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Topics of the Week.

Working Committee Decision.

THE decision of the Working Committee which met at Wardha last week-end to allow the Congress parties in the provincial legislatures to admit to their ranks, if they think necessary, members elected on non-Congress tickets if such non-Congress candidates take the Congress pledge and abide by the Congress discipline is good so far as it goes. But it does not go far enough to be useful outside one or two provinces. In the Bombay legislature only the Democratic Swarajists will be able to coalesce with the Congress on this condition, as they have never given up their claim to be considered as Congressmen and have no objection to the Congress pledge. But the Congress will not find others so eager to take the pledge, although they would not hesitate to cooperate with it in matters of common agreement. Why the Working Committee should insist on the pledge, it is difficult to understand. In many cases it will only lead to throwing the door open to only those "deserters" who disregarded Congress discipline and won the elections against an "official" Congress candidate. Surely, the Working Committee has no desire to welcome such persons. Or, perhaps, nothing succeeds like success.

In His Discretion

THE U. P. Congress Party, which has secured a majority in the local Assembly, has raised a point of constitutional convention which opens up an important issue. The Congress claims that the six nominations to the Legislative Council which the Governor is to make should not be made without consultation with the Government of the province. This claim has no justification in the letter of the law which clearly lays down that certain seats in the Upper House "shall be filled by persons chosen by the Governor in his discretion", and not by the Governor-in-Council.

The claim of the U. P. Congressmen has, therefore, no foundation in law.

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BUT British statesmen and their representatives in India have always prided themselves on their efforts to introduce into Indian public life not only British conceptions of law but also British traditions and conventions. Here is a splendid opportunity for the Governors of those provinces which suffer the misfortune of Upper Houses to lay down a wholesome convention in the matter of nominations by consultation with their ministers. There is nothing in law to prevent them from doing it. The nomination method has been indifferently and sometimes shamefully used in respect to local bodies, although it is generally recognised that nominations should not be used to strengthen a weak party or to weaken a strong party. The same principle can be followed with profit in the case of nominations to the Upper Houses. There is danger of "Governor's Parties" springing up in the provincial legislatures somewhat on the lines of the discredited King's Party in old Parliaments. Unless the ministers recommend outrageously unfair nominations, we feel that Governors would do well to lay down a convention of consultation with them in this respect.

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"A Reflection on Business Morality"

THE Government have recently professed to make an effort to conduct the affairs of the Railways on business lines. Reduction of pays, discharge of lower subordinate staff, rationalisation which hits the worker and similar steps contemplated by the Railway department and sometimes opposed by the workers, are sought to be justified on the grounds of "business" expediency. It is interesting, therefore, to notice what businessmen think of the step taken by the Railway Member in writing off Rs. 62 crores of Railway liabilities to the General Fund. The memorandum issued by the Indian Merchants' Chamber of Commerce on the Railway Budget for the year 1937-38 has the following observation on this "repudiation":

In ordinary commercial undertakings, such an attempt at evasion of obligations will amount to an act of repudiation, and may cast a reflection on the business morality of the transaction. Apart from this objection, it stands to reason that when the whole question of the rehabilitation of Railway finances is the subject of an expert enquiry, the authorities should not have attempted to minimise the gravity of the problem by a resort to window-dressing. With the load of over Rs. 60 crores removed by a stroke of the pen, the urge and need for radical financial reform are forestalled and circumvented. The Inchoape Committee pointed out that between 1913 and 1923 the working expenses of the Railways had gone up by 131 per cent. Public feeling on this point has been placed before the authorities, time and again, in unmistakable language.

and the present attempt to evade the issue by writing off undischarged obligations may accentuate this feeling. Moreover, in fairness to their own expert Committee, Government might well have awaited their recommendations before resorting to such a measure.

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Mr. P. Kodanda Rao.

THE report of the British Guiana East India Association for 1936 has the following about Mr. Kodanda Rao who recently visited that Colony :

The Association was very happy to welcome to this Colony Mr. P. Kodanda Rao, Secretary of the Servants of India Society, who arrived here on the 10th April, on a visit which he described as being purely educational. Mr. Rao was the guest of the Honorary Secretary during the six weeks he spent in this country, and we wish to record our extreme gratitude to Mr. Rao for the great assistance he was to his people in this country, for not only did he give instructive lectures, but he carefully studied many of our problems, and was always ready to give sound advice to all who needed it. Indeed he greatly endeared himself to the people here, and great was the sorrow felt at his departure. During the time he was here, he had many conferences and meetings with His Excellency the Governor, the Hons. the Colonial Secretary and the Director of Education, and other officers of Government, as well as heads of other organizations in this country. It was on his advice and suggestion that the highly successful Conference of May 21st was held.

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Tweedledum and Tweedledee

THE Princes have consulted some more constitutionalists and find that the bogey raised by Mr. Morgan was illusory and harmless. Mr. Morgan, an eminent jurist, questioned the inviolability of the Instrument of Accession and the Government of India Act 1935, and advised the Princes to safeguard themselves against any changes therein by demanding the right to secede from the Federation, if such necessity or desire arose. His advice was called a "bombshell" in the federation deliberations but proved to be only a damp squib, thanks to other legal advices.

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ON Mr. Morgan's note, the Princes repaired to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. The catechism between the Princes and Sir Tej is interesting. Sir Tej was asked :

(1) How is sovereignty of a State affected by the Act except in so far as it has been voluntarily conceded by the Instrument of Accession? Sir Tej Bahadur's reply was that beyond the Instrument of Accession sovereignty of the States is not affected.

(2) Is the Instrument of Accession a final and complete limitation on the authority of federal courts and the Privy Council? Sir Tej Bahadur's answer was in the affirmative.

(3) Has Parliament power to legislate amending protected provisions of the Act without in substance affecting federation as established under this Act? His answer was that the States were acceding to federation as established under this Act. Therefore, any fundamental change in the protected provisions of the Act would be putting an end to federation established under this Act. Therefore the Instrument of Accession would have spent itself and agreement between the States and the Crown in that behalf would necessarily come to an end. The omnipotence of Parliament is not denied, but amendment of protected provisions would necessarily mean termination of the existing understanding.

(4) Can the Instrument of Instruction be disregarded by the Secretary of State rendering thereby the protection afforded to the States in special powers of the Governor-

General nugatory? Sir Tej Bahadur's answer was in the negative. It would be no violent assumption on the part of the States to think that the Secretary of State would act honestly and he would conform to the high traditions of public integrity. In the event of any such instructions being disregarded by the Secretary of State there would be enough remedies to bring him to book beyond one of impeachment which in these days might be considered by some as an obsolete and rusty weapon.

(5) Is it open to federation to confiscate money lying in a State bank or in a Bank in British India to satisfy federal claim against a federating State? Sir Tej Bahadur's answer was in the negative. Decrees of a federal court are declaratory and, therefore, cannot be executed as other decrees. There is no provision in the Act for passing a special legislation confiscating such monies.

