

INDIAN OPINION

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ONE PENNY

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—EDITORIAL—

The Hon. Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru

The British Guiana East Indian Association on behalf of the East Indian Community extends to our distinguished statesman and visitor The Hon. Hirday Nath Kunzru, Member of the Council of State, Delhi, and President of the Servants of India Society, a hearty welcome. The Indian Community is indeed greatly honoured to have among them so outstanding a son from the Motherland that is so close to their hearts.

This gesture of goodwill and interest for the Indians overseas by the Hon. H.N. Kunzru will pass on to posterity and will never be forgotten by us. His presence among us has added hope and confidence in our future. We feel proud and honoured to extend our greetings to India and all she stands for, through so great a son of her soil.

ADDRESS OF WELCOME

The Hon. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU,

Member of the Council of State of India,

President of the Servants of India Society.

Honourable Sir,

We, the Indians of British Guiana, represented by the British Guiana East Indian Association, the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha, the Islamic Association of British Guiana, the Sa'ir Anjuman E'Islam of British Guiana, the American Aryan League, the Balak Sahaita Mandalee, the British Guiana Dramatic Society, the Hindu Religious Society and the British Guiana East Indian Cricket Club, extend to you a hearty welcome to this Colony.

2. We have followed with great interest and pride your activities in various spheres in our Motherland and overseas regarding the welfare and advancement of our Nationals.

3. We are grateful to you for making it possible to extend your visit to this Colony, to see and obtain first hand knowledge in regard to the manner in which Indians live in these parts.

Indians in these parts are indeed very grateful to the Hon. H.N. Kunzru for the motions he moved and which were accepted by the Indian Legislative Assembly in connection with an Indian Agent General. It is indeed unfortunate that this matter has not found favour with the Secretary of State for the Colonies and its implementation was thus delayed. By this visit of the Hon. Kunzru our hearts today throb closer to our Motherland, and our desire for a closer link with her increased Indian independence. Her culture and ideals are always closest to the heart of all Indians in British Guiana.

We wish the Hon. Pandit Kunzru a pleasant and successful visit to these parts.

4. The estimated population of British Guiana is 370,000 of which Indians represent forty-two percent. Our people are to be found in every walk of life, and we are pleased to be able to state that we are taking an active and keen interest in the Government of the Colony. In connection with the Constitution of the Colony and the popular demand for Universal Adult Suffrage, the Secretary of State for the Colonies has not seen his way to accede to our request, which has caused great disappointment, especially as our Sister Colonies—Trinidad and Jamaica, have been granted this greater democratic right.

5. If time permits we should be pleased if you could see conditions, not only in the City of Georgetown, the town of New Amsterdam and in the Villages, but also on the Sugar Estates.

6. With regard to Education it will be of interest to you to note that at the present time there is not accommodation for about thirty percent. of the children of school-going age in the existing Primary Schools.

7. In regard to illiteracy, while it is not possible to give you accurate figures, it is safe to state that not less than sixty percent. of the adult Indian population are unable to read or write any language.

8. We are fully conscious of the fact that our Motherland has her own problems to solve. Nevertheless, we feel that a sacred duty devolves on her to keep a protecting eye in our direction. Your coming in our midst gives us hope that after you have acquainted yourself with our problems, especially repatriation, you will make such representations as you may deem fit to the Government of India.

(Continued on page 2)

"To each according to his needs. From each according to his ability."

(By JANET JAGAN)

One of the things that the perpetrators of capitalism and imperialism always say about the conditions of the "under dog"—the man who tills the soil, who cuts the cane, who sweeps the streets—is that he doesn't want his standard of living changed and improved. They look at the slums and see how the people live crowded together in small poorly constructed houses; they see the ranges on the sugar estates; they see the inadequate sanitary conditions that exist and the lack of electricity and other conveniences; they see the miserable food the people eat, and the shabby clothes they wear; they see all the sickness and malnutrition, and then they say—"These people don't want their standard of living improved; they aren't even willing to work to better their conditions."

