

From South India

Water and Food

FOOD and water continue to be the horns of the dilemma on which citizens of Madras find themselves impaled. They look before and after and pine for what is not. Meanwhile, new ration cards have come, not into the hands of the consumers, in all cases, but into the columns of the Press for criticism. A separate ration office could not be opened here for there are not enough members, is one answer to a query. Additional rations could not be issued in another place. Oh, please wait for the new card and then change. That is the reply in a second ease. What about sugar: Asks a consumer. The extra quantity would be issued only CHI your getting the seal and stamp of the ration official, says the vendor. From pillar to post the poor citizen is driven. The administration is unable to meet the situation in spite of its best efforts. That is because there, never had been any kind of planning while there was plenty. The alien government saw to it. Planning in poverty is certainly more difficult and more thankless.

The few drops of rain that fell in the City looked more like the approval of the Heavens to the party given by Mr. Gopala Reddi to legislators on the eve of the end of the budget session than the precursor of plentiful rains to help us to tide, over the food crisis. Coonoor and certain other areas had, however, good showers. Mr. Gopala Reddi is a product of Santiniketan. Finance may be his portfolio but he cannot forget the place of art in public life. Did he not encourage drama recently by a concession in entertainment tax? 'The true lover of the good tilings in life that he is, as the late Satyamurti was, he threw the party in honour of the Speaker of the Assembly and the Chairman of the Council. Was it not the last but one sitting of the Legislature before the general elections came in the first week of December and should he not find it an occasion to thank the patient members of the party that had followed him and other leaders with meek votes. Should he not find again the opportunity to lead them? Now therefore was the occasion for the kid glove. The

Gemini orchestra was in attendance, the evening was colourful and Mr. Reddi thanked Mr. Vasam. Perhaps the tax payer's pocket was not to be touched. But, one cannot be a prophet in politics even if he be a financial wizard. A slight stir in the political atmosphere of pre-election Madras is, however, noticeable. Is ex-chief Minister O. P. R. Reddi going to hitch hike with Annadurai of Dravida Kazhagam is a question of the moment.

The Appropriation Bill, that august measure that gives legal sanction to the expenditure needed to run the administrative machinery and execute the state's policies demanded several crores of rupees. But the Minister was quick to dispel any doubts in the mind of the legislators why these huge demands should have been made, by explaining that it was nothing more than what was required to be done under the Constitution.

The debates in Legislature, all told, had a good press. Education occupied more space in the local newspapers. Was it because the papers wanted the citizen to understand that adult franchise was to be exercised by him a few months hence; was it that basic education was controversial; or was it again the interest in the teacher, that forlorn and neglected but essential member of the community? Whatever the answers to these questions, there is no doubt that education, as such, has its roots more deeply planted here than in certain other states. The Legislature Congress party is to discuss the position arising out of the Supreme Court's finding on the Communal G.O. and its implications for the educational policy in the State.

Of the opposition which has a definite function to perform, at least in theory, in a democracy, not much was in evidence even though Ex-Minister Raja Muthia Chettiar did command some attention. Coming from a district where the food problem was keen, and as a businessman with intimate knowledge of the conditions in Burma, Siam and other rice growing areas, he boldly criticised the myopic

policy of the Madras Government and attacked the indifference of the Union Government about the distant South. He charged the Madras Members of Parliament with apathy and created a minor storm. The proposed rice delegation to Rangoon is mainly ascribable to his valiant efforts. Mr. Gopala Reddi, however, denied that Delhi was either more distant or less helpful in its relations with this State and the Madras Members in Delhi also gave a similar reply.

While on the subject of rice and food, it may be mentioned incidentally that better relationship with Siam would be likely to be more profitable. Our relation with Siam is still governed by the protocol of the pre-independence days entered into by Britain on our behalf and not by one entered into by free India, though India has signed fresh treaties with other foreign states.

Now to water supply. Where is our Pani Maharaj? The Upanishads have never ceased to stress the importance of water. They begin with *Akasath Vayuhu*, and then come to *Agnerapaha*. What a world will it be without water! But the city dweller must pray: O Lord, Krishna, give us unto this day our daily trickle of water. For verily, it has been decided that Krishna water shall come to Madras. Estimates have now been sanctioned. Oh; if only, to do were as easy as to say. . . . But how long a period should pass before the scheme takes shape?

Though smaller compared to Bombay or Calcutta, the population of Madras doubled and is on the million and a half mark. Unless therefore there is a programme of decrowding greater Madras, trouble, economic and financial, is in store. The railways, insurance firms, big banks, and captains of industry could all play a useful part in helping to house the growing population in the suburbs, build garden cities and ensure speedy transport, Gandhi Nagar in the South of Madras is a right pointer. Such dispersal of population will also relieve; the heavy pressure on the public health institutions, notably the Central Hospital and other hospitals, which are getting far too overcrowded. Food shortage has been responsible, too, for the increase in certain forms of disease arising from nutrition deficiency.