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WE are interested in the replies only in so far as they show the utter imperviousness of the Federal Constitution to any attempts at improvement by agitation within the framework of the constitution. But it is worth while noting Sir Tej Bahadur's reply to the question regarding Parliament's power to legislate amending the Act. Sir Tej Bahadur advised the Princes that as they were acceding to the Federation established under this Act (of 1935) any changes therein affecting the protection, privileges and rights of the Princes would automatically put an end to Federation as established under this Act and the agreement between the Crown and the States would come to an end. In other words, the Princes would be out of the Federation, would, in fact, be exactly as safe as if they had the right to secede from it. What Mr. Morgan advised the Princes was to reserve a legal provision to secede, one by one, if they so chose. What Sir Tej has given them, if his view stands and is accepted by the British Government, is secession *en bloc* and automatic!

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Dr. Ambedkar's Party.

ONE of the notable results of the Bombay elections has been the success of the candidates put up by the Independent Labour Party, inaugurated by Dr. Ambedkar. A large majority of his candidates have been returned and we desire to congratulate him on the achievement. Dr. Ambedkar's speeches regarding the Hindu religion have given deep offence to many orthodox Hindus, who, in the heat of controversy, forgot the provocations taught to him. When he announced the formation of a party on the eve of the elections it was ridiculed as another "stunt" of his. The Bombay Congress in particular decided to see that he and his followers were taught a lesson in the elections. Unfortunately for them and fortunately for the progressive elements in social matters, Dr. Ambedkar and his followers gave them a good run for their troubles and came out victorious at the polls.

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THE success of Dr. Ambedkar's men at the polls is evidence of his hold upon the scheduled castes and particularly the *mahar* community, which forms a substantial section among the voters. The cumulative vote gave his men an advantage over their rivals, an advantage which they could not have used to their profit had they been divided or corrupt and it is worth mentioning that few of his candidates had to take shelter under the reservation. It is well known that money has not failed to play its part in the present elections and it is gratifying to note the resistance to temptation shown by so-called backward communities.

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WE welcome the success of this party for other reasons also. It is a party of young enthusiasts, the average age of its members being less than thirty. It

is the only party, barring the Congress, which has put before the public a radical economic and social programme. In some respects its programme is certainly nearer to the needs of the country than that of the Congress. In the Bombay legislature we have no doubt that Dr. Ambedkar's group will be found to be in the vanguard of the supporters of social and economic legislation of an advanced type. If the Congress decided to take office, it will find in this group, if judiciously handled, a valuable ally against reaction of every kind. On the other hand, it will also serve as a reminder to them, if they failed to implement the large promises they have given during the elections. A small and well-disciplined group can be a formidable minority in the Bombay Provincial Assembly where the largest party commands a precarious majority.

Some Gain

THE woes of third class passengers in railways were once more pressed on the attention of the Government last week in connection with the voting on railway demands by the Assembly. The matter was referred to on two former occasions in the present session and its discussion is almost a hardy annual so that nothing that has not been already said about it can, at this stage, be advanced on either side. Even so, we do not think anybody need feel displeased with the result of this particular debate. For one thing, the cut motion was carried against Government, which is a measure of the strength of feeling in the country on a matter which so vitally touches the masses.

BUT leaving aside the sentimental satisfaction resulting from the infliction of a defeat on the Government, the debate must be said to have been not altogether unfruitful. It made the Railway Member admit the need for larger expenditure on the comforts of the third class passenger, which is doubtless a valuable gain. To what extent the Railway Member's sympathy for the lot of the third class traveller can be actively brought into play to his practical benefit will naturally depend upon the state of railway finances. But it would be surprising if, with one of Sir M. Zafrulla Khan's undoubted and well-known sympathy for the pitiable lot of the lowest class railway passenger in charge of Indian railways, nothing is done to lessen the misery of third class travel. We shall watch with interest the steps he will take to translate his sympathy into practical action.

Dufferin Cadets.

GREAT concern was expressed recently about the lack of employment for the Dufferin cadets and the failure on the part of well-known shipping companies to afford to cadets trained on the Dufferin facilities for further sea-training. That the public anxiety on this score was fully justified can be seen from relevant statistics officially supplied to the Assembly on a recent date. It appears from these that since the establishment of the training ship "Dufferin" 214 Indian lads completed their course of instruction provided there and were given their Passing Out Certificates. Of these 66 cadets have so far obtained their Certificates of Competency after completing their sea-training as apprentices, which, unless our memory fails us, extends to three years.

THIS is satisfactory so far as it goes. But what we are specially curious about is what happened to the balance of 148 ex-Dufferin cadets. Did they not

pursue the navigation line? If so, what was the cause of their giving up the sea course? Was it the lack of facilities for their qualifying for the Competency Certificate or the prospect of unemployment or their own dislike of sea life? Information on these points would be very valuable as enabling one to judge where really the shoe pinches. But it was unfortunately not forthcoming in the official reply referred to.

TO go on with the story of qualified ex-Dufferin cadets. Out of the 66 so qualified, 60, we observe, have secured employment. This number includes two who are preparing for higher examinations. Four out of the remaining six have only recently obtained their Competency Certificates and are looking out for service. So far as the other two are concerned, they are believed to be in the United Kingdom and it cannot be said whether they are employed or unemployed. To any dispassionate student of these figures, the information will reveal the need of official action to secure employment and training facilities to the ex-Dufferin cadets. But curiously enough, the Government are not prepared to make any move in the matter! All we can say is that their self-complacency is altogether blameworthy.

Unintelligible.

LAST week we drew attention in these columns to the large allowances over and above his fat salary which the Viceroy of India receives. In doing so we pointed out that the list by no means exhausted the items of expenditure on his comfort which were met out of Indian revenues. The band and bodyguard establishments attached to the head of the Indian Government were mentioned as instances in point. We observe from a subsequent interpellation in the Assembly that of a like description is the expenditure incurred for the maintenance of the Viceroy's residences, one at Delhi and the other at Simla. And be it noted that the expenditure is not negligible and, what is more, is progressively increasing. In 1933-34 the maintenance of the Delhi residence of the Viceroy cost Rs. 1,52,308 to Indian revenues, and the figure had risen by more than Rs. 6,000 to Rs. 1,58,855 in 1935-36. The same phenomenon is observable in respect of the Viceroy's residence at Simla. The expenses for its maintenance and upkeep which amounted to less than half a lakh of rupees in 1933-34 went up by nearly Rs. 4,000 to Rs. 53,198 in 1935-36.

IT would have been interesting to compare the proportion of this expenditure with that in the British Dominions. The information was requested by the questioner with this end in view, but the Government put forward the convenient excuse of its not being in their possession. If they were so minded, it could have been easily obtained. But why, they must have thought, facilitate inconvenient comparisons? But, fundamentally speaking, what one fails to understand is why if an officer of Government is charged a certain proportion of his salary for house rent in case he occupies official quarters, the same practice should not hold good even in the case of heads of the Indian as also of Provincial Governments.

Locomotive Manufacture.

IN the course of last week's debates on the Railway budget in the Assembly a cut was carried against Government which aimed at impressing on them the desirability of arranging for the manufacture of locomotives in India itself. British businessmen have always adopted an attitude of hostility towards the

proposal and even on this occasion representatives of British commerce in India sitting in the Assembly strictly conformed to the traditional policy. Of course their opposition was not direct or point blank. It was in the nature of a flank attack under cover of considerations of their well known solicitude for India's financial interests! A locomotive factory is an impossibility in India, they said in effect. If it is to be an economic proposition it must be designed for an annual output of 200 locomotives. But the Indian railways do not need such a large number. How then would you dispose of the unused balance? To start a locomotive factory in India before a way out of the difficulty was thought of was like placing the cart before the horse. The logical conclusion, in their opinion, was to maintain the *status quo*, that is, to order Indian requirements in regard to locomotives from abroad. In view of the fact that some at least of these orders go to British manufacturing houses, the opposition of British businessmen to the proposal to produce locomotives in India is quite natural and intelligible.

