheme of re-organisation, the Congress must have a central policy regarding volunteer organisation. It is highly essential that the Congress Working Committee should draft a model constitution for the organisation of volunteers in every Province. It must give a definite lead to all Congress Committees in the country. We must choose bands of young men and women who should be given scientific training to make them ideal volunteers adequately fitted to carry out the responsibilities of their position. We must

develop in these young men and women many physical and mental qualities which are necessary for an ideal citizenship. For the Three-Year Programme we must fix progressive quotas of volunteers for every Province and every District. There is no reason why at the end of three years we should not have five lakhs of well-trained volunteers in the Congress. The magnitude of work that is before us does require this large number of volunteers. It is also necessary to raise the status of a volunteer in the society. The young men and young women must regard the volunteer's profession as one to be zealously coveted. Unless we demonstrate to the people that a volunteer is the most useful unit of our national organisation and is also a potential leader of our national movement it will be difficult to draw smart and intelligent young men and women in our volunteer movement. Our programme of building up a strong volunteer organisation in the country needs scientific and elaborate planning. The volunteer's position in the Congress organisation must also be defined in a manner that leaves no scope for doubt or argument. A volunteer ought to be a voluntary servant of the people ever ready to help them in their difficulties. While he is a member of the organisation, he should not be an active partisan in any party politics. If he becomes one, he is bound to impair his usefulness to the organisation as a volunteer. We must also fight the danger of volunteers being exploited for any party or sectional purposes. That is not the role which the Congress should expect a volunteer to play. For the proper organisation of an all-India volunteer scheme, the Working Committee must appoint an able and influential Congress leader

to be in charge of the volunteer activities in the country. This officer must tour from Province to Province until the volunteer movement gains sufficient momentum. Rules must be made to regulate the training of volunteers, both physical and intellectual. A volunteer is to be made to realise that sometime in life he has also to play the role of a leader. He must, therefore, try to acquire all those attributes which make perfect leadership. A volunteer must be fearless and non-communal in his attitude. If the Congress succeeds in building a strong and nation-wide volunteer movement it will, indeed, be a great boon to this country.

### **Our Mazdoors**

Industrial labour affords a vast field for activity. The Congress must do everything in its power to draw industrial labour into its fold. The workers in this country are increasingly becoming conscious of their importance in the political struggle. The *Mazdoor* movement has come to stay, and it is bound to influence our political affairs in future. Of course the Congress has always stood for the rights of the poor and down-trodden masses. Our charter of national rights drafted at Karachi has put a seal of approval on the rights of a common man. India is an agricultural country and about 80 per cent of our population is composed of those who live on labour, both industrial and agricultural. The labour, therefore, is the most important factor in our national struggle. Although in the past we have always tried to be on the side of labour we have not so far made any country-wide systematic effort to rally industrial workers round the

Flag of the Congress. We have often declared and reiterated that declaration in the resolution of August 8, 1942, that the *Swaraj* which the Congress has in view is the *Swaraj* of and for the toiling masses of this country. But a mere declaration is not enough. We have to implement this declaration by organising the workers. We have seen during the last twenty years that Congress is not the only institution interested in workers. There are other political organisations trying to push themselves among workers for reasons of their own. The workers today are being systematically exploited for party and group politics. I do not suggest that Congress should compete with others in this race for exploitation. We must banish all thoughts of exploitation from our minds, when we make an approach to labour. We must so organise workers as to make it impossible for any one to exploit them. That means that the Congress must go to the labour with an ideology and a programme of work which would be acceptable to the labour in its own interests. The Congress has always believed in the value and importance of Trade Union movement. Some of our top-most Congress leaders have been the Presidents of the All-India Trade Union Congress. They had the advantage of guiding and directing the Trade Union movement in this country. If the Trade Union movement was strong and in the hands of right type of people, there would have been little difficulty in getting its support for the movement of Independence. Unfortunately, neither the Trade Union movement in this country is strong nor is it in the hands of right type of people. This has created an anomalous position in our politics. There have been

