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## WANTED: A HOLIDAY FROM PLANNING

THERE was a time when people used to swear by science. Now planning is the thing. Moscow had a plan which caught the imagination of the world so powerfully that even those who do not like the suppression of freedom, regimentation and totalitarianism that goes with Soviet planning, nevertheless, have to swear by some sort of plan, if only to maintain their self respect or keep up their prestige. We who run after the discarded clothes of the West have had a surfeit of plans and planning. And now the Congress has taken it up in earnest so that Congressmen may not be left in the cold too far away from light and warmth. It would be hasty to conclude that Congress, as a body, has hit upon planning as a means of regaining its lost prestige. For New Delhi has not yet given up toying with the idea of decontrol as the only possible means of revivifying the Congress. Decontrol of food grains was a very close thing not so long ago; it may be revived when the elections draw near. Congressmen cannot very well ask the cultivator to part with his grain at controlled prices which deprives him of his rightful gains, and expect him to give them his vote. Just at the moment, the decontrol of cotton appears even closer. If press reports are to be believed, decontrol of cotton is actually being discussed by the Cabinet, not the extension of control to competing crops. It only illustrates how vapid such enthusiasm can be, and to what depths of folly people, who should know better, can sink, when they wax eloquent on planning and on a schedule of priorities when with the same breath they eulogise the merits of free enterprise! And not content with lip homage, the Cabinet have set about it in a practical manner to give earnest of their good faith. They have modified the structure of taxation, piled concession after concession on industry and done much to give private enterprise a free hand. Pandit Nehru has surpassed himself in recent months in performing the impossible trying to reconcile the claims of private enterprise to those of planning. But there is more to it yet.

For, in addition to the Planning Commission which is expected to make good the promises in the Constitution viz. to provide for every one adequate means of livelihood, to distribute the material resources of the community as would best serve the common good and to prevent concentration of wealth and of the means of production in too few hands, there is now a Congress Planning Committee also, which called a conference in New Delhi to discuss the one year development programme it had drawn up earlier and to decide upon a schedule of priorities. Lest one should run away with the impression that this was just another conference like any other, it should be noted that the attendance was both large and distinguished. Provincial Premiers as well as Presidents of the Provincial Congress Committees attended the conference. Pandit Nehru was there, too, along with other Cabinet Ministers.

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