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Dynamic Equilibrium

REMEMBER Sartre's hell—no change? There is also the analogy of musical chairs beloved of all political commentators for describing the composition of a Cabinet when Ministers' remain the same but they change their portfolios. None of these quite fit the new Cabinet which was sworn in during the week. A couple of Cabinet Ministers have been dropped and only one new name has been added viz that of Shri S K Patil, President of the Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee. True, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri returns to the Cabinet but his absence from it was brief and more token than real. Among the two missing from the old team one is Shri Khandubhai Desai who held the Labour portfolio, and the other is Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. Of course, Khandubhai could have been brought back by the back door of nomination to the Rajya Sabha. This the Prime Minister refused to do. But he did not bow to the electorate either, since Shri Gulzarilal Nanda who replaces the ex-INTUC Chief is the spirit and soul of the Congress Trade Union Wing.

As against only one in the Cabinet rank, in the second rank, among the Ministers of State, one finds two new names, both very promising ones—Shri Humayun Kabir, ex-Secretary of the Education Ministry and Shri A K Sen, the legal luminary from the Calcutta bar. Both are from Bengal which goes unrepresented in the Cabinet.

It is in the rank of the Deputy Ministers, however, that one has to seek the clue, if any, to Pandit Nehru's principle of selection, the result of his search for new talent and his success in infusing fresh blood. On all three counts, progress has been dead slow. The otherwise dynamic Prime Minister seems to believe in maturing slowly and leaving the deputies to stew, preferring the electorate to do the pruning. Promotions from the ranks of the deputies have been so few that one cannot help questioning the wisdom of the initial choice.

Ministers may not change, even the changes of portfolios may be few, but Ministries change with bewildering rapidity and along with the list of the new Ministers has been issued a press communique announcing reorganisation of Ministries and fresh allocation of the business of the Ministries in striking contrast to the 'no change' Cabinet. Many of these changes were necessary and necessary because the earlier changes, not so long ago, were uncalled for and entirely irrational. In this respect, the metaphor of musical chairs has to be modified. The Ministerial changes give the impression of an unstable equilibrium. Equilibrium is maintained all right, but it calls for constant re-adjustments whenever important Ministers change or are forced to change their portfolios. The departure of Shri T T Krishnamachari from the Commerce Ministry a little while ago, for example, led to a Wholesale change in this important Ministry, and the dislocation

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