more political parties in labour than anywhere else and many of them are so openly and systematically exploiting the workers that the average worker gets confused and does not know when and how to act. The 1942 happenings have opened our eyes wide awake. Many of us had naturally thought that if a struggle was forced on us, the industrial workers would stand by the Nation and play their part in this great movement of national liberation. In thinking on these lines obviously we had counted without the host. For many reasons into which we need not go at present, the workers would not play their expected part in this national awakening with the result that we had to suffer another temporary set-back. We have now realised the danger of leaving the labour movement into the hands of persons and parties whose loyalty to the Congress and the national cause is of a doubtful factor. The Congress cannot escape the responsibility of giving a correct lead to labour. The Congress must, therefore, develop closest contact with labour. We must so identify ourselves with the daily life and difficulties of a worker that he must be spontaneously drawn towards us. We must carry on ceaseless propaganda among workers to bring home to them the central fact that their struggle for bread and the Congress struggle for independence were in the last analysis one and the same. The workers must be made to realise that they would not succeed in their fight for bread unless India succeeded in her fight for freedom. So also must the Congress recognise that the struggle for independence would never succeed unless the toiling masses in this country were a party of that struggle.

It is with this object of organising industrial workers on essentially Congress lines that the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh has been recently re-organised. The Sangh was there for the last few years operating in certain parts of the country but now it has made a bid for an all-India organisation of labour on Gandhian lines. We must welcome the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh and do all we can to support it by our action. Thousands of young students and other workers must be trained for this gigantic task. To approach millions of workers and organise them in their respective trade unions is a huge task which would need great energy and large resources. There is enough scope for the talent and energy of our young men and women in this activity. In our scheme of re-construction we must have a well-laid-out plan of pushing the work of the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh among industrial workers all over the country. Gandhiji is the 'Guide, Friend and Philosopher' of the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh. It was started at his instance and its recent reorientation has secured his blessings. In the Textile Labour Union of Ahmedabad we have got a model of labour organisation of which any nation would be proud. What Ahmedabad could do during the last 25 years in raising the status and strength of labour and creating the proper type of consciousness among workmen, surely other cities and other Provinces can also do.

#### **Our Kisans**

The *Kisan* problem in India is by far the largest and the most difficult of our problems. The peasantry in this land is proverbially poor and perpetually in want. The Indian *Kisan* needs all the sympathy and

support that the nation can give. Right from 1920, the Congress has identified itself with the *Kisans* but we never formed any special organisation of *Kisans* on a class basis. Perhaps, this was not necessary then. But, I am sure, it is becoming necessary now. During the last few years *Kisan* organisations have cropped up in several parts of the country. Apart from the general problem of political slavery, the *Kisans* of India have a thousand and one problems of their own. These problems require special attention and sympathetic treatment. Like workers, *Kisans* also are likely to be exploited by persons and parties not always friendly to the Congress. We must prevent this eventuality by all means at our disposal. Our *Swaraj* is mainly for the *Mazdoors* and *Kisans* of this country. The freedom for India, therefore, is not merely a political freedom, but it must also mean economic freedom of our *Kisans* and *Mazdoors* who form the bulk of our population. I regard it a very welcome sign that Congressmen in several Provinces have engaged themselves in forming *Kisan* organisations. In our new programme we must give a position of importance to the organisation of 'Kisan' movement in this country. The "Kisan-Mazdoor-Praja Raj", sounds a very happy slogan. We must add substance to it. It includes within its scope all the 40 crores of our masses. Our 'Swaraj' is and ought to be a 'Raj' of our *Kisans*, *Mazdoors*, and the 'Prajas', which means the common people. Congress must formulate a scientific plan and programme of 'Kisan' organisation. We must have a net-work of these organisations all over the country.



## **Our Students**

When the history of all the national happenings of 1942 comes to be authentically written, I am sure, the students of this country will find a very prominent place in it. Their contribution in toil and blood to this mass movement was immense. The students of this country right from the beginning of non-cooperation movement have always identified themselves with the national struggle. In the early twenties several thousands of them joined the national movement and courted imprisonment. Somehow or other there was a lull in their activities for many years. This might be due to want of proper leadership. The year 1942 has, however, demonstrated in no unmistakable terms what a brave and patriotic young generation can do for its country. In their thousands the students joined this movement and hit it up with the fire of the vigour and enthusiasm. Students everywhere in the world are an inflammable material. Once they rise to action, the potentialities of their strength are incalculable. It was, indeed, creditable to the student community of this country that without leadership and without proper guidance and without any previous experience they could do so much for their country. The nation may not have succeeded in getting what it wanted at the end of this great and spontaneous movement, but surely, it has succeeded beyond imagination in getting thousands of patriotic young men drawn into the national struggle and determined not to quit that struggle until the victory was theirs. This is by no means a small gain. During the last several months student organisations have sprung up in all parts of the land. They are

doing wonderfully good work. They have plunged themselves into the activities of the Constructive Programme. The Provincial Organisations of students are federated into the all-India organisation known as the 'Indian Students' Congress'. This is a body thoroughly representative of the student mind of this country. The Congress must actively support the Indian Students' Congress.

