

COMMERCIAL

*"For Commerce, though the child of Agriculture, fosters his parent
Who else must sweat and toil and gain but scanty fare."*

William Blake.

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FRESH HOPE FOR DEMOCRACY IN INDIA

THE public response which the six-week-old Swatantra Party has so far had, under the inspiring leadership of Rajaji, is quite encouraging and fills one with fresh hope for the future of democracy in India. The first convention of the Party, held in Bombay last week-end, was well attended by representatives from all parts of the country and patronised by a large section of the public. It has won the support of some members of Parliament and certain State legislatures. The Statement of Principles drafted by the founders of the Party and unanimously adopted at the convention is in keeping with the genuine democratic ideals that animates the members of the Party and constitutes an appropriate basis for opposing the party in power and other left-wing parties which are, really speaking, only satellites of the Congress Party. The principles adumbrated in the 21-clause statement, published in full on page 243 of this issue, are precisely those for which this journal has been fighting ever since the Congress Party started meddling with the Constitution after the first General Elections and began to curtail the freedom of the individual under the guise of socialism. We, therefore, welcome the statement wholeheartedly and devoutly hope that it will gain the support of the vast majority

society of the Congress and the democratic (sic) socialism of the Communists. The Swatantra Party, it must be noted, is not opposed to all planning but only to planning of the Soviet and Chinese types which are inimical to individual initiative and enterprise. It is not opposed to the State starting industries; only, it wants the State to supplement the efforts of private enterprise and to take up the establishment of new industries which is difficult for private initiative. It is clearly against the State entering the field of trade and disturbing the market mechanism and introducing controls and official management, with all their wastefulness and inefficiency. But it certainly is not for *laissez faire*, for, while it stands for the principle of maximum freedom for the individual and minimum interference by the State, it recognises the right of State to prevent and punish anti-social activities, to protect the weaker elements of society and to create the conditions in which individual initiative will thrive along fruitful and beneficial lines.

It is common knowledge that the Congress Party has gone far beyond these limits for State intervention and State activity and has resolved to go still further in this direction. At the same time, it has miserably failed to punish anti-

notorious note on the approach to the third Plan and the official account of the equally notorious Ooty seminar.

The Swatantra Party's principles on taxation and profits are progressive and consistent with the need for ensuring suitable incentives for initiative and enterprise necessary for achieving higher production on the most economic lines. They are by no means those of die-hard business men or of the so-called vested interests. The Party believes in economic development with stability and wants foreign loans to be limited to the country's capacity to repay. It is against the expansion of the bureaucratic machine, with a hierarchy of officials asked to do functions which are best carried out by citizens and private agencies. These are sound principles. Some, however, may wonder whether these policies will be conducive to speedy economic development which is necessary to catch up with the rapid rise in population and in the ranks of unemployed. Such a doubt is natural to those who have been planning as the Government of India has been doing, with predetermined ideological objectives, as, for instance, the public sector should grow faster than the private sector, and with too much preoccupation with *per capita* income, which gives rise to exaggerated ideas of national needs, as, in arriving at *per capita* income, the whole population is taken into account, including

We are firmly convinced that there can be no democracy without individual ownership of property and without the system of free enterprise. Every family should have property of some kind, that is, savings invested in productive enterprises which will give it a sense of security and independence. It is true that not all the people today enjoy this freedom from want. But it is the desire of all right-thinking persons that everyone should have this freedom as early as is humanly possible and in a manner which will not deny the other freedoms. Today's have-nots have to become the haves of tomorrow. They should have the right to keep what they have won through hard work and to gain the means of their livelihood, unmolested by the State. This is exactly what the Swatantra Party is out to safeguard and to restore the rights guaranteed by the original Constitution but, unfortunately, taken away by the Congress Party through a series of amendments to that Constitution. Even the have-nots, therefore, will ultimately stand to benefit by extending their support to the new Party. They should remember that the policy of expropriation that is now being followed by the party in power and warmly endorsed by all the left-wing parties will, in due course, make the citizens—rich and poor alike—the slaves of the State. Communism and its associate, socialism, are only other names for State capitalism. We have no doubt that the people of this country, with their innate commonsense, will quickly grasp the dangerous implications of the socialist philosophy of the Congress Party if they are properly explained to them. It is the good fortune of this country that Rajaji has come forward to shoulder this responsibility, because he knows the art of treating the lay public better than any other leader.

