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## Congress in Blunderland

A GOVERNMENT must govern. Lawlessness cannot be tolerated. Violence must be suppressed. Congress has more than once demonstrated its ability to govern. Determination of the Congress Government to ensure stable administration will be welcomed. Violence may not be a more immediate and sinister threat than inflation to stable progress. But Pandit Nehru's warning against mob violence will be widely echoed. Behaviour of Maharashtrais is to be deplored. It is unfortunate that Bombay has not learnt a lesson from Calcutta's recent dignified political behaviour. Bengalis share the Maharashtrais' sense of frustration over the SRC pattern of re-organisation of States. They were as angry about the proposed Bengal-Bihar merger as Maharashtrais were, and are, about the exclusion of Bombay from the new Maharashtra State' But the disciplined protest of Bengal has been a reassuring contrast to Bombay's violent demonstrations.

Bombay has been a constant source of trouble since the SRC proposal to exclude the City from the proposed Maharashtra State. New Delhi has accepted many amendments to the SRC recommendations for re-organisation of States. It has conceded the demand for Samyukta Maharashtra. It has had repeated discussions on the problem of Bombay City. But it has never accepted the Maharashtraian demand for inclusion of Bombay into Samyukta Maharashtra. For some time, it seemed that New Delhi was incapable of taking any decision on Bombay. Deliberations of the AICC meeting in Bombay would seem to indicate that New Delhi had reached a decision long ago. It has been stubborn in holding on to its decision. Congress held the AICC session in Bombay so that Pandit Nehru could announce the Union Government's decision on this controversial issue' Pandit Nehru was adamant. He was not polite and left no room for doubt that the Union Government was determined to implement its decision, in spite of its firm and violent rejection by Maharashtrais.

Violence, to repeat, must be condemned. But many thinking persons will wonder whether a popular, representative government has any right to ignore the known wishes of the people. There is no doubt that Bombay belongs to Maharashtra, or that Maharashtrais, to the last man and woman, want Bombay to be included in Samyukta Maharashtra. Pandit Nehru could not have been unaware of the wishes of the people concerned. Nor could the Congress Working Committee be ignorant of the formidable geographic, economic and cultural compulsions behind the demand for integration of Bombay into Maharashtra. And yet Pandit Nehru, his Cabinet and the Congress Working Committee have decided to impose Central rule over Bombay city for, at least, five years. Pandit Nehru was definite only about the Union Government's decision to rule Bombay city as a Centrally-administered area. He was ambiguous about all the other relevant aspects of this decision. He did not announce a fixed time-limit after which the people of Bombay will have the right to choose the City's future status. He was vague about the manner in which the people would have the opportunity to express their wishes.

One central theme runs through Pandit Nehru's speeches during the AICC meeting in Bombay. He was at pains to assure the people that the Union Government's decision was influenced solely by Bombay's violent behaviour. Pandit Nehru emphasised that the wishes of the

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