This awakening among the students is a great national asset. We must, no doubt, capitalize this asset and put it to the best advantage of the country. The young students today are going to be the administrators of a free India tomorrow. Their potential role in the country's life is, therefore, extremely important. It is not enough that we get our freedom. We have also to carry on the administration of a free India. We shall need thousands of young men and women of ability and character, for the efficient administration of this country when it is liberated from the foreign yoke. Surely we do not propose to import these administrators from England, America and even from Russia. We must prepare our own administrators and it is here that the organisation of students comes in. Hitherto the Congress has not paid any special attention to students as a class by themselves. As in other cases this attitude of the Congress has resulted in leaving the students to the exploits of men and parties who have proved to be unfriendly to the Congress. The Congress cannot afford to be indifferent to the question of students' organisation any longer. The things have already started moving. The students have realised their responsibility in the struggle for independence. It is now for the Congress to guide them and

direct their actions so that they may not walk into the arms of other political parties which are only too anxious to exploit them for their own purposes. Properly guided, students will help us in solving many of our problems. They have the indomitable faith, vigour and energy—the qualities which are absolutely necessary for the success of our struggle for independence.

### **Organisation of Women**

Indian women also have played a great part in the 1942 struggle. It has been a special feature of our national movement under Gandhiji's leadership that it has attracted a large number of women from the very beginning. No national movement of this dimension, anywhere in the world, has had so many active women participants as the 'Satyagraha' movements of the Indian National Congress. There are quite a number of organisations of women all over the country. They have been mostly nationalist and even pro-Congress. In our programme of re-construction we must not underestimate the importance of the organisation of women. Some of the items of our Constructive Programme can be more easily implemented by women than men. The Congress, therefore, must formulate a plan for the proper organisation of women in our scheme of re-construction.

### **The Shop Assistants (Gumastas)**

Side by side with industrial labour it is absolutely necessary to organise clerical labour known as the Shop Assistants or 'Gumastas'. This labour is mostly confined to big industrial cities, and its numerical strength may go into several lakhs in the country.

These are lower-middle class people whose sympathies have always been with the Congress. Class consciousness and political awakening are most definitely coming over this class. As an organised section of the society the 'Gumastas' can materially add to the organisational strength and the fighting capacity of the Congress. Of late years the Shop Assistants in several cities have been clamouring for their organisation. During the days of Congress Ministries their demand for recognition as a distinctive class to be protected by legislation, became so insistent that the Congress Government in Bombay had to pass an Act known as the Bombay Shops and Establishments Act in 1939. This Act immediately came into operation in several big cities of the Province of Bombay and it has been functioning with wonderfully good results. The legal protection given by Congress Government to this class is very much appreciated. Other cities than Bombay are now clamouring for the protection of their rights and interests and very soon this question will have to be tackled by the National Government on a national basis.

Congress cannot afford to neglect such a big section of the society as the 'Gumastas.' They are already Congress-minded. They have made sacrifices for the nation. We must organise them, of course, on the basis of trade-unionism and get the best out of them to our national struggle. They are ready to throw in their lot with the nation. Our scheme of re-organisation must, therefore, find place for the organisation of this important class.

### Liquidation of Illiteracy

It is true that only a free state can effectively solve the question of the liquidation of its illiteracy. India's illiteracy is her greatest handicap and a drawback. It is a matter of shame for us that as many as four persons out of every five, i.e., 80 per cent of our population, are illiterate, not to talk of any education. This blot on our national life must be removed and sooner we did it the better it was in national interest. Apart from other causes, the main cause why our national movements failed to get that expected measure of success is the colossal illiteracy of our masses. The illiteracy of women is still worse. It is thrice as large as of men. How can a nation rise unless its masses also rise and what chance is there for the masses of this country to rise unless they first become literate? Statistics show that in the world population of two hundred crores there are as many as hundred crore illiterates. Of these as many as thirty-two crores are our own brothers and sisters. That means that for every three illiterates in the world one is an Indian. That is not a very happy position for our country. Congress cannot shut its eyes to this urgent national reform of liquidating mass illiteracy. We must have a systematic plan and programme about introducing this national reform. In one or two Provinces of India and notably in the Province of Bombay, experiments of spreading adult literacy among masses especially in industrial cities are going on under the governmental supervision. It is common experience in this country that anything that the Government may undertake to do it has the least chance of becoming popular and there is no

