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Note on Public Relations

It is now a year since the last General Elections and the new Government has been installed in Orissa. Perhaps of all the States there is the least news and information about developments in Orissa in the national press as a whole. While it may be true in these times that "no news is good news", it would not be desirable to be satisfied with such a situation. If, as is believed, the Orissa Government has a good record and a success story to tell, the plain fact is that it is not being told at all to people outside Orissa, whether in India or abroad. It is even possible that it is not being told adequately to the people of Orissa as a whole. This situation has been widely commented upon by people in key positions in Delhi and elsewhere in the country, by diplomats of other countries posted in India and by members of the press corps in Orissa itself.

A glance at the public relations apparatus of the Orissa Government is enough to explain why the public relations and publicity of the Orissa Government have been so poor during the past year. Active steps need to be taken immediately to upgrade this aspect of the State Government's activities. This is not merely academically desirable but is concretely necessary in the interests of the State and people of Orissa for a variety of reasons such as —

- (i) the desirability of public opinion in India in general being made aware of the onerous problems which the Government and people of Orissa have to face, largely as a legacy of the past, and the need for a reasonable and equitable relationship between the Union Government and the State;
- (ii) the urgent necessity for encouraging investment in industry and business in Orissa which led the Orissa Government recently to come out with a statement of policy designed to facilitate such investment. Such a statement of policy, however, is not enough. The message contained in that statement and the enlightened and liberal approach of the Orissa Government towards industrialisation and investment of capital from outside the State has to be carried to potential investors not only in Calcutta, Bombay and other centres in India but also overseas since Orissa, more than any other part of India, needs foreign capital in order to rectify the imbalance between Orissa's population and capital resources.

In the light of these needs, it is suggested that an appointment be made of an "Advisor on Public Relations" to the Government of Orissa. He should be a high level official adequately qualified and with experience of public relations work in India and abroad. While normally a person of the nature contemplated would expect a salary of Rs.3,000 or more in

private business in India, it may be possible to find a suitable incumbent between Rs.2,000 and Rs.3,000 p.m.

It is suggested that this appointment should be on a contract basis for a term of, say, four years.

The functions of the Advisor on Public Relations would be to keep in close touch with the Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister and other members of the Orissa Government; to be engaged constantly in implementing a programme of projecting the policies of the Orissa Government to the people of Orissa, to people in India generally and in countries abroad from which investment in Orissa may be considered possible. Obviously, the implementation of such a programme will involve maintaining close touch not only with the press in India, both domestic and foreign, and abroad but also the Union Government, industrial and commercial associations, banks and financial institutions, foreign embassies and trade commissioners in India.

While the Department and Directorate of Public Relations in Orissa would naturally be placed under the general guidance and supervision of the Advisor and be at his disposal, the nucleus of an office should also be provided to the Advisor in New Delhi. It should be part of the Advisor's function to spend about half his time every month outside Orissa.

Once a decision is taken by the Orissa Government to make such an appointment, it should not be difficult for some suitable candidates for the position to be located and for a final choice to be made from a short list that may be developed for the purpose.

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