

RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL COUNCIL ON MAY 28, 1966

Drought Situation in Orissa

The General Council notes with grave concern the widespread conditions of acute drought in Orissa which have assumed grave proportions. There have been many starvation deaths, and thousands have become emaciated and are in need of hospitalisation and special diet to restore them to normal health.

The neglect of the last 19 years, the failure of ill-conceived plans on which crores of rupees have been spent and the colossal waste due to favouritism and corruption have resulted in complete failure of many irrigation projects, while many others including large numbers of drinking water wells have remained incomplete. Hence, the total failure of crops in many areas and the acute shortage of drinking water is not due entirely to the failure of rains, but is to a large extent attributable to the inefficiency, neglect and lapses of the Government.

The Council condemns the Orissa Government for its lack of foresight and complete indifference to undertake timely relief measures. The present distress and suffering would have been minimised, if Government had paid heed to the timely warnings and advice from several quarters in recent months and had started relief measures earlier. Even the belated measures now undertaken are vitiated by inefficiency in execution, narrow partisan outlook; and the State Government is unable to prevent corruption and exploitation even during the distress of the people.

The General Council is further of the view that the Central Government cannot be absolved of its share of responsibility, especially in view of the fact that the worst hit areas are largely inhabited by Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and other Backward Classes, who are the worst sufferers of the famine and for whose welfare the Central Government has special constitutional responsibility.

The General Council calls upon the State and Central Governments energetically to undertake and intensify relief measures to save the famine stricken people from starvation ameliorate their sufferings and enable the agriculturists to undertake cultivation in the Kharif season, so that a repetition of the great Famine Tragedy of 1866-67 when one million people perished may be avoided.

This Council also demands that a Commission of Inquiry be appointed to investigate the cause of the present acute famine conditions and numerous starvation deaths in Orissa, to fix responsibility for the failure of relief measures and to suggest measures to prevent the recurrence of such a tragedy in future.