The Swatantra Party is not a party advocating negative policies, as some in high places have chosen to describe it. This will be clear from its Statement of Principles and the speeches delivered at the Party's convention by Rajaji, Mr. N. G. Ranga, Mr. M. R. Masani, Mr. K. M. Munshi, Mr. H. P. Mody and several others. These speeches, incidentally, are full of commonsense and economic wisdom and will repay a study by ambitious young men who are on the threshold of their life and wish to join the ranks of the haves by their own initiative and enterprise. They are in refreshing contrast to the swan-songs on the socialist pattern of

social activities and committed several costly mistakes on the economic front, thereby giving genuine ground for its left-wing opponents to ridicule it before the public. It is highly significant that, ever since the Congress Government took too many economic responsibilities and began placing a tremendous emphasis on policies designed to redistribute wealth, the Communist Party has gained in strength to the detriment of genuine democratic forces both within and outside the Congress Party. The criticism that the Congress Party is becoming communistic in its outlook may appear harsh and exaggerated. There is, however, a large measure of truth in it. Those who doubt the accuracy of this statement are welcome to study Mr. U. N. Dhebar's

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children, adolescents and old people past the stage of work. But to people with practical outlook, the principles outlined by the Swatantra Party will create no such doubt. It is obvious that any plan that ignores the vital resources and the availability of the requisite manpower, is bound to run into difficulties of the sort the second Plan has done. Surely, there is no virtue nor wisdom in the party in power holding out prospects that are outside the realms of practicability. Again, the chances of a more rapid rate of economic growth than has been achieved in the second Plan are better under the type of society advocated by the Swatantra Party than under the socialist pattern of the Congress Party. Experience in this country, as well as elsewhere, shows that the cost of economic development through bureaucracy is distinctly greater than through a mixed economy, in which the State will play a relatively minor, though valuable, part of a catalytic agent. It is not a mere cliché to say that a rupee earns more when it is employed by private enterprise than by the public sector.

The Swatantra Party promises a fair deal to workers and is fully alive to the interests of agriculturists. It has given weighty reasons for opposing co-operative farming, ceiling on land and incomes. It believes in peasant-proprietorship, the ideal system for securing the urgently required increase in production. Without co-operative farming, agricultural production in India has recorded a significant increase and, if the increase has not been more, it is because of lack of adequate facilities. Given the advantages that are now promised for co-operative joint farming, agriculture under peasant proprietorship will doubtless give an impressive performance. If the repeated statements by the protagonists of co-operative farming that it will be voluntary has not carried conviction to the leaders of the new Party, it is because they know very well that a reform of this nature will ultimately end in compulsion through coercion and domination by bureaucracy. The trend of discussions and recommendations made at the Co-operative Conference at Mysore last week, favouring large-scale co-operatives and State participation in capital and board of management—in the name of economic viability and need for ensuring efficiency—only serves to confirm the misgivings of those opposed to co-operative farming.

FOOD TECHNOLOGY

THE application of science and technology to production, preservation and processing of food crops has made rapid strides in recent years. Although agricultural science has had a hoary past, the application of technology after the stage at which crops are raised is of relatively recent origin. In India, there is yet little awareness of what science can do to its crops, whether cereals, fruits or vegetables. Processing of food articles has no doubt received a certain measure of commendable research attention. But, by and large, the progress made by food processing, either in research or in application, is limited, especially when it is viewed against the size of the country and its agricultural production. Indeed, the food processing industry itself is only of modest size, mainly because the demand for processed food is small and confined mainly to the principal cities. Although the food habits of the vast majority of the people and their low purchasing power are the chief causes for this state of affairs, conditions are bound to change gradually in favour of this food with continuing economic development and growing urbanisation. The scope for further progress is, therefore, vast. From this point of view, the Regional Seminar on Food Technology for Asia and the Far East, which was held this week at Mysore, has done well to bring out the implications of this science to the farmer and the consumer.

