

# Indian Opinion

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## — EDITORIAL

### Repatriation Of Indians

We brought to the notice of our readers and the general public that 238 979 persons were introduced into the Colony from 1838 to 1917 and 74, 645 men, women and children were repatriated to India at the end of 1938. These figures show that there should be 164,334 Indians in the Colony, after no allowance is made for natural increase in the Indian population.

According to the 1931 Census Returns the Indian population was placed at 130 540, or a shortage of 33, 794. There may be an increase in the Indian population at this date, but as official statistics are not available, it is best not to use estimated figures prepared by the Registrar General, which may prove very inaccurate when the next Census is taken.

As the majority of the Indian population is working on Sugar Plantations, let us examine the wages earned by resident and non-resident workers on Sugar Plantations for the year 1942, as compiled by the Labour Commissioner. Resident time-workers, males and females earned \$2 47 and \$1 63 per week respectively, while piece-workers, males and females earned \$3 56 and \$1 90 per week respectively. Non-Resident time workers, males and females, earned \$2 65 and \$1 45 per week respectively while piece workers, males and females earned \$4 02 and \$2 31 respectively. These are the earnings of all races and classes of workers on Sugar

## Government Land Settlement

### Hague, West Coast Demerara

(BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENTS)

The Government Settlement at Hague, West Coast, Demerara, was started over 25 years ago and at the beginning of last year there was no less than 150 houses on the settlement with a population of about 400 persons. This Settlement is situated about ten miles from Georgetown, and has a depth, North to South of the West Coast public road of about two miles. The "road" to the end of the Settle-

ment is actually a mud dam and although Government promised on several occasions to metal this road up to now no effort has been made to do so.

### GOVERNMENT'S BROKEN PROMISES

The Government has neglected to provide facilities of various kinds for these 500 souls. There is no road nor

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Plantations, working approximately four days per week. The average earnings of all classes of workers on Sugar Plantations was, therefore—males \$3.18 and females \$1.82 per week during the year 1942. These earnings included a War Bonus of 15%. The Labour Commissioner made the following comment in his report for 1942, Legislative Council Paper, CSO No 287/4:—

The average cash earnings of workers on Sugar Estates were higher than in the previous year for two reasons:—

- The average number of days worked was somewhat greater than in 1941;
- The War Bonus was increased from 10% to 15% on 26th January, 1942.

As a matter of fact the earnings for 1942 were higher than in all previous years. In addition to the cash earnings of the workers a majority of them supplement their earnings in various ways, principally by rearing live-stock and planting vegetables and rice with the assistance of members of their families, but some of the workers do not have any opportunity to rear livestock or plant rice and vegetables.

Turning to the figures on the Cost of Living, as recorded by the Cost of Living Survey Committee, Legislative

Council Paper, No. 6 of 1943, we find the following:—

Food	\$4 52
Clothing	1 07
Rent	1 07
Fuel & Light	.47
Other Items	1.04

\$8.23, as the average cost of living for 1,418 working class families in Georgetown and its suburbs based on the prices of food, clothing, etc. in 1943. The Deputy Director of Medical Services was a Member of the Committee and in a Comment to the Chairman of the Committee he stated that:—

"the food available represented a supply of 2,134.4 calories daily per man value. The Technical Commission on Nutrition of the League of Nations has placed the calorie requirements per man value to be 2,400 calories of food actually assimilated for an individual not engaged in manual work."

It will be seen then that while a man worked for an average of \$3 18 per week on Sugar Plantations the cost of living of a working man family of 4.6 persons was found to be \$5.65 for food and clothing alone. The figures make distressing reading and is it any wonder that there is such a huge shortage on the number of persons introduced into the Colony from India as against the number of men, women and children now alive?

(To be continued)

# The Indian Women of British Guiana.

## Their Struggles And Sacrifices

Broadcast Talk by Mrs. Jenarine Singh.

Over Station ZFY during the B. P. L. "Farm Hour" on Sunday 10 inst Mrs. Jenarine Singh, President of the Demerara Ladies Auxiliary of the B.G. East Indian Association, delivered the following talk:-

Good afternoon Farm Hour listeners my talk this afternoon concerns Indian women of British Guiana. I will deal principally with those in the rural areas.

The average Indian woman on the sugar estates and in the rural areas lives a very high moral life, influenced chiefly by her ancient traditions and her religion. The relationship of husband and wife is not only one of harmony but also of deep love, respect and companionship. She attaches great importance to the sanctity of her home no matter how humble it may be, and does everything within her power to preserve it.

She performs her entire household duties and in addition contributes to the upkeep of the home, especially when the earnings of the husband are inadequate—a state of affairs which exist everywhere in the country districts.