wonder that Government's effort, meagre as it is, has not found any warm support among the masses. Unless the spirit of the masses is stirred, such reforms do not gather the speed that they must for their early accomplishment. It is for the Congress to create that spirit. This reform is, in my view, the most constructive of the whole Constructive Programme of Mahatma Gandhi. I have no doubt the nation will take to it with faith and determination.

In this connection the Mysore experiment as reported in the Press is most commendable. This Indian State has been one of the foremost in social and educational reforms. In this reform also Mysore has surely lived up to its reputation. Even the literacy figures of this State are much higher than anywhere else in British India. The Mysore University, so goes the Press report, has made a rule that no student appearing for the Matriculation examination of the University will be declared as having passed that examination unless along with other requirements he produced a certificate of having made at least five illiterates literate. I am certain that when this rule comes into operation mass illiteracy will begin to disappear at any rate in this State. According to another Press report in the same connection it is stated that the Mysore Government are contemplating a measure to drive away illiteracy by legislation. The measure as reported is: that after 5 years of the passing of the 'Compulsory Literacy Act' every illiterate adult in the State will be made to pay to the State an annual tax of Rs. 5 as a punishment for his illiteracy. During these 5 years the State will undertake to carry literacy to the very doors of the illiterate masses. This

is also a very wonderful reform and the nation must congratulate the Mysore State for having undertaken it, thereby giving the lead to the whole country.

#### **Harijans**

Then there are other items of the Constructive Programme which must also find place in our scheme of national re-construction. The removal of untouchability is one of our oldest liability. We have not been able to liquidate it even after 25 years. Every Congressmen knows that Gandhiji's heart is set on this reform as on nothing else. A larger part of his waking hours every day is spent in the services of 'Harijans.' During the last 25 years Gandhiji has done more for the solution of the 'Harijan' problem than most people in the country for a hundred years. It is not merely the Congress but almost the whole nation is now convinced that untouchability is a scourge in this land and it must be wiped out at the earliest possible moment. Congressmen must actively take up this programme and accelerate the speed by its implementation. It is possible to formulate a scientific plan in this connection for the practice of the rank and file of Congressmen.

#### **Rashtrabhasha**

In spite of unremitting efforts of Mahatma Gandhi, our 'Rashtrabhasha', the 'lingua franca' of India, in its double garb, namely, 'Devnagari' and 'Urdu' scripts, has not made as great a headway as it should have. The nation is now getting impatient about its freedom. We have to hurry up with every activity which is intended to help our freedom movement. The spread of 'Rashtrabhasha' is such an activity, and the Congress can no longer be indifferent about it.

Hitherto the activities like the removal of untouchability, spread of Khaddar, Prohibition, use of the products of village industries and even spread of 'Rashtrabhasha' were regarded as special subjects for Gandhiji's care and concern. Beyond passing resolutions at frequent intervals in support of them, the Congress has done very little in regard to these subjects. This attitude on the part of the Congress is neither fair to Gandhiji nor a sound national policy. The Congress must immediately take up these subjects in hand and formulate a plan and programme for their early accomplishments. It has now been established beyond doubt or argument that Congress cannot live merely on political agitation. That freedom which as accomplished by political agitation alone is merely a shadow that may look like freedom but surely it has not the substance of freedom. The freedom would be judged by its contents and more real and substantial these contents are, more lasting will that freedom be. The Congress must create and build up the contents of Indian freedom. And this cannot be done without implementing, in the fullest measure, the Constructive Programme given to the nation by Mahatma Gandhi.

