attempt at making simple things obscure in order to forestall a possible agitation or so hopelessly confusing an attempt at clarification that it achieved the same purpose with effortless ease. It would be unkind to say that the statement neither showed any respect to the Members of Parliament to whom it was presented nor did it show the slightest sympathy to the people whose lives and fortunes were affected by it. But it is not possible for any one to say anything more charitable about this precious document. After all, it is not very courteous to assume that Members of Parliament or the public have the skill and legal training to unravel its profound obscurities. The statement did mention, however, that legislation would be necessary to validate exchange of territory and this was later repeated by Pandit Nehru in his reply to the debate in the Rajya Sabha. The obscurity, nevertheless, was so impenetrable that leader writers are not to be blamed if they chose so damaging a caption in their comment on the whole episode as "evasive".

Exchange of enclaves is obviously desirable as being the only practical solution of an impossible situation. But it would be difficult to persuade the people of West Bengal that the resultant loss of territory estimated at 22 square miles is also a fair and necessary price that should legitimately be demanded from them.

Apart from the loss of territory which the Nehru-Noon Agreement imposed on West Bengal, public opinion in the State is extremely suspicious as to why the settlement on the Eastern border alone is effected in this manner, when the dispute on the Western border, equally longstanding, and no less acrimonious, was left unsettled. The interpretation has, naturally, been that the territory of West Bengal is expendable but not the territory of the States on the Western border. This suspicion alone will add fuel to the fire unless Government designs to explain its action and makes out a cogent case for the proposed changes. Time is running out fast, for according to Shrimati Laxmi Menon's statement, 15th of this month has been "fixed as the date for exchange of territories in certain sectors of the East Pakistan—West Bengal boundary, where demarcation has been completed in accordance with the Radcliffe and Bagge Awards." So it has now become a question of Pandit Nehru keeping his word, but at the cost of people who have not been consulted and not even told clearly about their future fate.

Speeding Up Shipbuilding

HINDUSTAN Shipyard, the only shipbuilding concern in the country, which is in the public sector, now has as its Chairman Shri G L Mehta, who was a leading figure in Indian shipping before he joined Government. The appointment of non-officials as Chairmen of public corporations and Government-owned private limited companies has often been suggested as a necessary first step in decentralization for the more efficient conduct of such undertakings. This is among the problems for the investigation of which a Committee was appointed by the Congress Parliamentary Party some time ago. But it would be premature to read, in this particular appointment any such significance though Shri G L Mehta has taken over this assignment from the Secretary General to the Government of India, Shri N R Pillai, ICS.

In his speech from the Chair Shri Mehta was fortuitous in demanding a further and speedier assistance from Government and regretted the delay in the sanction for the remaining part of the second phase of the development programme. The latter includes an extension of the jetty which will not cost much foreign exchange and the construction of a dry dock which had been sanctioned by Government early in 1954, but which had to be postponed on account of foreign exchange shortage. As a result, ships built in the yard have to be sent to Calcutta for dry docking before delivery. Since shipping is a great saver and earner of foreign exchange, the construction of this dry dock at an early date is necessary to speed up the delivery of ships as also to promote the development of ship-repair facilities at Vishakapatnam.

Despite the interruption to its working from the breakdown of its 45 ton travelling crane and delay in receipt of steel in the earlier part of the year, Hindustan Shipyard appears to be getting into shape at long last. Production during the year to March 31, 1958 went up by 15 per cent and there was improvement in labour-materials ratio. Since the close of the year, two ships the keels of which had been laid earlier have been launched and the keel for the 9,500 tons 'Lubecker' ship was laid in October. The agreement for technical assistance with the French firm of consultants, which had not worked very smoothly, was terminated in July and except for one German technician who functions in an advisory capacity, the Yard is now entirely Indian-managed.

Progress in respect of specifications and quick decisions about the selection of machinery and equipment is, however, still unsatisfactory. Shortage of materials has prevented the commissioning on schedule of the Pre-fabrication Shop which is the most important, unit in the development programme. This is expected to come into operation some time early this year.

The changeover to construction of 'Lubecker' type of vessels has helped to keep the vexed problem of pricing of Hindustan ships in abeyance, as prices of nine of these vessels have been settled on the basis of prices paid to German shipbuilders. This ad hoc procedure meets the complaints of the shipping companies that the previous methods of fixing prices on the basis of British parity proved unfavourable to them. A permanent price formula would have to await the study of actual cost data of Lubecker' ships in relation to their prices.
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Now that pricing, the question of specifications and balancing of plant capacity are approaching a satisfactory solution, it is time to enquire if the ship yard is actually giving the output of which it is capable. Currently, it has been turning out barely 2½ ships in a year; its capacity has been rated much higher by knowledgeable persons who have looked into it. In fact, there is reason to believe that without substantial extra investment the output of ships from the yard can be increased several times. Shri G L Mehta has undoubtedly taken up a very challenging assignment. The ability he had displayed in the past in the service of shipping in the private sector and his long experience should enable the country to get the best out of its first venture in this strategic sector of industry. With it? teething troubles nearly over, the Hindustan Ship Yard should now be able to give a more tangible proof that it has made good and that proof could only be the number of ships it turns out in a year.

Turn of the Wheel

THE wheel has turned a full cycle.

President Nasser is becoming respectable again in western eyes. The quarrels of a bygone era are ostensibly forgotten and the time may not be far off when Mr John Foster Dulles can again be a welcome guest in Cairo. Every sign points in the general direction of a rapprochement between Egypt and the West. This is the significance of the current visit of the President of the World Bank, Mr Eugene Black, to the Egyptian capital. The inspired news items flowing from Washington and London can also have no other meaning. All parties concerned, evidently, are anxious to bury the hatchet and the time is now.

That Mr Black should have been chosen as the “peace-maker” has something of poetic irony about it. One recalls the infructuous negotiations between Egypt and the World Bank on the tortuous question of financing the construction of the Aswan Dam. One also recalls the hasty words then said by Mr Dulles on the subject and the reaction they evoked in the land of the Nile. Mr Black’s current visit to Cairo, evidently, is the U S State Department’s way of waving the white flag, of apologising for past mistakes. Once it was sought to hum-