Why is it then that the man who works all day in sun, doing hard manual labour, receives such small wages that he is forced to maintain the very lowest standard of living? Why is it that this man who produces such an important commodity as food, who does all the lowly essential work—why is it that this man does not receive enough to meet his needs? Is it fair that the man who works six hours a day under favorable conditions should receive may be one hundred times what the other receives? We all know that the capabilities of men vary—one man is more suited for one kind of work than another—but do their needs vary? Is it not true that all men have the same needs, those of food, clothing and shelter?

It would certainly not be difficult to prove to these same men that the people do wish a better standard of living. It would be an obvious fact if the government were to complete a housing project and give the slum area people a chance to choose between their hovels and well built modern houses that could be rented at a level that could meet their income. Or introduce better houses and sanitation on the sugar estates, and see how many of those living in broken-down ranges wish to remain there. Or introduce free public primary and secondary education throughout the colony and let them see how many would then remain uneducated. That is, of course, provided that wages are high enough to permit parents to send their children to school instead of being forced to utilize their labour to augment the family income.

These same envoys of capitalism will give you another tale. They will tell you that another reason the people are so poorly off [they always manage to avoid the true reason] is that they lack initiative. You don't utilize the opportunities that are

before you," they say. How soon they forget that it is their whip that has broken the people's spirits. It is their years of subjugation and exploitation that have stamped away the flame of initiative.

What is it, then, that each man desires for himself and his family? He wants a good healthy adequate standard of living. And how shall he attain this end? He can only obtain what he needs by insisting that government exist for the benefit of the majority and not for the interests of the few. This insistence can be of maximum effect only when the workers, and the farmer-peasant groups, organize to the utmost.

ADDRESS OF WELCOME

(Continued from page 1)

9. As you are aware, our people migrated to this Colony under a system of Indenture which, happily, terminated in 1917. One of the terms of the contract was that they should be allowed to return home when it was convenient to them. At the present time a large number of our Nationals are anxiously awaiting the

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opportunity to do so, but owing to various reasons, one being war conditions these people have not been facilitated in their right and desire to return.

10. We look forward to your advice and guidance in the furthering of our social Service work, as is carried on by your Society in India.

11. The question of direct communication by sea and by air to these parts is a matter that deserves the most serious and urgent consideration of the Government of India. For our part, we hope and pray that our Motherland will be industrialised so as to enable her teeming millions to live in comfort and happiness. If it is possible for the majority of our people here to assist in this great humanitarian work and so make Asia a continent comparable with the other progressive continents of the world, we assure you and those directly concerned of our irrevocable resolve to offer our contributions, however small they may be.

12. We have endeavoured in this short address to point out some of the facts and problems as they exist at the present time. After your visit to the various centres where the majority of our people live and work, an opportunity will be taken to go into the various matters in greater detail.

13. In conclusion, we sincerely thank you for your visit, which is very much appreciated; and like your predecessors who have been kind enough to pay us official and unofficial visits, we have no doubt that you will be able to use your high office in the promotion and advancement of our social, economic and political welfare.

14. Finally, we wish you good health and happiness during your short stay amongst us.

Yours very truly,

JENARAIN SINGH

President B.G.E.I. Association.

JUNG BAHADUR SINGH

President B.G.S.D. MAHA SABHA

RADHIKA KAWALL

President Balak Sabhita Mandales

BALKARAN SINGH

President The B.G. Dramatic Society

MOE'D BARAT-ULLA KHAN

President Sadr Anjuman E' Islam

A. D. HACK

President The Islamic Association of B.G.

J. A. VEERASAMMY

President B.G.E.I. Cricket Club.

J. D. ROHEE

President The Hindu Religious Society.

JAIRAM BISSERAR

President The American Aryan League

PANDIT RAMSAROOP MARAJ.

C. RAMKISSOON JACOB,

and Others.

INDIAN CONFERENCE

In Honour of the visit of The Hon. Pandit HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU at Georgetown British Guiana.
13th May, 1945

Resolutions

INDIAN COMMISSIONER

WHEREAS on account of the manifold problems peculiar to the Indians in British Guiana and also to those in Dutch Guiana and the West Indian Islands;

AND WHEREAS for the establishment & preservation of good relations between the Indians and other races, and between the Indians and Government and other interests an Indian Commissioner would be of considerable and effective assistance.

