

INDIAN OPINION

OFFICIAL WEEKLY ORGAN OF THE BRITISH GUIANA EAST INDIAN ASSOCIATION

VOL. 1. NO. 69

GEORGETOWN, B. G., SATURDAY JANUARY 19 1946. ONE PENNY

INDIAN OPINION: Items of news interest and Literary contributions must be addressed to P. O. Box 43, Georgetown, B. G. Features and other items appearing in this journal do not necessarily represent the views of the Editorial Board. The Editorial column reflects the policy of the British Guiana East Indian Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Single Copies—one penny.

LOCAL

Annual Subscription—Posted \$1.50

FOREIGN

Annual Subscription—Posted \$2.00

AGRICULTURAL BANK

We have been emphasizing for sometime now in these columns the necessity for the creation by Government of an Agricultural Bank, in order to provide credit facilities to those engaged in agricultural pursuits in the colony.

The Government and its advisers are so deeply interested in the preservation of themselves and the present status quo of the population that they have disregarded all suggestions in this direction; but we feel it our duty to return as often as possible to our demand on the Government for the creation of such an institution, as it would be one of the main levers to any future advancement towards improvement in the general welfare of agriculture and those engaged in the industry, which is the mainstay of the colony.

Government's negligence in providing proper credit facilities in this direction has led to the present

chaos that exists among those that have had to acquire credits from private sources. Generally the rate of interest is so high and the security demanded so exorbitant from private individuals that sooner or later the farmers succumb to these Shylocks.

We are sure that Government would not find it difficult to establish such an institution as we know that the entire population of the country are in favour of such an institution as we have had resolutions passed throughout the colony to this effect some time ago, which received unanimous approval everywhere.

We are of the opinion that no time should be lost by Government to make the necessary preliminaries towards the establishment of such an institution.

It seems the Government of this colony is becoming so reactionary and fool hardy that no matter what are the needs of the people, it lends a deaf ear to its pleadings; ruling like Nazis with its heel firmly planted on the heads of the inhabitants of the colony especially those engaged in agriculture.

We wonder if those that are governing us so cruelly do not realize that times are changing and sooner or later a halt must be called to this gross mismanagement of the affairs of the people by those who should not have such dictatorial powers over the people of this colony.

READ THE
Indian Opinion

FABIAN COLONIAL BUREAU CIRCULARIZES ITS COR- RESPONDENTS AND FRIENDS IN THE COLONIES

Asks to Give Labour an
Opportunity to Demon-
strate Its Sincerity

Dear Friend,

In view of the recent political changes which have taken place in Britain, we felt that our many correspondents overseas would wish to hear from us. The magnificent Labour victory, at the polls resulting in a Labour Government, has brought the honour of being appointed Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies to our Chairman, Mr. Creech Jones. I am sure that you will agree with us that we are all very fortunate in having Mr. Creech Jones, a proved friend of colonial peoples, at the Colonial Office, and we are looking forward to considerable progress under our new Labour Government. You will appreciate however, that there is no magical wand which can in one moment of time bring much needed and desired reforms, and with the aftermath of the war weighing very heavily at the moment, progress may be a little slower than we would wish but come it surely will.

In spite of the change in Government the Bureau will be continuing its activities along the same lines as it has done in the past. We shall always be pleased to hear from you and help you in any way within our power.

The people of Britain are showing great willingness to give the Labour Party a chance to prove itself by its deeds. I am sure you folks in the Colonies will be willing to do the same. We hope you will be interested in the appraisal, which we attach, of Labour's work at the Colonial Office during the first three months in control.

The Fabian Colonial Bureau gives you "hands across the sea" once again.

Yours in comradeship and friendship,

OLIVE R. CRUCHLEY,
Overseas Correspondent

Indo-American Trade Prospects

New Delhi, Nov. 26.—In a review of business conditions in America in September 1945, Mr. S.K. Kirpalani, India Government Trade Commissioner in New York, observes that "despite the fact that the War Production Board and other Government agencies, with the exception of the Office of the Price Administration, have been rapidly 'getting out of the way of Industry', reconversion is running into snags owing to aggressive demands of Labour for increased basic wages."

On the question of Indo-American collaboration, he observes that "generally speaking, manufacturers who have plans for establishing production in India in partnership with Indian nationals, do not propose to proceed further until the currency, exchange and tariff situation is cleared up. Meanwhile, they will seek opportunities to send individual representatives to India to survey the situation first hand. Manufacture of various consumer goods in India through American-Indian collaboration remains a practical proposition, but opinion is hardening on the issue of major capital share resting with American partners."