Agriculture sustains nearly 80 per cent. of the people in the South-East Asian region. It is thus the largest single source of employment. Indeed, it is not merely a profession but a way of life for a large majority of people. Nevertheless, as the Union Food Minister, Mr. A. P. Jain, pointed out, in his inaugural address at the Mysore Seminar, the study of food science and technology and the closely allied field of nutrition with the background of modern scientific knowledge and techniques are comparatively new to the countries of the Asian region. Emphasising the role this new science plays in the food economy of the industrially advanced countries, Mr. Jain said that scientific methods had now advanced so much that not only were the various essential nutrients well preserved but also in several cases the processed products were enriched and made more palatable than the fresh

By far the most important task that remains to be tackled is that of changing the food habits of the people. What is necessary is to educate the citizen in the value of supplementary and protective food articles. Since food habits, once they have been firmly set, die hard, it is advisable to concentrate one's attention on the younger generation. The Agricultural Production Team, sponsored by the Ford Foundation, suggested that a general educational programme should be undertaken, in order to change food habits for better nutrition. The educational material should be channelled through a central agency and disseminated through public health nurses, health workers, agriculture and home science workers, *gram sevikas* and welfare staff. It should show clearly the results of inadequate diet and the tangible gains accomplished through improved diet. Such publicity should enable the results of research conducted by India's food laboratories to reach the people. Calling attention to the work done by these laboratories and the scope for application of food technology to Indian conditions, the Team observed:

"The technical laboratories in India are conducting many experiments with the preservation of indigenous foods by drying and salting. Bananas, for example, can be dehydrated for use as a sweet or as a substitute for the fresh product. Increased use of groundnuts is encouraged by new methods of cleaning, crushing or roasting of the nuts. Fruits are preserved in glass jars and tins and sold as a sauce or preserve. India has some of the finest fruits in the world and improved processing methods will permit better use of available supplies. This is especially important for varieties which do not ship well, but which can be used to good advantage, if processed and preserved."

Among the many notable results of research of particular relevance to Indian conditions, evolved in our laboratories, mention must be made of improved method of parboiling rice and the preparation of multi-purpose food. It would appear that the new method of parboiling rice makes the product free from the disagreeable odour associated with rice parboiled in the traditional method. Parboiled rice has two addi-

foodstuffs. Clearly, the production of agricultural and dairy produce must first be augmented before it is processed or treated in any of the many ways indicated by the advances in food technology.

ATOMIC POWER

IN its admittedly highly specialised sphere, the Department of Atomic Energy continues to make steady progress. A notable development has been the fabrication of the first prototype fuel element for the Canada-India Reactor which is scheduled to start operation by March 1960. The Reactor will be fuelled with about 10 tonnes (1 tonne=1,000 kgs.) of natural uranium in the form of some 176 fuel elements. Explaining the importance of this new stage of operations, Dr. H. J. Bhabha, Secretary to the Department, stated in Bombay this week that the fabrication of fuel elements was a "highly specialised technology, mainly because the metallurgical behaviour of the uranium metal is extremely temperamental." Nuclear grade uranium ingots have now been in production at the uranium metal plant at Trombay since February 1959. The fabrication of a prototype fuel element, with effect from 15th June 1959, is said to mark the culmination of an essential phase in the programme for producing nuclear energy. It has been computed that Rs. 50 lakhs a year of foreign exchange could be saved through the fabrication of fuel elements in India.

Dr. Bhabha disclosed that efforts were being made to locate a suitable site in the Bombay-Ahmedabad region for building India's first atomic power station. The erection of the plant, which would cost about Rs. 55 crores, would be entrusted to some agency to be selected through global tenders. Dr. Bhabha believed that the plant which would produce about 250,000 kw. power might be ready by 1964. He estimated the cost of power at 4 naye paise per unit, though, after a period of, say, five to ten years, it might come down to 2.6 naye paise. By the end of the third Plan, it might be possible to generate 500,000 to 750,000 kw. of nuclear power.

While we have no doubt that India should continue to press nuclear science to peaceful purposes, it would perhaps be in the best inter-

products themselves. Citing an instance of how the absence of processing facilities leads to waste of resources, Mr. Jain recalled that, this year a large part of the "gigantic" crop of mangoes grown in U.P. perished for want of specialised transport or processing and storage facilities. This instance lends weight to the economic importance of food preservation industry and processing techniques, to which Dr. V. Subrahmanyam, Director of the Central Food Technological Research Institute, drew particular attention. Dr. Subrahmanyam said that, if food technology could be developed in the South-East Asian region on anything approaching the scale in the West, its food problems would not cause so much anxiety as they do at present.