BUT Indian opinion can never be taken in by such specious reasoning. It is quite conceivable, as so obligingly pointed out by non-official Britishers in the Assembly, that the proposed factory would produce much more than India's needs in locomotives. This would be so if it concerned itself exclusively with locomotive manufacture throughout the year. Can it not turn its attention to the manufacture of something else connected with the Railway industry which is more largely in demand? Then, again, is a factory capable of producing less than 200 locomotives the economic impossibility that British businessmen represent it to be? These aspects of the problem demand closer investigation, for which the Government should have volunteered to arrange. But till the results of such a thorough and all-sided examination are available, India cannot merely take on trust the pontifical and obviously interested statements, emanating from however eminent a quarter, about locomotive manufacture in India being out of the question.

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THE INDIAN BUDGET.

IN presenting the budget to the Assembly this year Sir James Grigg had a somewhat more disappointing tale to unfold than that which fell to his lot during the two previous years. Partly this is the inevitable result of the ushering in of the new constitution. Partly, however, it is a result of bad estimation. In commenting on the Finance Member's estimates last year we pointed out that he seemed to have ignored the lesson taught by the Railway Budget figures and framed his estimates too optimistically; and though the Finance Member may urge that to some extent his difficulties are due to an unprecedented fall in sugar customs, yet that fall by itself does not explain the entire situation. The fall in customs revenue in the revised estimates from the budget figures is distributed over a large number of important items and shows clearly that the Finance Member counted on a much larger trade recovery taking place during the course of the current year than has actually come about. This would not have been serious but for the fact that the Finance Member's optimistic budgeting has led this year to a frittering away of somewhat large sums in doles and grants. It cannot be claimed by the Finance Member that the financial difficulties consequent on the new constitution have come upon him suddenly. The separation of Burma and the fact that help would be required by provincial governments under the new regime were fore-known. And though their exact extent or the nature of, say, the Niemeyer award could not be determined, this year should not have caught the Finance Member so unprepared especially after he had been lavish with a restoration of cuts and with grants and doles during the past two years.

The net immediate cost of the new constitutional arrangements to Indian Central revenues has been calculated at over Rs. 4 crores. Owing to the separation of Burma the Indian Government loses large amounts of income under both customs and the income-tax, this loss being off-set to some extent by

the contributions to be made by Burma according to the Amery Committee recommendations. There is also some net saving in expenditure on this account. The final result is a loss as a result of the separation of Rs. 2,33 lakhs for the first year. The burden of provincial autonomy is threefold in character: the grant of the major portion of the jute excise income to Bengal, the remissions of interest payments and the grants to certain provincial governments as determined by Sir Otto Niemeyer. The total cost is Rs. 1,85 lakhs.

This may be said to be the first budget under the new constitution although there are still in store some additional expenses with the coming in of the Federation at the Centre. As such it does not give the new arrangements a very promising start. We still have almost the full complement of the emergency depression taxes with us. Customs duties stand at a high level with no lessening of the emergency surcharges. The new "hastily improvised" system of excises shows no sign of any abatement. It is only in the income-tax that some relief has so far been given by way of a halving of the surcharges and the abolition of the newly created Rs. 1000-2000 class. The world as a whole is supposed to be fairly on the way to recovery. Agricultural countries like Australia and Argentine are in the midst of prosperity and in England economists are already discussing measures by which the recovery may be prevented from growing into a run-away boom. With the full burden of enhanced taxation and while conditions of fair recovery obtain in most countries of the world the Indian Finance Member still finds himself with a deficit budget, the moment a part of a source of revenue is knocked off or a few comparatively slight subventions have to be made. How then can we expect those conditions to be fulfilled on which alone a smooth working of the new constitution is based? According to the Niemeyer programme, after five years a considerable part of the Income Tax yield

will be given over to the provinces. What chances are there that central finances will be in a position to afford this when the time comes? No doubt this year's railway results make better showing than they have done for many years past. Agricultural prices are on the increase and trade in agricultural produce is looking up. If a recovery did really set in, central finances would respond quickly. Income-tax, customs and railways would all profit and would soon place Imperial finances in the sound position in which they ought certainly to be. But the indications in India are yet too uncertain for strong recovery to be definitely predicted. While, since 1932 recovery in many countries of the world has pursued an even tenor it has been slow and halting in India. Our balance of merchandise exports is only now approaching its normal level. (It is characteristic of Sir James Grigg that he should interpret this trend back towards normality as a proof of the overvaluation of the rupee.) It will require a persistence of favourable conditions for some years to come for central finances to be in the position in which they were, say in 1928. Even if, however, such trade recovery comes about the fundamental maladjustment of Indian federal finance arrangements will persist. Defence expenditure which has with great difficulty been kept down during this period of depression will begin to mount up rapidly the moment financial conditions improve and the provinces could not hope for anything more than their promised share of the income-tax. Their own taxes, land-revenue and the excise, will not expand even with better times and if motor transport is severely restricted to benefit the railways the only potentially expanding source left to Provincial Governments will have been effectively checked. Thus even if things turn out more hopefully than we have any grounds at present to believe the provincial Governments who are for development purposes the really important units will continue under the present dispensation to face a chronic condition of financial stringency.

The belief that the present Finance Member is an inveterate doctrinaire of the English classical school is strengthened by his remarks on two questions during the course of the budget speech. Sir J. Grigg has evidently been much impressed by some accounts of the working of the provincial Rural Indebtedness Acts. (It may be paranthetically noted that large provinces like Bombay have no legislation of this type at all!) He mentions them as affecting revenue receipts in two separate ways—reducing the income-tax yield from the rural money-lender class and reducing customs by affecting the purchasing power of the peasantry. In both connections, especially the latter, one can feel the disapproving judgement of the laissez faire theorist. The Indian income-tax statistics are not available in a classification detailed enough for us to judge the extent of the role which the rural money-lender plays in the yield of Indian income-tax. We are also not in a position to say whether the yield of the income-tax from this class has fallen sharply this year or has been gradually falling since an earlier point of the depression period. We can, however, believe it possible that

Rural Indebtedness Acts should affect the income of this class. But it is very difficult to see how such legislation can affect the purchasing power of the peasantry. Sir J. Grigg says that it has done so by restricting agricultural credit. But surely the purchasing power of the peasantry depends primarily on prices of agricultural produce and these have little to do with the abundance or otherwise of agricultural credit.

Again the Finance Member sees in the increased importation of silver a revival of the old hoarding tendency and wags an admonitory finger at it. When will it be that India will be certain of having Finance Members who have a proper understanding of at least such elementary phenomena? That silver enters into domestic use in India to a very much greater extent than in the European countries is perhaps unknown to Sir J. Grigg. But it is also not only a traditional but a convenient way of embodying your small savings. Silver purchases are again very sensitive to price changes. With some recovery and some price fall silver imports naturally mounted up this year. Unless ways of investing one's savings are made much more familiar and are available much more conveniently than is the case today in India it is no use merely condemning silver purchases from theoretic heights.

