

Official Papers

## Two Valuable Judgements

**Community Developments in India.** Report of a Survey by M L Wilson. C P A, July 1956 Pp 30.

**A Critical Analysis of India's Community Development Programme.** By Carl C Taylor. C P A, September 1956. Pp. 62.

### Reviewed by Evelyn Wood

BOTH these Reports are written by distinguished, professional men of long experience who were invited to make their comments by what is now the Ministry of Community Development. Both men did so as Ford Foundation Consultants on Community Development. Their approaches to the Community Development Programme promoted by the National Extension Service are very different. Mr Wilson has been associated with the United States Extension Service for over fifty years; he thus looks at the situation in India primarily as one interested in Extension as education for economic improvement. Dr Taylor, on the other hand, has the more analytical view of a rural sociologist, and tends to see the programme as the controlled building of a more orderly kind of society.

Mr Wilson's observations were made during field-trips in March and April 1956, in which he visited 9 States, 17 Extension Training Centres, 19 Development Blocks either of NES or Community Development type, 35 villages and talked with about 40 gram sevaks. He has been in India before, in the winter of 1952-53, when he visited 6 States and 7 Extension Training Centres. Thus his observations were to some extent grounded to form an estimate of growth during the three intervening years.

Dr Taylor's study took much more time. In a full year from July 1955, he visited 14 States, 40 Development Blocks and 150 villages; and he talked with 10 "District Officers", who were probably the Planning Officers for Development, the States' Development Commissioners, and in the field with Block Development Officers, Extension Specialists and gram sevaks, besides village people themselves. Dr Taylor, too, had previously spent six weeks here in early 1953, and seven "months" from April, to October, 1954. His examination must therefore be more cumulative.

In their earlier pages, both men adopt the diplomatic manner of lavishing compliments on the magnitude, intensity and effectiveness of India's programme of Community Development through Extension pro-

cesses. It is this characteristic of Mr Wilson's reports which was picked out for Press comment, while Dr Taylor's equally laudatory document has been publicized more for its critical content. In fact both men are actually critical of the whole structure of the Extension Service in India as a tool for rural development, which they see in different forms. Both men are repeatedly insistent that the gram sevak must be primarily an educator, and they see that there is a strong tendency to burden him with so many other duties that he does not get time to fulfil his educational function.

Both men are particularly critical of the Social Education Organisation, which bears more directly on Community Development, as such. Both men notice the need for some basic knowledge of the social sciences to be part of the training of all Extension workers. Dr Taylor, on page 50, is rather less specific about this, but his feeling that such knowledge is not in fact being acquired or built up seems to be the more intense. But Mr Wilson's page 14 is quite specific on this point.

A third, perhaps equally distinguished (but not so venerable) American social scientist, who has spent much time in India, has questioned the soundness of this rather fulsome manner of reporting on development to the Government of India. He suggests that when the appetite for foreign flattery has been satiated, there may remain no digestive capacity for the criticism. Further pursuit of this analogy would trespass on medical science.

### Forms of Development

Mr Wilson on pages 22-23 puts his finger firmly on the only means of developing these useful forms of private enterprise in villages. Dr Taylor's comments on pages 60-61 are equally illuminating. Both men call for much more sharply defined working concepts of what co-operatives are, but of course Dr Taylor throws the net wider, as is natural to a sociologist. One very useful suggestion, for what he calls a "farm plan" appears on Mr Wilson's page 24-25; in several places besides this,

he is particularly lucid about organized credit. From page 26 onwards, Mr Wilson draws parallels between the American and the Indian use of Extension as a means of community development, which may be overdrawn, only time and the more careful studies of social anthropologists will be able to ten.

At the very end of his Report, Mr Wilson makes welcoming references to the Programme Evaluation Organization and to the National Centre or Institute for higher studies and training in the field of Community Development. He interprets both these as signs of great health and flexibility in the Indian programme of development. By this Institute he possibly means the National Institute for Fundamental Education, recently established by the Union Ministry of Education. Oddly enough he does not refer to the ten Institutes for Higher Rural Education which have also been recently promoted by the same Ministry. These Institutes seem to have been referred to by Dr Taylor on page 33, but he does not anywhere mention the Fundamental Education Institute.