India will benefit most, he observes in his report, from the technological advances made by America by obtaining the services of key technicians as and when this may prove feasible. For the present, however, practically speaking, no technicians are available.

The report advises that, meanwhile, "every effort should be made to develop the export trade of India with this country by testing the markets for new products like silks, woodware, ivoryware, brassware, and silverware and by exporting as large quantities as possible of commodities in which the Trade is already established."

According to the report, the market in second-hand surplus machinery remains bright for spot purchases. "Two or three months hence the picture may change radically, for many other countries have a vigilant eye fixed on every promising opportunity that comes by."

Discussing current prospects for various Indian commodities, the report observes that as regards burlap, the foreign Economic Administration is contemplating turning over the purchase to private trade channels. The shipping position is likely to become easier but there is no present indication of the price and end use restrictions being removed. In the slightly altered circum-

stances, private trade may be willing to take up the purchase of burlap provided India can give an assurance that at least 190 million yards will be available for January-March shipment at prices within the ceilings which have been operative hitherto for American Government purchases.

The demand for spices is fairly keen but a large consignment recently received was found to be heavily infested with weevil. Importers are averse to placing further orders unless they are assured that the tumeric available in India is clean and in good condition.

Mechanically shelled cashewnuts from Brazil are beginning to arrive in New York. Some exports in the trade believe that with proper machinery, Brazil will eventually be able to compete with India. The situation is being watched.

As regards coir, it is felt that American importers would have henceforth no difficulty in picking up the quantities which industry may require from time to time.

Since the war had ended, the situation regarding American Navy's demand for kapok has changed. Future purchases are not likely to be made from India both on grounds of quality and price. Indian kapok has a malodorous smell and the price runs round about 25 cents per pound. It is understood that Kapok is available from France and Ecuador at 15 or 16 cents a pound.

Some time ago there was a keen demand for cotton waste particularly hard waste. Importers would like to know the supply possibilities over the next six months and the probable export price range.

Interest has been evinced in certain quarters in the prospects of imports of Indian silk. This is a favourable moment to send in samples and quote prices and to test the market with the help of trial consignments.

There have been important enquiries regarding a wide range of arts and crafts products. Necessary information has been furnished, which will enable prospective importers to get in touch with likely suppliers in India.—

(Bureau)

Indian Languages In The Colonies

By the Rev. O. F. ANDREWS

One of the most interesting studies is to note what may perhaps be called the tenacity of Indian languages to survive in the different colonies abroad, where Indians are assembled in great numbers. The conditions for such a survival are often of the most precarious character, and I have known many examples in my travels from one colony to another where the younger generation has lost altogether the use of the Indian mother tongue.

In addition to the familiar language which may be spoken at home, there is only one *lingua franca* which in different forms and many corruptions holds its place with English as a common medium. This may rightly be called Hindustani, if that name may be used for a speech which no one would recognise as pure Hindi or pure Urdu, though both languages have gone to compose it. The corruption has chiefly been caused by the introduction of 'pidgin' English. To give a single instance, instead of 'Main bimar ho gaya' we used to get in Fiji, 'Main 'sickman ho gaya' It was necessary, even for an Englishman like myself, to learn these strange corruptions, because they are pronounced in such a manner that at first they are hardly recognisable.

In the old days of indenture, Indians in Fiji divided themselves into two categories, *grimit-wala* and *khalas*. A *grimit-wala* was one who came out under an agreement, or indenture. *Khalas* meant one who was free. The word 'free-man' had come into use as frequently as *Khalas*.

* Such was the state of things when I first visited Fiji along with Mr. W. W. Pearson. It seemed to us then, that the Indian languages would soon become altogether lost in a jungle of 'pidgin' English. But a quite remarkable revival has taken place. Owing a great deal to the efforts of the Arya Samaj, and also to the pains taken by the inspector of Indian Schools, Mr. A. Macmillan, the Hindustani that is now learnt is simple and grammatical. Also in the Nadi District, where a large number of settlers from South India have made their homes, a special school for Tamil children has been maintained with splendid enthusiasm. I am not quite sure about the latest developments, but provision has been made to teach Tamil children their own language and Urdu is taught in Muslim schools. Compared with what we found in 1915 an immense improvement can be recognised.

(To be Continued)

GENERAL PROVISION
MERCHANTS

Resaul Maraj & Co. Ltd.