It is very likely this idea about their hoarding character that drew the attention of the Finance Member specially to silver imports and made him clap on them an additional duty. We believe this choice of silver to be unfortunate. Silver purchases have, as we have pointed out above, a special character. As a metal in which a large part of the holdings of the poorer classes are held it has claims to be treated differently from other commodities. The Finance Member may disapprove but he should at least give due importance to the traditional modes of behaviour of the people whose finances he manages. Silver duties ought, in our opinion, not to be lightly changed. Government may not be able to control the other fluctuations in the price of this metal. But it should at least not introduce an uncertain fluctuating factor on its own account. The choice of silver is also unfortunate as the price of silver being dependent today almost entirely on the policy of the U. S. A. treasury, the course of trade in silver is much more uncertain than that in ordinary consumption commodities.

The other proposal for raising the additional revenue we consider even more ill-judged than the increase in silver duty. It consists in increasing further the excise duty on sugar. This is a most unfair increase in the already heavy burden carried by the Indian consumer of sugar. It is also an unfair handicap on the smaller and growing units in the Indian sugar industry. From some of his remarks it would seem as if the Finance Member increased the duty with a deliberate intent to keep down the numbers of sugar companies or even to diminish them. But the rationalisation of industry is no business of the Finance Member. At least it is not a business to be achieved through budget proposals.

If the Finance Member feels that the Indian sugar industry is not growing up properly he can persuade the Government of India to take suitable measures in that behalf. The present action of the Finance Member is all the more unjustifiable as the Tariff Board is shortly to enquire into conditions obtaining in the sugar industry and report fully thereon.

All depression finance has in India been managed at the expense of the poor consumer. Indirect taxation lies always more heavily on the poor than on the rich. The two new proposals are specially regressive in

their effects. Silver is the precious metal of the poor and sugar a luxury of the poor. The rich direct taxpayer in the meanwhile escapes lightly. Even Sir O. Niemeyer specially drew attention to the fact that "the general scheme of Indian taxation operates to relieve the wealthier commercial classes to an extent which is unusual in taxation schemes" and that the rates of our income tax and super tax are "by no means excessive". Yet when the Finance Member wants to raise an extra crore and half the burden is laid on the consumers of sugar and the hoarders of silver!

OFFICE ACCEPTANCE ?

Next to this demand for the Constituent Assembly our most important task will be to oppose the Federal structure of the Act. Utterly bad as the Act is, there is nothing so bad in it as this Federation and so we must exert ourselves to break this and thus end the Act as a whole. To live not only under British imperialist exploitation but also under feudal control, is something that we are not going to tolerate, whatever the consequences. Thus our opposition to the federal part of the Constitution is not merely a theoretical one, but a vital matter which affects our freedom struggle and our future destiny. We have got to make it a central pivot of our struggle against the Act. We have got to break this federation. We are not against the conception of a federation. But the present federation that is being thrust upon us is a federation in bondage and under the control, politically and socially, of the most backward elements in the country. The present Indian States took shape early in the nineteenth century in the unsettled conditions of early British rule. The treaties with their autocratic rulers, which are held up to now so often as sacred documents which may not be touched, date from that period... It is an interesting and instructive result of the long period of British rule that when, as we are told, it is trying to fade off, it should gather to itself all the reactionary and obscurantist groups in India, and endeavour to hand partial control to the feudal elements.

THUS spoke Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in his presidential address to the Faizpur Congress last December. He was so impressed by the immediate necessity of breaking the federation that he sacrificed his previous passion for the early establishment of a socialist state in India and declared that what they were fighting for was not socialism but nationalism. The sweeping victory of the Congress at the provincial polls has now presented him and the Congress with an opportunity to give effect to whatever scheme he might have planned for the breaking of the federation. For there can be no doubt that with the breaking of the provincial governments, the inauguration of the federation can be made an impossibility. And the Congress has, to an unexpected extent, the strength of numbers to carry out their wrecking plans.

But have they any plans, wrecking or otherwise? If the babble of counsels which are heard from different leaders of the Congress is any measure of the readiness of the Congress for a concerted drive towards making the constitution impossible, the prospects of such a plan emerging in the near future seem remote. The decision on the issue which faces the Congress today, viz., the acceptance or rejection

of offices wherever the Congress has secured majorities, shall determine, to a very great extent, whether or not the resistance to the 1935 Act is strengthened or weakened in the country. Unfortunately, on this particular issue the Congress is hopelessly divided and we are not surprised that the Working Committee has again burked the issue at Wardha.

Elder Congressmen like Mr. Patel and Mr. Rajagopalachari have wisely kept their counsel on the office issue and in this respect their silence is more expressive than the socialist volubility. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and his followers have made no secret of their attitude on the office acceptance question. They are opposed to it. They would not touch offices under the present constitution with a barge-pole. Acharya Narendra Deo, President of the U. P. Provincial Congress Committee, for instance, has already issued a statement defining his attitude towards the question and it can be taken to represent the views of a majority of the left wing of the Congress, including Pandit Jawaharlal. The statement says:—

The temptation to do something for the nation and to demonstrate the capacity of the people for self-government is indeed very great on such occasions but we must successfully resist the temptation if we want to face big issues and accomplish great things... The parliamentary activities which the Congress will favour will be of a revolutionary nature. The Congress party will adopt means and measures to end the sham constitution which has been imposed upon us against our will and which constitutes an impediment to the further progress of the nation. But the parliamentary action has to be supplemented by extra-parliamentary work for developing mass action. The masses have to be led into the political struggle and this can be done by organising and developing the agrarian movement and the workers' struggle. These are the immediate tasks which we have to perform. I appeal to all Congressmen in these provinces to lend all their energies to the accomplishment of these tasks. As a preliminary step we must make ourselves an efficient instrument and extend and perfect the Congress organisation. A revolutionary crisis is slowly maturing. This process has to be accelerated by suitable devices. Exposures of the administration are of great help in quickening the political consciousness of the people and in developing the crisis. This task becomes easy when the people's party in the legislatures forms the Opposition. In acceptance of offices there is a real danger of this process being retarded. We should in no case forget that the main task of our parliamentarians is to expose the hollowness of the constitution and to end it. We have to prepare ourselves for revolutionary action in a revolutionary situation when-

ever it may arise. The world forces are slowly gathering and making for a new dispensation. We in India have only to come in line by increasing our pace and thus hastening that great event.

Pandit Jawaharlal also has not kept his views on the matter to himself. In a meeting of the Allahabad Congressmen he pressed on their consideration his uncompromising opposition to the formation of ministries by the Congressmen. The decision of the question is, of course, left to the A. I. C. C.

The President of the Congress knows that although he reigns, he does not rule. In fact, Congress leaders who do not appreciate his revolutionary ideology have not hesitated to remind him of it and one of the Madras leaders, Mr. T. Prakasam, President of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee, rebukes the President in his turn, for giving out his views on the question earlier.

Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru as President of the Congress would have done better (says Mr. Prakasam) if he had spared himself until the A.I.C.C. met to consider the matter. During the last sixteen years we have passed through so many critical stages and failed to take the correct decision on more than one occasion. This is yet another crisis which we have reached but I see no danger at present of the leadership failing us at the psychological moment. Whatever might be the personal opinion of Panditji on this question of office acceptance he has earned the reputation of being a sound and strong leader. So long he has managed, as President of the Congress during two successive terms of office, to lay down the rule that the decision of the majority should be accepted and obeyed by the minorities. None of us will quarrel with him for holding his own views on the question of office acceptance.