In its wider sense, food technology covers all operations connected with the preparation and processing of all food articles. Since the chief deficiency in the average Indian diet is the absence of sufficient quantities of protective foods, food technologists in India have necessarily to devote a major portion of their attention to correcting this deficiency. The Indian Council of Medical Research has indicated how nutritionally deficient is the average Indian diet. The daily intake (in ounces) of different food articles which it has recommended (with actual average intake in brackets) is: cereals 14.0 (16.6); pulses 3.0 (2.3); leafy vegetables 4.0 (0.9); other vegetables 6.0 (4.1); ghee and vegetable oil 2.0 (0.9); milk and milk products 10.0 (3.3); meat, fish and eggs 4.0 (0.9); fruits and nuts 3.0 (0.6); sugar and jaggery 2.0 (0.7); condiments—(0.4). A study of these figures will show that, except in cereals and pulses, the average Indian diet has to be greatly enriched. Indeed, a slight reduction in these two items could conceivably do no harm, whereas any failure to improve the intake of such protective foods as vegetables, vegetable oil and ghee, milk, fruits and meat and eggs, will certainly condemn this country to remain an ill-fed nation, with little capacity for contributing to increased productivity. As the Chief Minister of Mysore, Mr. Jatti, stated in his speech at the Seminar, while religious sentiment and social taboos have conspired to restrict our choice of foodstuffs, even this limited choice has been further restricted by the low purchasing power of the people; in consequence, the average Indian is incapable of long and sustained effort and it is not surprising that his productive capacity is easily the lowest in the world.

tional advantages: (a) it is a more nutritious product than the raw milled rice, and (b) it leads to better recovery of the whole rice. It has been computed that, if all the rice produced in India were parboiled, it would by itself increase the availability of rice by half a million tons. The other result of research is the multipurpose food, which, when added in small quantities to the ordinary food, serves to make it more palatable and nutritious. If these two products alone were more widely publicised and used—efforts should, of course, be made to manufacture them on a large scale—the nutritional level of the average Indian diet could be greatly increased. There are, of course, many other subsidiary food items which, as the special articles in the previous two consecutive issues of this journal have pointed out, could be manufactured in India with great profit to the farmer and benefit to the consumer.

In considering the many complex issues raised by the application of science and technology to the preparation of food articles for consumption in India, it is well to bear in mind two considerations. In the first place, no scientific technique is of any use, if it implies installation of costly equipment in rural regions or results in a product that is priced at a level above the average means of the consumer. Discussing the scope for food technology in Asian region, Dr. A. G. Van Veen, Chief of the Food Processing and Preparation Branch of the F.A.O., rightly emphasised that "canning, cooling and freezing are by no means cheap and simple ways of processing and are, therefore, of only limited value." He added: "We know that the great masses of population of Asia cannot afford expensive preserves of this kind, popular as they may be in North America and certain parts of Europe." He, therefore, suggested a system of community processing, under which the State or the community provided the factory with enough equipment for preservation of food on a small scale. An experiment on these lines could be of considerable assistance to rural areas. Secondly, it cannot be too strongly emphasised that food technology has only a limited application in a situation in which there is a deficit in the supply of

ests of the country that the whole question of setting up atomic power stations were kept under constant expert scrutiny. For one thing, even some of the industrially advanced nations have been reluctant to think in terms of giving high priority to the production of nuclear energy as a source of fuel. Some of them, like the U.S., are well endowed with other sources of energy like oil or natural gas, which are distinctly cheaper than nuclear power, so that they feel that atomic power is not an urgent economic necessity. The U.K. is, of course, making enormous strides of progress in the setting up of such atomic power stations as Calder Hall. But this is because that country's coal reserves are getting depleted or its coal mining has proved to be an increasingly costly operation and it has no other sources of fuel. Italy and Japan are other examples of countries similar to the U.K. In the Soviet Union, the emphasis has no doubt shifted away from coal, but not so much towards production of nuclear power as towards exploitation of its oil reserves to the fullest extent possible. In fine, countries with alternative sources of fuel are giving high priority to their development in preference to nuclear power, for the simple reason that the latter is relatively more expensive and involves the ticklish problem of disposing of the atomic waste.

These considerations point to the need for a certain degree of caution in India's atomic power plans. Nobody would, or should, object to the many phases of atomic energy development programme, particularly to the research and industrial applications. But the question of setting up more than one atomic power plant should be viewed in the light of comparative advantages of nuclear, thermal and hydel power stations. After all, India has large extensive coal reserves. Given a sound price policy, it should be possible to augment coal production speedily. Thermal power should, therefore, prove advantageous to India for a long time to come. India has also not fully developed its water power potentialities. In any case, it is reasonable to expect that the Government should subject the atomic power programme to expert scientific and economic scrutiny before it commits itself too far in that direction. Surely, in the context of India's limited capital resources, it would be wrong to allot, without prior scrutiny, too high a priority to a capital-intensive programme like atomic power project.