Water Street,

Georgetown

Recent Constitutional Changes And Issues And The Question Of Self-Government For British Guiana

By D. P. DEBIDIN

I am glad of the opportunity given me by the invitation of the Executive of the Association to write on the above subject.

On the 18th day of July, 1928, the Court of Policy and combined Court were abolished for a new constitution popularly referred to as the 1928 Constitution or "Crown Colony Government."

The then Governor (Sir Cecil Rodwell) and the then Secretary of States for the Colonies (Mr. Amery) and a great many others expressed the view that the change meant an end to political stagnation and to political stagnation and that a new era for progress for the colony was ushered in.

The die-hards then, no different from those of today however, thought otherwise. Instead of progress they saw retrogression. They saw a curtailment of the vox populi through their representatives. They realised as we ourselves also have by now come to realise that the policy of the Government of the Colony was one to be shaped and carried out by the Colonial Office. The elected representatives of the people were always in the minority and

what made matters worse was when some of the electives were not truly representative of the interests of the people. The result as we have seen in the last 15 years or more was that a few elected members who championed the cause of the people in one measure or another were able to accomplish no more than focussing public attention upon any measure which they championed. And public opinion which could have been truly described as being indifferent became more indifferent by this state of things.

THE 1928 CONSTITUTION

A glance at the constitution of the Legislature will show the position of the elected block. By the 1928 Constitution the Court was made up of the Governor as president with a casting vote, 10 Official members nominated by the Governor except for the Colonial Secretary and the Attorney General who were Ex Officio members; 5 unofficial members nominated by the Governor and 14 elected members.

It can safely be said that little or no

progress resulted from the 1928 change over in the Constitution. On the other hand problems increased both in numbers and their magnitude and conditions generally became worse.

WEST INDIA ROYAL COMMISSION

A West India Royal Commission was appointed in August 1938, to investigate the Social and Economic conditions and matters connected therewith in British Guiana, Jamaica, Trinidad, and certain other West Indian Colonies, and to make recommendations. This Commission however felt they were bound to extend their enquiry into the political issues of and Constitutional Reforms for the Colonies chiefly because they found the people in these parts wishing to have a larger voice in their own affairs and because they felt the political issues were closely bound up with the social and economic problems.

This commission, which can be said to be one of the ablest, if not the ablest and most well-balanced to visit these parts made a very thorough investigation of matters and their recommendations on the *Constitutional problems* like nearly all of their other recommendations were extremely satisfactory and welcome and promised drastic changes of far-reaching effect and importance.

I shall deal with a few aspects of these recommendations. Of first importance is the recommendation that "Official representation in the Legislative Councils should be confined to the Colonial Secretary, the Treasurer and the Attorney General, and the resulting vacancies filled by nominations" which would "ensure that all important sections and interests of the community receive adequate representation".....

1928 CONSTITUTION AMENDED

This recommendation was implemented in this Colony by the amendment of the British Guiana Constitution of 1928. On the 12th day of April 1948, these new changes in the Constitution came into force.

(Continued on page 4)

BUY 'NIRMAL GHEE'

British Guiana's Foremost Dairy Produce

"NIRMAL GHEE" is 100% pure cow's ghee and is manufactured locally under expert supervision. If you want your Puree, Manbhog, Mithai and other Indian dishes made more tempting and nutritious use "NIRMAL GHEE".

"NIRMAL GHEE" is the only ghee that can be used with confidence at your Jag, Katha, Puja and other ceremonies.

PLACE YOUR ORDER TODAY AT THE

New Stabroek Drug Store

STABROEK MARKET, GEORGETOWN.

PHONE C 341

General Provision

Merchandise

Boodhoo

Water Street, Georgetown.

Recent Constitutional Changes And Issues And The Question Of Self-Government For British Guiana

(Continued from page 3)

and it can be said that they were a definite step forward towards Self-Government. All the eight nominated Official Seats were abolished and the Colonial Treasurer was added to the Ex Officio group. This therefore created seven vacancies to be filled by nominated unofficial men. But the amended constitution only provided for 2 of these vacancies to be filled. These changes have put the elected group in the majority, although it is a small majority which can be offset by any two electives swinging over to the other side.

On this point I must comment that though I would prefer the seven vacancies to be filled by elected members i.e. that the elected group be increased to 21, I am at a loss to know why all the 7 vacancies were not filled by nominations in the spirit of the recommendations.

Is it because the elected majority might further be strengthened, or is it to still place Government as nearly as possible in the position it was before the 12th April 1943?