Mechanisation of agriculture and use of chemical fertilisers along with it is commonly accepted as the solution of our food problem and therefore of our nutritional deficiencies also. But there's the rub. Chemical fertilisers may bring us food but also organic diseases! And of all people, the warning comes from a poet, Ezra Pound, who knows China well. Ezra Pound warned Amiya Chakravarti that the new free India should not attempt to destroy the age old system of her agriculture, for the apparently short-lived benefit of deep ploughing. Indeed, Pound's observations are so profound that they merit being quoted in full from the *Vishva-bharat Quarterly* in which the in-

terview appeared.

He . . . maintained that China and India had been able to preserve their civilisation because their peasantry remained sane and sound despite the challenges of changing political regimes. Deep ploughing, according to Pound, starves the soil whose fertility can be replenished only with chemical fertilisers which in turn react on the physical-metabolism of plants and crops. Such a system can have very far reaching consequences, as, for instance, the prevalence of organic diseases like cancer in a community sustained by fertiliser stimulated food."

"This is a view", adds the interviewer, "which would be vigorously

challenged by agricultural scientists but the fact remains that America today has a relatively high incidence of cancer." Let us not add the growth of cancer in our organism by our nutrition policy.

An Officer of the Ministry of Agriculture was recently on a tour of the South to investigate the possibilities of growing a new tree out of whose seeds tung oil could be extracted. Tung oil is an important raw material of industry which can be used for water-proofing cloth, silk and paper insulation of electric wires. This native of Chinese origin has been brought to India by the Central Government and is being grown in Assam and the Punjab.

India On the eve of the Elections A Balance Sheet of Achievements and Failures*

John Matthai

MY reason for raising this subject for discussion is that in view of the nearness of the elections it is time there was a concerted effort to stimulate corporate thinking and educate public opinion on the problems which face the country. Unless we have a clear grasp of these problems and can estimate the effort required to meet them, we can hardly form a right judgment as regards the selection of the people who are to govern us.

In every democratic country, there is bound to be constant and severe criticism of Government. We in India are no exception, in a country which has recently emerged from a revolutionary movement with a Government of its own, this criticism is apt to be expressed in exaggerated and violent terms because of the wide gulf between expectations and achievements. A revolutionary movement by its very nature intensifies expectations. On the other hand, the difficulties which face a new Government necessarily have the effect of slowing the pace of achievement.

If we cast a proper balance-sheet of the Government of India's achievements, setting side by side the *plus* and *minus* items, it must be granted, if allowance is made for the difficulties which have faced them, that on the whole they

have a good record to their credit. There are black chapters and there are bright chapters. By and large, the bright side dominates the picture. There is no reason for despair or despondency. There is, on the other hand, reason for encouragement, and hope.

The Credit Side

Some of the credit items in the balance sheet may be mentioned:

(1) *India's international position*: India's position in international matters is marked by a heightened prestige and in most matters she has become a factor to be reckoned with. There may be different opinions on India's foreign policy but there can be no difference of opinion as regards the personal prestige of the Prime Minister who handles it and his reputation for sincerity and breadth of vision.

(2) *Political integration*: "The political integration of the Union of India under Sardar Patel's leadership has been a remarkable achievement. The separate existence of Indian States had been bequeathed to the new Government as an unsolved and almost insoluble problem. The emergence of a single political entity out of the multitude of separate States within the brief space of a year and a half is a tribute to the Government of India's vision and statesmanship.

(3) *The Army*: A new Government born of a revolution, with all the conflict of loyalties it involved and the sudden disappearance of

the British element which practically dominated the officering of the army, might well have made the restoration of the army a matter of enormous difficulty. Today the army, completely Indian from the C.-in-C. downwards, is probably the best integrated and most efficient organ of Government. Its achievements in Hyderabad and Kashmir justify the pride we feel in our army.

(4) *Law and Order*: Considering the serious civil disturbances with which the new regime began, the restoration of law and order and its maintenance in the face of growing political and economic difficulties reflect credit on Government.

Coming to Bombay City from a recent holiday in the principal capital cities of Europe, I have formed the impression purely from the point of view of law and order that Bombay is as well administered as any city in the world today.

(5) *Industrial relations*: Industrial relations have steadily improved since 1947. Our record will bear comparison with any country in the world. Labour is more conscious of its rights but is also more conscious of its responsibilities.

(6) *Communications*: Both Railway transport and Posts and Telegraphs are today as efficient as at any previous time in India in spite of unprecedented difficulties—wear and tear of equipment due to war, rising costs, large volume of traffic.

(7) *Finance*: In spite of all the talk about inflation, we have succeeded in averting a runaway inflation of the kind which has occurred

* This is the full text of the speech delivered to the Progressive Group in Bombay on March 26, 1951.