I am one of those who differ from him and who will be fighting him and his school of thought in the next A.I.C.C. meetings when the nation's verdict will be recorded and whatever it be, the minority is bound to obey and give effect to it. None can claim exemption—not even Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru.

To this bewildering medley of views Mr. M. N. Roy, who is believed to be the "new portent" in the Congress, has added his own voice.

Our splendid victory at the polls is not the only result of the election campaign, (says Mr. Roy). Indeed it is a minor result. The major result is the mobilisation of the masses under the banner of the Congress. During the election campaign, our appeal was not addressed only to voters, who constitute but a minute fraction of the people. We directed our appeal to the oppressed and exploited masses with the object of making them conscious of their political bondage and social slavery. There has been a mighty response to that call. That is the major result of our election campaign. The plan of our future activity should be framed in the revealing light of that result. A powerful foundation has been laid. Are we prepared to build on that foundation? That is the question of the moment.

The fact that Congressmen will constitute a majority in a number of provincial legislatures, does not compel them to shoulder the responsibility of administration. It is frivolous to seize upon that fact as the conclusive argument in favour of accepting office. That fact simply places us in a position to demonstrate that the new Constitution does not transfer any power to the people. That is the only inducement for our accepting office. Should Congress decide to accept office, the purpose of that policy must be to utilise our strategic position for organising the struggle for the capture of power. For implementing the election manifesto, Congressmen in office will be obliged to press for legislation for relieving the masses of the intolerable burden of taxes, rent, interest. They must sponsor or

support social legislation to give some relief to the wage-earners. The interests of Imperialism do not permit such reforms, urgently required for the welfare of the people.

If the Congress majority favours acceptance of office, says Mr. Roy, let them accept it. But let the Congress organisation keep a tight hold on them. "The ministers should be instructed," he says, "to insist upon legislation necessary for implementing the Congress manifesto. There should be no shilly-shallying on that score." This parliamentary activity is to be supplemented and supported by extra-Parliamentary movements in the country.

In short, masses mobilised during the election campaign should be drawn into an organised movement to be developed step by step under the banner of the Congress, with a clear plan of action for the realisation of complete independence.

II

Why are certain Congressmen opposed to the acceptance of office? Do they consider that to accept office is to "co-operate" with the Hoare constitution? Or are they afraid that the acceptance of office would bring them into closer contact with the representatives of the British Government whose tempting parlours are always open to unwary "flies"? In one of his frank moods, a noted Congress leader from Madras once confessed that it is more for fear of the latter than for the niceties of constitutional hair-splitting that many of the Congress leaders are afraid to talk of taking offices. They are nervous of the demoralising effect of power on many of them. They are not sure of their men.

The lure of office has certainly outweighed considerations of loyalty and conscience among many Congressmen before, notably in the C. P. and Berar which broke the back of Congress parliamentary programme under Swarajist auspices. Since then Congress has travelled far and the majorities it commands today are beyond those dreamt of by the leaders of the Swarajya Party. The wide net cast by the Congress in the election flood has landed in its compound strange fish of doubtful odour and utility. The problem before the Congress High Command, which is in itself divided on vital issues of detail, is how to "stomach" them without injuring the resistance of the organisation and its morale. Thus from expediency as well as from considerations of principles the question of office acceptance presents difficulties to the Congressmen.

Pandit Jawaharlal's opposition is, however, based on stronger reasons which are stated in his presidential address to the Lucknow Congress in unequivocal language.

How has this question arisen? he asked. If we express our hostility to the Act and reject the entire scheme, does it not follow logically that we should have nothing to do with the working of it and should prevent its functioning, in so far as we can? To accept office and ministry, under the conditions of the Act, is to negative our rejection of it and to stand self-condemned. National honour and self-respect cannot accept this position, for it would inevitably mean our cooperation in some measure with the repressive apparatus of imperialism, and we would become partners in this repression and in the exploitation of our people. Of course we would try to champion the rights of the people and would protest

against repression, but as ministers under the Act, we could do very little to give relief, and we would have to share responsibility for the administration with the apparatus of imperialism, for the deficit budgets, for the suppression of labour and the peasantry. It is always dangerous to assume responsibility without power, even in democratic countries; it will be far worse with this undemocratic constitution, hedged in with safeguards and reserved powers and mortgaged funds, where we have to follow the rules and regulations of our opponents' making. Imperialism sometimes talks of co-operation but the kind of co-operation it wants is usually known as surrender, and the ministers who accept office will have to do so at the price of surrender of much that they might have stood for in public. That is a humiliating position which self-respect itself should prevent one from accepting. For our great national organisation to be party to it is to give up the very basis and background of our existence.

Self-respect apart, common sense tells us that we can lose much and gain little by acceptance of office in terms of the Act. We cannot get much out of it, or else our criticism of the Act itself is wrong, and we know that it is not so. The big things for which we stand will fade into the background and petty issues will absorb our attention, and we shall lose ourselves in compromises and communal tangles, and disillusion with us will spread over the land. If we have a majority, and only then can the question of acceptance of office arise, we shall be in a position to dominate the situation and to prevent reactionaries and imperialists from profiting by it. Office will not add to our real strength, it will only weaken us by making us responsible for many things that we utterly dislike.

III.

While we realise the soundness of the doctrinaire view point in the above, we have to remember that besides uncompromising opposition there are other ways of damning the Hoare constitution out of book. One of them is sabotage and the majority which Pandit Jawaharlal wanted is there for him to use in six provinces. Now the acceptance of office cannot be regarded as unadulterated acquiescence in the constitution. While the mass organisations in the country are storming the castle from outside, the Congress ministers can weaken the resistance of the defenders from inside. That is what Mr. Roy seems to drive at, although, for obvious reasons, he hesitates to commit himself.

True, there is the fear that the attention of the parliamentary wing of the Congress, which commands many stalwart fighters, may be diverted to everyday details of administration and certain "nation-building" (tempting word!) activities to the detriment of the main objective, viz., the destruction of the Hoare constitution. But that is a danger which has to be faced sooner or later, and the sooner the better. To allow the majorities of the Congress party in the provincial assemblies to stagnate and perhaps atrophy in powerless opposition would demoralise them the quicker and more surely. On the other hand, if the Congress accepted office it will get an opportunity to pick out the weak links in its organisation. The Congress has, we expect, enough of an organisation now to control and guide its parliamentary wing.

The task is by no means easy. Ireland is often held up as a model for the kind of fight the Congress might carry on within the legislatures, but the model is misleading. Ireland did not have nearly a dozen

legislatures, nor did it have an equal number of Governors endowed with powers more completely autocratic than the Sovereign himself. Had the Congress or any anti-constitution party to fight in a single legislature, the Hoare constitution would have been dead the moment the results of the election were known. The Congress has to chalk out a programme for provinces in different circumstances and it must chalk out a uniform programme. It cannot accept office in Madras and reject it in the U. P. nor can it reduce land revenue in Orissa and neglect the question in Bombay. That is the surest way to the loss of prestige and, what is worse, of self-respect. The Congress Working Committee which met at Wardha during the last week end has decided to make its recommendations to the A.I.C.C. when it meets next in about a fortnight to consider the office acceptance question. But the general trend of opinion in the Congress organisation indicates a definite bias towards acceptance of offices. It is this fact, we believe, which has induced the Working Committee once again to emphasise its agrarian programme. It is a significant emphasis, and one which will invite conflict with the Governors speedily. If the conglomeration of interests which forms the Congress parties in the provincial Assemblies could be persuaded to make these radical demands the immediate spearhead of their parliamentary programme, the democratic pretensions of the Hoare Constitution would be exposed within a short time. It would certainly mean inviting conflict with the Governors rather than awaiting it, which is all the difference between wrecking and working the constitution.