AND WHEREAS there are appointed in this Colony Consuls and in some cases vice-consuls for the various important nations including China whose services to their nationals here for the promotion of their interests justify their appointment.

AND WHEREAS in no less a degree there is need for the appointment of an Indian Commissioner by the Government of India for the Colony.

AND WHEREAS the necessity for the appointment of an Agent General has been conceded by the Council of State for India by a resolution passed by the Council, a few years ago in which the Hon. Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru took no small part.

BE IT RESOLVED, that this Conference unanimously affirming the urgent necessity for the appointment by the Government of India of an Indian Commissioner for the Guianas and West Indian Islands who shall himself be an Indian, solely responsible to the Government of India with as nearly as possible similar powers and privileges of a Consul, respectfully requests the Hon. Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru to take all steps necessary for bringing about such an appointment at an early date.

Mover: Hon. J.A. Luckhoo K.C. M.L.C.
Seconder: H.B. Gagraj.

UNIVERSAL ADULT SUFFRAGE.

WHEREAS by the British Guiana (Constitution) Amendment Order in Council, 1943, changes have been effected in the constitution of the Legislative Council giving an elected majority therein;

AND WHEREAS by Recommendation 28 (d) of the Recommendation of the West India Royal Commission (1938-1939) it was recommended that in order to secure that the elected element of the Legislative

Council shall be truly representative as possible, the object of policy should be the introduction of Universal Adult Suffrage.

AND WHEREAS our sister Colonies of Trinidad and Jamaica which were in a more or less similar position constitutionally have been granted Universal Adult Suffrage.

AND WHEREAS a Franchise Commission appointed by the Governor of the Colony in 1941 submitted a majority report which denied to the people of British Guiana Universal Adult Suffrage and, in this respect, the Report has been adopted by the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

AND WHEREAS by the recommendations of the Franchise Commission the Indian Community stand to suffer a grave disadvantage as against the other races because of the large percentage illiteracy in any language among the Indians due to the labour conditions in the past and other circumstances over which they had no control.

AND WHEREAS from the composition

of the Franchise Commission, the manner and spirit in which the enquiry was conducted and the many conflicting interests, the Indian Community could not have hoped for anything but unsympathetic consideration of their claims for Universal Adult Suffrage which fact is fully revealed in the inherently bad and illogical majority report.

BE IT RESOLVED that this Conference condemn the said majority report of the Franchise Commission as approved by His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies as being adverse to the best political interests of the Indian Community and of the Colony as a whole.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Conference respectfully request the Hon. Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru to intercede and do any act he may deem necessary to gain for the Colony the immediate grant of Universal Adult Suffrage.

Mover: D.P. Dabidin

Seconder: Hon. C.B. Jacob M.L.C.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Conference respectfully ask the Hon. Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru to make full representation in respect of the above in India and anywhere else he may deem fit on behalf of the Indians in these parts.

Mover: Hon. C.B. Jacob M.L.C.

Seconder: Hon. Dr. J.B. Singh, O.B.E.

[Continued on page 4]

NOTICE.

BRITISH GUIANA EAST INDIAN ASSOCIATION'S CONFERENCE.

Consequent upon the visit to the Colony of Honourable Hirday Nath Kunzru, Member of Council of State Delhi, and President of the Servants of India Society a conference will be held at the British Guiana East Indian Cricket Club Pavillion on Sunday 13th instant at 1 p.m.

All Indians are invited.

N. C. JANKI.

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INDIAN CONFERENCE

(Continued from page 3)

EDUCATION

WHEREAS Mr. Hammond—Educational Adviser to Sir Frank Stockdale—Controller for Development and Welfare in the West Indies has examined and reported on the Education System of British Guiana.

AND WHEREAS Mr. Hammond has recommended that all new School Buildings erected in the future be controlled by Government, and existing Buildings be administered under a TRUST SCHEME until such time as Government is in a position to assume control of such buildings.

AND WHEREAS Mr. Hammond has recommended that Non-Christians—Hindus and Muslims who constitute 38% of the colony's population be not debarred from the Teaching Profession and denied the post of head-teachership as at present, should they have the necessary qualifications.