We must be quite willing to concede that the imperial Government has spent and still spends considerable sums in the "development" of our Colony and therefore it would be in the interest of the taxpayer in Great Britain to see that the complete control of the colony is not transferred away—a fact which makes me feel that it would be a very very long time indeed before this Colony gets Self Government if at all.

So that, we see the further safeguard to the Imperial Government in that the Governor of the Colony remains vested by the amended Constitution with a very wide power of veto of any measure which may be passed by any majority of the Court.

UNIVERSAL ADULT SUFFRAGE

The next important recommendation on Constitutional matters is to be found in 28 (d). "That in order to secure that the elected element in Legislative Councils shall be as truly representative as possible, the object of policy should be the introduction of Universal Adult Suffrage."

Because some of the commissioners felt Universal Adult Suffrage should be introduced immediately, while others felt it should be by gradual stages it was recommended that Local committees be appointed to consider the extension of the Franchise.

Committees were appointed in Jamaica, Trinidad and British Guiana among other places, and we have learnt that in Jamaica and Trinidad it was recommended and has been confirmed by the Secretary of States for the Colonies that Universal Adult Suffrage be introduced. General elections have already been carried out in Jamaica without any difficulty on Universal Adult Suffrage.

FRANCHISE COMMISSION OF 1941

British Guiana's committee (The Franchise Commission, 1941) appointed on the 26th May 1941, submitted as late as the 28th February, 1944, a majority recommendation for a lowered Franchise only which was confirmed by the Secretary of States for the Colonies. Recommendation 28 (d) had enjoined further that "such committees (Franchise Commissions) should keep in close touch with their counterparts in the other West Indian Colonies."

I am yet to learn whether our Commission kept in touch with Jamaica or Trinidad which granted U. A. S. and if they did, then the nature and extent to which they kept in touch.

U. A. SUFFRAGE DOOMED

The cause of Universal Adult Suffrage was doomed at the very outset through the personnel of the Commission. The views of some of them were already known while the lack of political experience and knowledge of the people by some and indifference to the issue by others, didn't help matters. Paragraph 108 of the Franchise Report reads as follows "As a result of the continuous and repeated absences from meetings of several members of the Commission...we were deprived of the benefit of their help and advice in arriving at our decisions."

We all have vivid recollections of the whole enquiry and I venture to think that quite a few just appended their names to the report without a full examination of the evidence, thus merely recording their personal vote, a vote, therefore, of no greater value than that of a witness but used nevertheless to turn the scales on one side.

LEG. COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS

The next step was a more pitiable injustice done to the cause of Universal Adult Suffrage. An almost 2-term legislature with some of the elected group not standing a ghost of a chance of being returned on a Universal Adult Suffrage voting, discussed the Franchise report, 11 of the 19 commissioners were members of the Legislature. Of the 11, 8 were for the majority report and 3 for Universal Adult Suffrage. This to my mind, was a glorious farce, as we all have by now experienced. It was nothing short of a Coroner sitting at the inquest of the man he murdered or

BREWING today is a combination of a very old art and a new scientific method. YOU are assured of SUPERIOR and UNIFORM products brewed with the best available materials by methods of merit when you buy.

Frontenac Beer

Dow Ale

and

Dow Stout

Wieting and Richter Ltd.
AGENTS.

C. R. JACOB & SONS,
LIMITED

GENERAL MERCHANT &
COMMISSION AGENTS.

WE SPECIALISE IN THE IMPORTATION OF COTTON SEINE TWINE, COTTON CORD AND AMERICAN PINE TAR.

MALT LIQUORS—BEER, ALE & STOUT AND

HIGH QUALITY FOODSTUFFS

Orders And Enquiries Solicited.

Tel. C.625 9-10 Holmes Street.
P. O. Box 128. Georgetown.

of a judge trying his own case.

This is important as his Excellency the Governor took the discussions of the Legislature along with a resolution passed by a Village Chairmans Conference held at Bartica in favour of the recommendations of the Franchise Report, to the Secretary of State for the Colony in England as evidence of a majority support of the Franchise Report in the Colony.

Editors Note:

This article was intended for the Christmas Number of Indian Opinion; but was late for publication. We Recommend it to our readers.

(To be continued next week)

THE INDIAN OPINION printed and published every Saturday, at the Bharat Printing and Publishing Company, at lot 11A Queen Street, Georgetown Demerara by CHARLES EDWARD PACKWOOD or Mr. JENARINE SINGH, President of the British Guiana East Indian Association.

SATURDAY, 19th JANUARY 1946.