Of course the subject is so vast that no person, however expert, can cover every aspect of India's programme of rural development. In fact the "uniqueness" of the Indian programme to which both men frequently refer, is characterized by the fact that the NES is supposedly ready to tackle any aspect of village life and work in which it appears that village people are ready for improvement. In other countries, Extension is a more limited process of education; in the United States, for example, confined to Agriculture and Home Science. But here, in India Health has at least equal importance in Extension teachings. Political mechanisms, children's education, physical communications and such industries as will fit into the rural pattern are all part of Extension's load in India, which is not the case in other countries. Without doubt, the range of subject matter as well as the numbers of population involved make India's the greatest social experiment in all history. (Taylor pages 58-59).

### Dr Taylor's Strongest Points

Provided the massive evidence produced in Dr Taylor's paper is absorbed and not allowed to pass undigested, it can give an enormous lift to the whole process of rural development through Extension. This is the most important study of the process yet produced. It is not easy reading, but anyone interested in the subject should give it close attention. There is too much to compress in a brief notice. This reviewer can do no more than list the major points, which are constructively raised in great detail.

### Working with Groups

It is found that systematic group-teaching is little practised; progressive individuals are chosen to experiment with, when introducing improved practices (pages lift.). Techniques of group-working seem to be unknown. Therefore progress is slow and the new groundwork is insecure (pages 19, 29, 30). There is a tendency to work with any villager who is offered as a "leader", without considering his actual position of influence; the natural uprising of leaders from groups with which Extension works is not considered (pages 17ff.). In these respects there is no improvement in the NES since 1953 (page 18).

Dr Taylor says that the group-working and leader-discovery techniques are more successfully practised in other countries where rural development is pursued. He repeatedly refers to a body of experienced knowledge from which India should draw, but he discreetly avoids naming actual sources (pages 5-55 and 62, final paragraph). In fact, at the foot of page 6, he rather ostentatiously ignores the example of Pharaonic Egypt—and modern Russia! Perhaps this is wise.

He draws useful distinctions between propaganda and the more controlled, two-way channels of communication (pages 7 and 11). The paragraphs bridging pages 11 and 12 are worthy of being written in letters of fire over every Development Block Headquarters. Oddly enough Dr Taylor misses what seems to this reviewer to be the most vital of all motives which drive today's village people in India. This is the weariness of their position of inferiority, so long accepted, which they now express. The positive side of this is the new hunger of villages to be treated with mere respect by townfolk. Village people want to be valued for their good points of

skill and knowledge at work, and their ethics of the home. They do not ask for respect towards their social organisation; in this they know themselves to be bad. Dr Taylor does not seem to see the burning need both for good repute, and personal satisfaction in work and home-keeping which are perhaps the strongest driving forces acting on village people today.

### Selection and Training of Extension Workers

On the training of all cadres in the NES, Dr Taylor has many practical recommendations, chiefly based on importing current field experience into the Training Centres (page 20 ff.). But, strangely enough, he does not mention the alternative of carrying on the training in the village-field, with villagers helping as trainers. Yet this has worked well, in the reviewer's own experience.

At the District Headquarters level, Dr Taylor finds the weakest link in the programme (page 25) and considers that more technical officers are essential. At the Block level, the selection and training of BDO's

is poor (pages 23 and 30); and *this* Social Education Organisers are vague and unplanned (pages 30-32). It is likely that he leans towards the upgrading of selected gram-sevaks for most Block Level and District Extension jobs (page 33). This reviewer would agree completely; but is surprised that the factor of vocation for working with villagers is never mentioned.

### Continuous Evaluation of Programme

Dr Taylor's comments on the Programme Evaluation Organization (pages 48-49) are pregnant with creative possibilities. This page cannot be quoted, but must be read in the original. His wider plea for more *employment* of social scientists in the Programme (page 50 ff.) is almost equally exciting. But will the plea be admitted by implementation?

Last, but not least, Dr Taylor is the only foreign observer whose comments have been read by this reviewer (a voracious reader) who admits that scientists have much to learn from village people in India, (page 58). Perhaps this justifies all the flattery of his Report.

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