

Family Incomes of Calcutta College Students

WHILE the middle-class has been hit everywhere, it is in West Bengal that it has been hit hardest. The appalling incidence of the crisis on the coming generation, high lighted by an abnormal rise in the percentage of failures in University examination in recent years, prompted the Bengali daily *Satyayug* to institute an enquiry into the household budgets of the families of college students, in Calcutta and elsewhere in West Bengal. The results have now been brought out in the form of a monograph. The sample collected is small, there are other deficiencies which were almost inevitable in the absence of assistance from the Government or eminent research organisations. Despite its many limitations considered purely as a sample survey, the value of the study; in view of the light it throws on an acute social problem, can be scarcely over-estimated.

The average incomes of half the families to which West Bengal college students belong is Rs 240 per month while the average expenditure comes to Rs 287. This alone does not show how the middle class is being dragged to ruin. Seven per cent of the families have an income of Rs 100 or less. No more than 22 per cent of the students

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have a room where they can study. Conditions outside Calcutta are only slightly better,

The enquiry covered some 1600 families out of which budgets of 158 were studied, 130 in Calcutta and 20 in the mofussil. The income range of the families studied was Rs 0 to Rs 500. 55 per cent of the families in Calcutta had an income of Rs 300 or less per month, 10 per cent of the families had an income of Rs 100 or less.

In West Bengal, nearly 36 per cent of the total number of students belong to families with an income of Rs-200 less per month. About 62 per cent are from families with an income of Rs 300 or less. The average family in all the income ranges showed a deficit budget

The pattern of expenditure shows that an inordinately large proportion is spent on food (54 per cent of expenditure or 65 per cent of income). Expenditure on education amounts to 19 per cent of the income or 16 per cent of the total expenditure. More than 25 per cent of the income of families whose monthly income does not exceed Rs 200 is spent on education. It is difficult to imagine how families whose monthly income does not exceed Rs 100 can be spending anything on university education. Yet such families spent more than a quarter of their income on this item.

Of the families studied, 58 per

group Rs 401-500 are escape the burden of debt, ;

The situation that the study reveals is, indeed, ripe for a social revolution. One hopes with Prof Gyanchand, who has written a poignant foreword to it, "that " personal sufferings of so many thousands; of intelligent and sensitive young and women would give them a keen interest in an understanding of real issues and create among a large number of them an intense desire to deal with them as adequately as possible." Also that the study which shows within its limits what our college students and their families are going through in the existing circumstances, "should, besides revealing the suffering of young students, stimulate an interest in similar studies all over the country and make it possible for us to have a nation-wide picture of the effects on the growing generation of the increasing stresses of our national economy,"

Caustic Soda Plant

A SCHEME for setting up a factory for the manufacture of caustic soda and soda ash has been submitted by the Government of Saurashtra to the Centre. The proposed plant is to have a capacity of 50,000 tons of soda ash and 55,000 tons of caustic soda per year. This should meet the major portion of the demand for these chemicals for industries like glass, textiles, soap, paper and rayon in the country. Jaffrabad on the south-cast coast of the Kathiawar Peninsula has been recommended by the Saurashtra Government for the location of the plant.

The scheme is to cost Rs 7 crores, of which Rs 4 crores will be the foreign exchange expenditure. The plant will be ready for production within three years after the scheme is sanctioned. A return of 30 per cent is expected on the book capital investment. The Sanrashtra Government has proposed that the project should be taken up by the Central or the State Government either independently or in cooperation with some private party.

Indigenous production and imports of caustic soda and soda ash in recent years' were as follows:

| | Imports (in tons) | |
|---------|-------------------|----------|
| | Caustic Soda | Soda Ash |
| 1948-49 | 90,616 | 163,567 |
| 1949-50 | 12,989 | 12,295 |
| 1950-51 | 22,000 | 20,817 |
| 1951-52 | 61,840 | 85,315 |

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