### **Parliamentary Activities**

The attitude of 'superiority complex' in regard to Parliamentary activities is definitely going out of fashion in this country. People have realised, as they must, that sooner or later they will have to carry on the Government of this country. The qualities of good administration are, therefore, as necessary an attribute of our national equipment as the qualities



of fighting in our struggle for independence. There used to be a time when a majority of Congressmen used to scoff at the very mention of Parliamentary activities. The Congress has very often boycotted elections to legislatures and institutions of Local Self-Government. Those were different times. They have gone for ever. Both the Congress and the nation have made tremendous political advancement and we are now on the threshold of having to undertake the entire administration of our country. The Parliamentary activities, therefore, have become as important and integral a part of our total national effort as the Revolutionary activities of the past. Hitherto we were sending only second-rate and third-rate people to legislatures, municipalities, local boards, and other bodies. These people did more than good and very often brought the Congress into ridicule. This cannot go on any longer. The Congress must now send its best team to capture these administrative positions. It was a welcome sign at the Simla Conference that the list submitted on behalf of the Congress for forming the National Cabinet did include the top-most Congress leaders whose presence in any national cabinet would have brought astonishingly good results. The spirit that was shown at Simla must now govern our attitude towards the Parliamentary activities. The best fighters who are also capable men must be sent to Central and Provincial Assemblies and the important city municipalities in India. These institutions can be made to supplement the national programme of the Congress. The 'touch-me-not' policy of the Congress in regard to the Parliamentary activities must go once for all. If we

Congressmen are made of the right kind of stuff we can demonstrate to our own people and also to the world that we can discharge our obligations ably and honourably, in whatever positions we are made to work. The Congress must, therefore, formulate a programme of Parliamentary activities and prosecute it with ability and vigour.

### **Communal and Political Parties**

In formulating our programme of reconstruction we must finally settle our policy in regard to our relationship with the communal and the political parties in this country. There has been too much wobbling in recent years on this question. The policy of pleasing everybody has never succeeded anywhere at any time. We must be able to distinguish between a friend and a foe. Too much pampering of a person or a party can hardly do us any good. The experience has shown that it has done us a lot of harm. The Congress must take its stand firmly and unequivocally on a national programme regardless of consequences. If the resolutions of the Congress Working Committee at Poona are any indication of our future policy, the nation can heave a sigh of relief that at last the policy of appeasement is at an end.

### **Congress Publicity**

There is one subject which requires special emphasis in our scheme of reconstruction and that is, the adequate publicity of the policy and the programme of the Indian National Congress. The Indian Press—and to a certain extent even the Foreign Press—have been very friendly to us throughout our strug-

gle for independence. There is, much however, which the Congress as an institution can do to organise better and more widespread publicity for many of its activities. Such an attempt has never been made in the past. A time has now come when the Congress must give serious thought to the question of publicity and information. There ought to be, in my opinion, a member of the High Command in charge of Information and Publicity. It could be his responsibility to so organise and regulate publicity as to get best results out of it. The Congress can make a systematic plan for it and vigorously put it into action. The science of publicity is a technical science and it is very much advanced in the modern world. We must train thousands of our young men and women in the art of proper publicity. There must be a training class at the centre, where most expert training in the art of publicity can be made available to some of our smart young men and women. Even the Provincial Congress Committees should start their own training classes. We must build up and develop our friendly contacts with the newspaper world. Many of the newspapers in this country are Congress-minded. They will surely help us in organising our national publicity. The Working Committee must officially run a 'National Bureau of Information and Publicity.'

### **Total Approach**

The central theme of all suggestions made in the foregoing pages is that hereafter the Indian National Congress must infuse lot of constructive energy and young blood in all its activities. Not a single element of the nation ought to remain our organisational con-

tact. The Congress must contact the nation in its entirety. In the scheme of national re-construction our approach to the nation must be a total approach. It must be recognised that unless every section, both small and big, is made to get on its legs and act, the nation cannot rise. This is the meaning of the total approach. The Congress has always meant such a total approach although it had never planned it systematically and scientifically. A time has now come for us to start this effort in a vigorous and determined manner. There is a lot of excellent material in the country waiting to be harnessed for the cause of country's freedom. The Congress will be committing the mistake of the greatest magnitude if it fails on this crucial occasion to make use of this material. We must go to the younger generation of the country and try to train it from now for the future leadership of our nation. It is out of the young students of this generation that the future leadership of the country is to be drawn. This leadership must have fighting qualities as well as the administrative abilities to run the administration of the free India. We must not, therefore, allow the students to go untrained and uncared for in our scheme of things. The same rule applies to the 'Mazdoors,' 'Kisans' and other important national sections. Now is the time for an all-out effort on a national basis to strengthen the Congress and make it the most gigantic and the most popular people's organisation in the country. Such a Congress alone will win the freedom of this country in the shortest possible time.

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