Our Parliamentary Letter.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

New Delhi, February 28.

NEW QUESTION RULES.

THE Assembly met on Tuesday in animated surroundings. Not only did the Opposition benches put on a cheery appearance, but the visitor's galleries too looked lively and full. With the exception of Mr. Jinnah and Sir H. P. Mody, all the other prominent M. L. A. s were found in their seats. The day began with the adjournment motion of the Congress party whip who wanted to censure the Government on the new rules regarding the asking of questions. Mr. Satyamurti, with his usual zeal and officiousness delivered a lecture to the President on creating precedents. But the Chair was in no mood to hear his homily. It came down heavily on him and sternly warned him to mind his business. The adjournment motion was ruled out of order.

RAILWAY POLICY.

The cut motions on Railway demands were then taken into consideration. Mr. A. C. Dutta moved a cut of Rs. 100 in the demand under Railway Board to discuss the general policy of the Railway administration. He condemned the policy of

the Railways which arranged their freight rates in such a way that foreign industries profited at the expense of the Indian industries. After criticising "the reckless extravagance" of the Railway administration, he urged that the pay of all classes of Railway servants should be readjusted to the prevailing price-level of the country. Mr. Dutta himself is not a good speaker, but he takes great pains in collecting his materials. But it must be said that in this case, he contented himself with generalisations alone. He complained, for instance, that the Railways did not encourage Indian industries. But the Railway Member in his reply to the House pointed out that the Railways were quoting special rates for manure, sugarcane, wheat, iron, coal and steel and no doubt these are some of the Indian industries. It is not as if the Railway administration is the paragon of perfection. But our representatives sometimes make their own case weak so that it becomes easy for the Government to demolish their arguments. Mr. Sri Prakasa spoke on Mr. Dutta's motion and treated the House to some of his refreshing humour. One should not expect much substance in Mr. Sri Prakasa's remarks, but they are always refreshing and lively to a degree and hit the opponent without wounding his feelings. Prof. Ranga and Mr. Ramnarayan Singh spoke on the motion and detailed the grievances of the 3rd class passengers. The Railway Member gave an elaborate reply and dwelt on the various issues raised by the members. His persuasive eloquence won the day and Mr. Dutta's cut motion was rejected without division.

EUROPEAN OPPOSITION TO "FRANTIC FINANCE."

The next cut motion, however, was of a weightier character. It was moved by the leader of the European Group. He criticised the policy of the Railway authorities in increasing expenditure when the finances were sound and reducing expenditure heavily when the finances were weak, causing thereby a dislocation of both industry and trade. He suggested to the Railways to build up reserves in good times, so that they may follow an even policy all through. Many speakers supported Sir Leslie Hudson and criticised the "frantic finance" followed by the Railways. The European Group did not want to press their motion to a division. But the Congress Party was ever anxious to score a victory and defeated the Government by asking for a division.

WEDGWOOD COMMITTEE

Wednesday was the day of the Congress party cut motions. Mr. Satyanarayan Sinha moved a cut motion under the Railway Board to discuss the exclusion of the Indians from the Wedgwood Committee. Mr. Sinha had prepared his speech neatly and well, but his manuscript eloquence made no impression. The two best speeches of the day were delivered in that connection when Messrs. Desai and Pant took part in the discussion. By his sweet delivery and spotless diction, Mr. Desai occupies in the Assembly the pride of place. But his speeches are always of an introductory character. They supply the emotional background required for an appeal.

But very few members of the Assembly can be led away by emotion alone and herein he is helped by the Deputy Leader of his party. Mr. Pant's speech shows mastery of logical persuasion. The discussions on the Wedgwood Committee made two points clear. The Government was frankly wrong in appointing more than one expert and even then in not including a single Indian in the personnel of the Committee. The Public Accounts Committee had asked for an acknowledged expert. But the representatives of the Congress Party in the Accounts Committee were equally guilty in the matter. They had agreed in the Committee to the appointment of a foreigner and could have no reason for complaint had the Government appointed a single foreign expert. It is a pity that the public has not taken the matter seriously. If the Government had appointed a single foreign expert, then the Congress Party could not have objected to it, because its own representatives had sold the interests of the country by agreeing to the persuasive pleadings of the Government members.

The next cut motion of the Congress Party was moved by Mr. Saxena to discuss the Government's failure to take over the management of the B. N. W., R. K. R. and the M. & S. M. Railways. He said that in not purchasing these lines the Government had given another instance of its flagrant disregard of public opinion and of the decision of the Assembly taken last year. The cut was opposed by Sir A. H. Ghaznavi who preferred company management to management by the State. But the House refused to be carried away by his arguments and Mr. Saxena's cut motion was carried by a majority.

REPEATED GOVERNMENT DEFEATS.

On Thursday, three more cut motions were carried in the Assembly. The first of these motions related to the manufacture of locomotives in India. This was a motion on which all the non-official Indians combined together, including Sir Henry Gidney, the Anglo-Indian leader. The Railway Member's defence was that it would not be paying. But every key industry is not paying in the beginning. Key industries should be developed carefully by every country, it does not matter whether they be paying in the beginning or not. Supposing England gets entangled in a European conflagration, can India look up to England for getting her locomotives in time? If not, will not her trade and industries be disorganised altogether?

The next cut motion referred to the Indianisation of the services. The plea for Indianisation of the services in India sounds rather absurd to an unfamiliar man. But such is the tragedy of circumstances in India, that the Indians have to cry themselves hoarse for the Indianisation of their services! The Railway Member said in his reply, that very small economies would accrue if the recruitment of the Europeans be stopped altogether. But may we ask why European officers be recruited at all? We do not bother about the extent of the economies to be effected. We want our departments to be run by our own men. As regards the grievances of the 3rd class passengers, it is no use harping on the matter any more. Year in and year

out, the Assembly members have been spending their breath over the miseries of the 3rd class passengers. But the grievances are as acute as ever. The Railway Member himself admitted in his speech that the villagers regarded Railway journey as a kind of tribulation. Still, though no notable attempts have been made to redress their grievances, the Railway Board has

offered to the 1st class passengers air-conditioned coaches !

The heavy list of the cut motions was already impressive, but Friday saw the passing of two more cut motions. The defeat of the Government was complete in the Assembly. But the Government is not sensitive about these defeats.

CONGRESS PROGRAMME IN LEGISLATURES. WORKING COMMITTEE'S STATEMENT.

The Working Committee of the Congress which met at Wardha last week has issued a statement outlining the Congress programme in the Legislatures. The statement says :

THE Congress has entered the legislatures not to co-operate with the new constitution or the Government, but to combat the Act and the policy underlying it, as this Act and the policy are intended to tighten the hold of British Imperialism on India and to continue the exploitation of the Indian people. The Congress adheres to its general and basic policy of non-co-operation with the apparatus of British Imperialism, except in so far as circumstances may require variation.