### PITIFABLE SIGHT

Untold sacrifices are made by these valiant women of the Indian race, such as going to the fields and leaving nursing infants and toddlers in the charge of young children who can hardly take care of themselves. It is pitiable to see pregnant women

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struggling in the field, working equally as hard as the men. Economic circumstances have forced these women to do their bit and they do so uncomplainingly and unselfishly.

Indian women must be complimented in the manner in which they give assistance to their husbands so as to augment their meagre earnings.

The rice industry owes its existence to the efforts and sacrifices made by the Indian women who have worked side by side with the menfolk. Had it not been for the grit and determination of these women there would have been no Rice Industry in the Colony today.

The Indian woman's sense of thrift and good management of the finances of her home have resulted in a satisfactory financial position of Indians in the rural areas, and it compares very favourably with that of other races of the same class.

### SACRIFICES NOT IN VAIN

The struggle for existence of the Indian women has been taking place for generations in this colony but those of them who are still alive must be proud to know that their many sacrifices have not been in vain, as is evident from the prominent positions held by some of our Indian women in the City of Georgetown. They can be found in every walk of life: on Government Boards and Committees in the Civil service, in social, cultural and charitable organisations, etc.

These Indian women are even mindful of the great sacrifices made by their mothers and grand mothers who have pladed them in their present position. They, in their turn, are doing their level best to lighten the task of their less fortunate sisters.

I hope that this talk on Indian women will erase from the minds of several people of other races the misconceived ideas that have been expressed concerning general life conditions of Indian women.

The general aspect and outlook of our Indian women can be compared favourably with those of any other race in the country. Indian in their colony are striving to march forward with the other races for the future betterment of all British Guianese.

Thank you

## Important Notice

### B.G. East Indian Association

The Annual Conference of the British Guiana East Indian Association will be held on Sunday the 24th day of September 1944 1 p.m. at the E. I. Cricket Club Pavilion.

Important resolutions will be discussed.

All Indians are invited to attend.

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# Mahatma And Viceroy Wavell

Common Sense has published a remarkable document—five letters exchanged between Mohandas K. Gandhi (then a political prisoner in the Aga Khan's palace at Poona) and India's Viceroy, Viscount Wavell. In his foreword Newsman Louis Fischer, who made the letters public, claimed that Gandhi's recent conciliatory proposal to Wavell for Indian independence (TIME, Aug. 28) was a "sequel" to this correspondence. That might or might not be true. But as historic and human documents, the letters were unique. Each of the correspondents was an arch-type—Gandhi, of the saintly man turned political crusader, Wavell, of the worldly, disciplined, cultured proconsul. Each was high-mindedly and absolutely convinced of the rightness of the cause he typified. The result epitomized the present phase of the problem of India and Britain—deadlock tempered, in this case, by Gandhi's and Wavell's deep humanity.

## GANDHI TO WAVELL

Dear Friend,

Although I have not had the pleasure of meeting you I address you on purpose as "Dear Friend." I am looked upon by representatives of the British Government as a great, if not the greatest, enemy of the British. Since I regard myself as a friend and servant of humanity including the British, in token of my good will I call you, foremost representative of the British in India, my "friend." ...

I distinguish between the defeat of Japanese arms and Allied victory. The latter must carry with it deliverance of India from a foreign yoke. The spirit of India demands complete freedom from all foreign dominance and would therefore resist the Japanese yoke equally with the British or any other... [British] promises for the future are valueless in the face of a world struggle in which the fortune of all nations and therefore of humanity is involved. Present performance is

the peremptory need of the moment if the war is to end in world peace and not be the preparation for another war bloodier than the present...

I have done, I thought that if I claimed to be a friend of the British as I do, nothing should deter me from sharing my deepest thoughts with you.

## WAVELL TO GANDHI

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

I thank you for your letter of February 17...

I expect you have seen in the paper reports of a speech I made to the Legislature on the same day on which you wrote that letter. This states my point of view and I need not repeat what I said then. I enclose a copy for your convenience if you wish to read it.

I take this opportunity to express to you deep sympathy from my wife and myself at the death of Mrs. Gandhi. We understand what this loss must mean to you after so many years of companionship.

## GANDHI TO WAVELL

Dear Friend,

...At the outset I send you and Lady Wavell my thanks for your kind condolences on the death of my wife. Though for her sake I have welcomed her death as bringing freedom from living agony, I feel the loss more than I had thought I should. We were a couple outside the ordinary. It was in 1906 that by mutual consent and after unconscious trials we definitely adopted self-restraint as the rule of life. To my great joy this knit us together as never before... I now come to your address which you delivered before the Legislature and of which you have kindly sent me a copy...

After developing the Cripps offer you have said... But I see no reason to release those responsible for the declaration of August 8, 1942 [The All India National Congress demand that the British quit India at once], until I am convinced that the policy of non-cooperation, and even of obstruction has been withdrawn—not in sackcloth and ashes—that helps no one—but in recognition of a mistaken and unprofitable policy.