AND WHEREAS the Church Bodies controlling around 237 of the 247 fully and partly aided Schools in the Colony have now banded themselves into a body: the UNITED CHRISTIAN FRONT and have published their CHRISTIAN EDUCATION PRINCIPLES which they propose to put in operation in the Schools, and which will debar Non-Christian children from attending school freely as at present, and restrict the appointment of the best teachers.

BE IT RESOLVED that Government be requested to give effect to the Recommendations of the Hammond Report as early as possible.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that The UNITED CHRISTIAN FRONT BE not allowed to put their CHRISTIAN EDUCATION PRINCIPLES in operation in the Primary Schools especially those sections affecting Non-Christian children.

Mover: Sugrim Singh.

Seconder: Dr. U.B. Khan, Op.D.

REPATRIATION AND LAND SETTLEMENT.

WHEREAS there is a large number of Immigrants in the Colony entitled to Return Passages to the Port in India whence they came;

AND WHEREAS for economic and other reasons it would be very desirable to encourage their remaining in the Colony;

AND WHEREAS a strong factor in achieving this end would be the granting or transporting of land or the making of money payment to them in lieu and satisfaction of their right to Return Passage under the provision of Section 193 of the Immigration Ordinance, Chapter 208;

AND WHEREAS it is certain if suitable offers are made a fair number would avail themselves of such offers;

AND WHEREAS in view of the war having spread to the Pacific it is not possible to repatriate Immigrants at the present time, and this situation may continue for some time in the future;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Conference respectfully requests Government to offer at an early date suitable lands or

money payment to all Immigrants, their wives, children, and/or dependants entitled thereto in lieu and satisfaction of their right to Return Passage in accordance with Sections 193 to 195 of the Immigration Ordinance, Chapter 208;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Conference urges upon Government as an alternative measure the establishment of land settlements at suitable sites for such Immigrants when the equivalent of their Return Passages may be utilised towards the cost of the lands taken up by them under such settlements.

ALTERNATIVELY upon refusal or failure to comply with the above requests that the Government be asked to afford shipping facilities immediately after the cessation of War in the Pacific for transporting every Immigrant and those entitled to back passage and wishing to be repatriated,

RAISING THE STANDARD OF LIVING ON SUGAR PLANTATIONS

WHEREAS the standard of living on the Sugar Plantations of British Guiana is low and has in the course of years resulted in the backwardness of the social, educational cultural and political advancement of the sugar workers, the majority of whom are East Indians;

AND WHEREAS this state of affairs constitutes a grave danger to the general advancement toward citizenship and self-Government on the part of the whole population of British Guiana;

AND WHEREAS it is wholly necessary that every section of the peoples of British Guiana be made to advance equally in social, educational, cultural and political growth—towards self-Government;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Conference most respectfully request the B.G. Government to adopt the necessary ways and means to raise the standard of living of the workers on the sugar plantations, in order to achieve the equality of progress in comparison with the country, village and urban districts of the Colony of British Guiana;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Conference most respectfully request the Honourable Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzu, Member of the Council of State for India, to use his good influence with the Government of India to impress on the Government of British Guiana the urgent and essential need for this measure of raising the standard of living of the sugar workers to achieve the goal of self Government for the peoples of British Guiana,

Mover: Hon. Ayube M. Edun.

Seconder: Amos Rangela.

ADULT EDUCATION

WHEREAS by the Swettenham circular and other circumstances the Government of the Colony connived at non-education of Indian boys and girls in the past and is either directly or indirectly responsible for the large percentage of illiteracy in any language among Indians to-day.

AND WHEREAS the whole of the reasoning of the majority Report of the Franchise Commission of 1941 for not recommending Universal Adult Suffrage is because of this large percentage of illiteracy among the Indians particularly,

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BE IT RESOLVED that this Conference respectfully request His Majesty's Government in the Colony to provide immediate country wide facilities for Adult Education.

Moved by: R. B. Gagraj

Seconded by: D. P. Debildin.

The INDIAN OPINION printed and published every Saturday at the Bharat Printing and Publishing Company at lot 11 A Queen Street Georgetown Demerara by CHARLES EDWARD PACKWOOD residing at lot 101 Carmichael St, Georgetown Demerara.

SATURDAY 12th MAY 1945.