CONGRESS OBJECTIVE.

The objective of the Congress is *purna swaraj*, or Complete Independence, and to that end all its activities are directed. The Congress stands for a genuine democratic state in India, where political power has been transferred to the people as a whole, and Government is under their effective control. Such a state can only be created by the Indian people themselves and the Congress has, therefore, insisted on a constituent assembly, elected by adult franchise, to determine the constitution of the country. The constituent assembly can only come into existence when the Indian people have developed sufficient power and sanctions to shape their destiny without external interference.

TO RESIST FEDERATION.

The immediate objective of the Congress in the legislatures is to fight the new constitution, to resist the introduction and the working of the federal part of the Act, and to lay stress on the nation's demand for a constituent assembly. The Congress members of the legislatures have been directed by the Faizpur Congress to take the earliest opportunity to put forward in the new Assemblies this demand for a constituent assembly and to support it by mass agitation outside. The Congress members of the legislatures must remember the Congress policy of not assisting or co-operating with any function or activity calculated to enhance the power or prestige of British Imperialism in India. Ceremonial, official or social functions of this kind must, therefore, be avoided and no Congress member should take part in them. In doubtful cases, individual members should not take any action themselves, but should refer to the Congress Party in the Assembly and should abide by its decision.

NO ACCEPTANCE OF TITLE.

No Congress members of the legislatures may accept a title given by the British Government.

RIGID PARTY DISCIPLINE.

The Congress Party in each of the Provincial Assemblies must act as a disciplined body, the leaders of which will represent the Party in any conversations with the Government and other groups, and individual members shall have no official contacts

with the Government, other than those resulting from their duties as members and such as may be expressly authorised by the Party.

The members will be expected to be in their places in the Assemblies during the session and when the Party is attending there should be no absence except when leave is taken and the cause shown.

All Congress members of the legislatures shall be dressed in *khadi*.

Congress parties in the Provincial Assemblies must not enter into any alliances with other groups in the Assemblies without the previous permission of the Working Committee.

Any member of the provincial legislatures not elected on behalf of the Congress, but willing to take the Congress pledge and abide by the Congress principles and discipline may be taken into the Congress Party in the legislature, if the Party considers his admission desirable. But no person against whom disciplinary action has been taken by the Congress may be accepted without the permission of the Working Committee.

CONGRESS PROGRAMME.

Congress members should press for the carrying out of the Congress programme as enunciated in the election manifesto and the Congress agrarian resolution. In particular, they should work for:

- (1) A substantial reduction in rent and revenue ;
- (2) Assessment of income-tax on a progressive scale on agricultural income, subject to a prescribed minimum ;
- (3) Fixity of tenure ;
- (4) Relief from the burden of rural debt and arrears of rent and revenue ;
- (5) Repeal of all the "repressive" laws ;
- (6) Release of political prisoners, internees and detenus ;
- (7) Restoration of lands and property confiscated or sold by Government during the civil disobedience movements ;
- (8) Eight-hour day for industrial workers without reduction of pay, and a living wage ;
- (9) Prohibition of intoxicating liquor or drugs ;
- (10) Unemployment relief ; and
- (11) Reduction of high salaries, allowances and the administrative cost of Government.

" DEADLOCKS INEVITABLE "

Under the existing Act, with all its safeguards and special powers in the hands of the Viceroy or the Governor and its protection of the Services, deadlocks are inevitable. They should not be avoided when they occur while pursuing the Congress policy. Congress members in the Provincial Assemblies should further give expression to certain important demands

of all-India application, which may not be given effect to in Provincial Assemblies, such as a substantial reduction in military as well as higher Civil Services expenditure, complete national control over trade, tariffs and currency, repeal of all-India repressive legislation, freedom of speech of the press and of association, and opposition to war preparations, credits and loans.

WORK OUTSIDE.

Congress members in the Assemblies must always endeavour to mobilise public opinion in their constituencies for the particular demands they are putting forward in the legislatures. The work in the legislatures should be co-ordinated with activity outside and mass movements built up in support of those demands and the Congress in general.

OUR HILL TRIBES.

PLEA FOR BETTER TREATMENT.

(Concluded from our issue of February 11, 1937.)

THE CENTRAL PROVINCES.

The primitive or aboriginal tribes in this province number about 41 lakhs. Of these, the most numerous and important are the Gonds who number about 23 lakhs, but who, in the words of the C. P. Census Commissioner of 1931, "as yet have a negligible voice and negligible influence in the administration of the province."

The Gonds are an ancient people. Their country was known in olden times as Gondwana or the forests of the Gonds. Even the Muslim invaders of the South seemed to have avoided the Gonds because of the dangers of the impenetrable forests, inaccessible mountains and fear of a savage people. The Dandaka forest of the Ramayana where Rama is reported to have met the sage Sulikshna formed part of Gondwana. It is enough to say that Gondwana has been the seat of many empires and imperial wars. Emperor Ashoka held sway over this land, the Magadhas claimed dominion over it, the Chandel Rajput Princes of Mahoba included it in their territories. Then the Mohammadans of Delhi conquered the land and ruled till the beginning of the fifteenth century when their dynasty yielded place to the Raj Gonds. Thus the history of Gondwana, even in its barest outline, has been a chequered one.

The following pen picture of the Gonds by Messrs. Verrier Elwin and Hivale, who have been living amidst them trying to understand their culture and civilization and serve them with schools and medicines will give us an idea about the Gond, his life and environment.

The Gonds live in little villages, in tiny thatched huts of mud plastered bamboo, gaining a precarious living by scratching the soil by primitive implements, or by working for a starvation wage on the roads or in the forest. Their staple food is a thin gruel made from the poorest kind of rice, supplemented by roots and fruits from the jungle, and occasionally a little meat. In physique, they are short, dark, wiry, with great powers of endurance, sometimes strikingly handsome. Their attitude to life is characterised by a magnificent and regal leisureliness. Shy, wayward, idle, with truant hearts and slow moving minds, but brave, loyal and humorous, patient, affectionate, they triumph over their poverty with a heroic merriness of spirit.

Speaking of Gond boys and girls, they say, "A Gond girl walks through the forest like a queen, a tigress queen, the movement of her body is a perfect rhythm. There are boys with the carriage of princes. They have blood."

Education has not advanced among them very far. There were only 17 literates for every 1,000 males and 1 for every 1,000 females.

Money-lenders, greedy land grabbers and exploiters, as elsewhere, have reduced these unsophisticated people who once ruled the land to a landless class. The impact of what is called civilization has had a very disastrous effect on them. The

aboriginal in some parts of the Central Provinces as, for instance, in Satgarh has been displaced by the Hindu Malguzars. They have lost village headships. Having lost the headships, the ex-headmen left the villages, and the village tenantry which consisted entirely of aboriginals also left the village with their ex-headmen. This substitution of foreigners for the headship of the village, led to the Kol rebellion of 1820 and 1831.