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# Government Land Settlement

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regular water supply; insufficient land to plant rice and vegetables; and not even enough lands to graze the Settlers' cattle and other live stock. Various promises to make additional areas suitable for cattle grazing have not been honoured.

## NO FACILITIES FOR TRAVELLING

For over twenty-five years the residents have not been able to travel on a reasonably good road to and from their houses. Medical and Sanitary Officers, Police, Nurses and others cannot visit the settlement during wet weather, except by boats which take hours, and in most cases sick persons have to be brought out of the Settlement to Doctors and Nurses.

In February, 1943, the Commissioner for Local Government made definite promises in writing to get the Public Works Department to metal the "road."

## LOST CONFIDENCE

This is how Government has been treating Settlers who have been doing all they can to help themselves. Certain people and Government officials have been suggesting that the majority of the residents wish to do nothing for themselves—they want Government to spoon-feed them. We wish to suggest that those who think Government should not do its duty by providing roads, water supply and other conveniences for the residents who wish to help themselves to study the plight of the Settlers of Hague, and to think the whole matter over. In our considered opinion the majority of the working-man has lost confidence in the Government.

## INDIANS ADVISED TO PREPARE TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMELAND

Our suggestion to the Settlers is to prepare themselves to leave the Settlement and the Colony and to return to India as soon as possible, where every effort is now being made to industrialise that Sub Continent. India has a credit balance of over 2½ thousand million pounds sterling in the Banks at Great Britain and the Statesmen, Economists and Industrialists of India are pressing the Viceroy's Executive Council to begin to raise the standard of life and education in India. A seven-man Committee has already reported and efforts will be made to encourage Indians overseas to return to their homeland.

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## Mahatma And Viceroy Wavell

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...I am surprised that you, an eminent soldier and man of affairs; should hold such an opinion. How can the withdrawal of a resolution arrived at jointly by hundreds of men and only after much debating and careful consideration, be a matter of individual conscience? The resolution, jointly undertaken, can be honourably, conscientiously and properly withdrawn only after joint discussion and deliberation... If you can but trust us, you will find us to be the greatest helpers in the fight against Nazism, Fascism and Japanism and the like...

### WAVELL TO GANDHI

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

...I do not think it profitable that we should enter into a lengthy argument and do not propose to answer in detail the points you raise in your letter...

The draft declaration of His Majesty's Government which Sir Stafford Cripps brought to India stated in unmistakable terms the intention of H.M.G. to give India self-government under a constitution of her own devising arrived at by an agreement between the principal elements. I need hardly say that I am in entire accord with that aim and only seek the best means to implement it without delivering India to confusion and turmoil...

At the greatest crisis of all for India, at the time when a Japanese invasion was possible, the Congress party decided to pass a resolution calling on the British to leave India, which should not fail to have a most serious effect on our ability to defend the frontiers of India against the Japanese.

I do not accuse you or the Congress party of any wish deliberately to aid the Japanese. But you are too intelligent a man, Mr. Gandhi, not to have realized that the effect of your resolution must be to hamper the prosecution of the war; and it is clear to me that

you had lost confidence in our ability to defend India and were prepared to take advantage of our supported military straits to gain a political advantage. I do not see how those responsible for the safety of India could have acted otherwise than they did and could have failed to arrest those who sponsored the resolution. As to the general Congress responsibility for the disturbances which followed, I was, as you know, Commander in Chief at the time; my vital lines of communication to the Burma frontier were cut by Congress supporters, in the name of Congress flag. I cannot, therefore, hold the Congress party guiltless of what occurred; and I cannot believe that you with all your acumen and experience could have been unaware of what was likely to follow from your policy. I do not believe that the Congress party's action in this matter represented the real feeling of India nor that the Congress attitude of non-cooperation represents the opinion of anything like the majority of India...

### GANDHI TO WAVELL

Dear Friend

...You have sent me a frank reply I propose to reciprocate your courtesy by being perfectly frank...

Your letter is a plea for cooperation by the Congress party in the present administration and, failing that, in planning for the future. In my opinion, this required equality between the parties and mutual trust. But equality is absent and Government distrust of Congress can be seen at every turn. The result is that suspicion of Government is universal. Add to this the fact that Congressmen have no faith in the competence of Government to ensure India's future good. This want of faith is based upon bitter experience of the past and present conduct of the British administration of India. Is it not high time that you cooperated with the people of India through their elected representatives instead of expecting cooperation from them?...

The responsibility for what followed the hasty arrests of Congressmen must rest solely on Government. For they invited the crisis, not the authors of the resolution...

As I visualize India today, it is one vast prison containing 400 million souls. You are its sole custodian. Government prisons are prisons within this prison. I agree with you that whilst you hold the views expressed in your letter under reply, the proper place for one like me is a Government prison. And unless there is a change of heart, view and policy on the part of Government, I am quite content to remain your prisoner...

TIME, SEPTEMBER 4, 1944

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