Secondly, this unjust and unfair exploitation by foreigners of the Gonds forced the Government to pass a Land Alienation Act to protect aboriginals in certain districts of the C. P. As a Malguzar, or the proprietor of the village, the Gond has some good points. No doubt, he is said to be improvident and given to drink. But these demerits outweigh his other good qualities. He is reported to be very friendly with his tenants and treats them well and with consideration. Compare the Bania, the usurious money-lender, and the Malguzar who wants his return from the land by rack-renting his tenants, whether the land yields any crops or not, whether it rains or not.

The other disabilities of these aboriginals arising from their contact with aliens are best described by the officials themselves. For instance, the Deputy Commissioner of Nagpur says:

The land revenue policy of Government adopted in the sixties was ill-considered as far as Gonds are concerned. Their tribal system is naturally one of a village headman and ryotwari tenure, the village lands being regarded as the property of the community rather than of individuals. A limited number of Gonds were given proprietary rights in the sixties but ever since their numbers have steadily fallen owing to their ignorance of the civil laws and the ease with which they have become a prey to money-lenders. . . . In nearly every village in the Deolapar tract, the Gonds are dissatisfied with their Hindu or Muslim malaguzars, and many of the Gonds are abandoning their tenancy land rather than put up with alien landlords. Several of them go to the forest villages where they are fairly happy but most are degenerating into landless labourers.

Thus, the innocent unsophisticated Gonds have been victimised and neglected. Their material and moral welfare has not engaged the special attention of the Government. Till recently, no non-official agencies, with a real desire and earnestness to understand and help them came forward till Mr. Elwin and his colleague, Mr. Hivale, settled among the Gonds nearly four years ago. Since then they have been, notwithstanding the heavy odds and an inhospitable, unhealthy climate, carrying on their work in a spirit of deep reverence, love and affection for the Gond. They have, in one word, put the Gond before themselves, in their work. Facilities for imparting the three R's, medical aid, etc., are their side activities. The chief object of these workers is not to fit in the Gond with the outside culture which they represent, but to see how far the best of the outside culture may be made to fit in with that of the Gonds.

without in any sense depriving the Gond culture of its distinctive feature and personality.

MADRAS.

The Presidency of Madras including Travancore contains about 13 lakhs of aboriginals and primitives. The largest number of these are found in the Agency tracts in the North, and in the districts of Ganjam and Vizagapatam. The rest are distributed in small numbers over almost every district in the Presidency.

The Chenchus are found in the districts of Kur-nool, Guntur and Kristna districts and in the southern parts of the Nizam's Dominions adjoining these districts. As a result of the restrictions imposed on these people by the Forest Department, the Chenchus have suffered a lot. The Government launched against them Police operations on a large scale and have forced the Chenchus into submission. The Government have also started ameliorative work for them.

The Chenchus, though aboriginals, are hardly distinguishable as such. They have become part of the Hindu population, and they too treat the depressed classes, like the Malas, as untouchables. According to the 1931 census, their population is 8,078.

The Konds and Saors are chiefly found in the districts of Ganjam and Vizagapatam and the Agency tracts. The Konds are a cheerful lot. They are truthful, frank and humorous. But compared to Saors, they are not very industrious. They like their forest life and are averse to any settled occupation like agriculture. The Madras Census Commissioner says: "Some of the effects of the Konds' attitude towards settled agriculture are far from welcome to the administrator. Personally attractive and likeable, the Kond as an administrative circumstance is a frequent anxiety." This is in no small measure due to the restrictions imposed on them by the Forest Department. Their population is about $3\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs.

The Saors number over two lakhs according to the 1931 Census. They emigrate in large numbers, just as the Konds emigrate to Assam to work in the tea gardens there. Their communal organisation was of a democratic nature. Any matter of importance was freely discussed at their open-air meetings. It appears women also participated in these discussions. The communal offices seem to have been hereditary and not elective in an otherwise democratic community.

The other smaller communities like Paliyans of the Periyar Lake region in Madura District, the Sholagars in Coimbatore District, the Todars in Nilgiris, the Malayalis in Salem and several others need not engage our attention here since what is true of the major part of the community is equally true of the smaller ones.

A careful study of the present condition of the hill tribes reveals the painful fact that at every stage in their life they have not been treated fairly by the Government and the people of the land. A brief reference has already been made in the course of this article to the various causes which ultimately resulted in depriving the aboriginals of their original homeland, freedom, liberty and independence. All these evils have been the result of a desire on the part of the Government and the so-called missionaries and humanitarians and foreigners to force on these people a new order of things without any understanding of the psychology, culture and life of the aboriginals concerned.

POSITION UNDER NEW REFORMS.

Under the new reforms, their position, we fear, has been made worse. The backward tracts inhabited by the aboriginals have been excluded from the jurisdiction of legislatures and Ministers on the plea that

the aboriginals will not obtain enough representation in the Provincial Councils to ventilate their grievances and feelings, that the Ministers with their party allegiance and vested interests would not be able to undertake any special measures to promote their well-being and prevent their exploitation by traders, money-lenders and others and, therefore, it is necessary, it was said, to exclude areas partially or completely from the jurisdiction of the Ministers in the Provinces. The totally excluded areas will be under the protecting wings of the Governor and the partially excluded areas will be administered by the Ministers who will be controlled by the Governor. It is not possible to discuss the full implications of this exclusion in this article. We have a suspicion lurking in our mind that this decision was taken on the advice of many foreign anthropologists and ethnologists to preserve these aboriginals in glass cases, untouched by outside civilising influences for their own edification when they visit India. It is feared that with the backward areas thus excluded from the general public life of the country, no opportunity will be given to the aboriginals to take part in the public life of the province and gradually get themselves absorbed in the general mass of population. Frankly, we are no believers in the exclusion. If only the Government had any solicitude for their welfare, they could have done a great deal when the Governors enjoyed full powers in the past. This sudden outburst of feeling for the welfare of the aboriginals is, therefore, understandable. It is only necessary to refer to the allocation of seats in the legislatures for the Gonds in the C. P. They have been allotted one seat only though their numbers entitled them to 15 seats as they form one-eighth of the population.

Thus the position of our hill tribes, both materially and morally, is a matter for deep humiliation and shame. The location of cantonments in the vicinity of hill tribes, just as in Assam, Nilgiris and elsewhere has led to prostitution and spread of disease and misery among the hill tribes. The forest laws, excise and game laws, and *begar* have deprived them of the freedom and liberty they enjoyed in the forests not many years ago. These have driven them to the plains where they lead a miserable existence. The Government have done precious little to raise them to the level of an average citizen. The general public too are indifferent to this problem affecting about 22 lakhs of people in India. An all-India organisation, like the Harijan Sevak Sangh, with ramifications in every part of the country where the aborigines live, backed up financially by the public and the Government at large, can alone do something for these unfortunate people. The centres of work of the Bhil Seva Mandal in the Panchmahals district in Gujerat, and those at Barama in Assam in Kachari area and Karanjia in C. P. in Gondwana are trying to bring to these people the joy and happiness which they have lost, a message of hope and cheer which they long for. The experience of these two centres has demonstrated to perfection the great need for similar centres in other parts of the country inhabited by the aboriginals. Men with a burning zeal for service, understanding and broad sympathies, prepared to devote all their life energies to the cause of this neglected mass of humanity are needed. Philanthropists, merchant princes and the charitably disposed, whatever may be their social and economic standing, cannot think of a nobler cause for their discriminating charity. The measure of success of any endeavour in this direction depends upon the measure in which men and money are forthcoming for this work.