

J.P. ADVOCATES FOUR-TIER STATE SET-UP

Village Community As The Foundation INDIRECT SYSTEM OF VOTING URGED

BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, Monday.—Mr Jayaprakash Narayan today set out the broad features of his plan for lasting and organic democracy in India in an address before the Indian Council of World Affairs.

This, the Sarvodaya leader said, was the first authentic exposition of his thesis, called "Reconstruction of Indian Polity," although some portions of it had appeared in a section of the Press giving a rather distorted picture.

Mr Narayan envisaged a four-tier State structure with the village community, rather than the individual, as the foundational or basic democracy. The three tiers above them would be the zilla councils, State councils and the Union.

The emphasis in the entire scheme would be on the foundational democracy or the gram panchayat which is to be elected not on the basis of adult franchise but by "general unanimity" of all the villagers above 18 or through a system of "drawing lots."

UNIFYING QUALITY

Mr Narayan discarded the present voting system because it tended to divide the village communities by exaggerating their prevailing differences in caste, creed and property. The system was unsuited because the task before Indian democracy is to unite the community for national reconstruction.

Mr Narayan did not claim originality for the scheme. Village communities existed in India until the British replaced them by the parliamentary pattern. Gram panchayats functioned for centuries, undisturbed by internal upheavals or external invasions, because of their vitality and their unifying character.

Even the voting patterns he suggested, Mr Narayan said, were

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not new. The method of "general unanimity" was used in Northern India for electing gram panchayats while that of "drawing lots" was in use in South India until about hundred years ago. He named a village in Madras where the system still worked. Qualifications for a candidate in both cases were strictly laid down.

Mr Narayan did not explain the methods of election for the other three tiers, but hinted that some indirect method should be adopted there also. Even Mr Nehru had thrice mentioned the need for indirect election during his speeches before the last general elections though he did not pursue the idea. Mr Narayan quoted Mr Dhebar as another supporter of this idea.

In Mr Narayan's opinion, the pattern suggested by him was the same as that envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi. Acharya Vinoba Bhave was working on it on a limited scale. He was convinced that the new pattern was superior to the parliamentary pattern, but he would not like to stress it for fear of controversy. It was enough to say that the parliamentary system was unsuitable to India.

RURAL TRADITIONS

Mr Narayan's objections against the parliamentary system—as it functioned in India—were many. The system was against the spirit of India's rural traditions. Village communities in India were a live force but the parliamentary system did not assign any effective role for them in the functioning of democracy.

The parliamentary system, on the other hand, was based on the "atomized individual," a byproduct of industrialization in Europe which disrupted the village communities. In India, village communities were not so thoroughly disrupted yet, he said.

A majority of Indians did not understand the system. They were mere spectators to a system which functioned from above.

The political parties also did not help people in understanding the system. By constantly harping on and exaggerating the differences between them, these parties created dissention and disunity. The parliamentary system of election was, moreover, too expensive for even the smaller parties.

COMMUNIST DANGER

Mr Narayan described the Indian parliamentary system as an "umbrella democracy." It protected the people from above but did not encourage them to function on the theory of "Government of the people, by the people and for the people." It was uninspiring.

There was the danger that the people might opt for Communist dictatorship or military rule because the "democracy from above" is failing and we are not building up democracy from below.

Mr Narayan was not in favour of scrapping the parliamentary system in India until an alternative on the pattern suggested by him was built up. He would like, therefore, the foundations of the new pattern to be laid while Mr Nehru was at the helm of affairs.

It was not difficult, he said, to establish gram panchayats in India's 556,000 villages within the next four or five years. A beginning had already been made in

Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and some other States.

If voluntary workers took up the scheme with understanding and determination, they could lay the foundation for a lasting democracy in India within the next few years, he said.

Parliamentary democracy had failed in most Asian nations and dictatorships had taken their place. Mr Narayan, however, saw a redeeming feature in the dictatorships in Egypt, Pakistan and Indonesia.

The dictators themselves were advocating democracy. The schemes envisaged by the "national union" in Egypt, "basic democracy" in Pakistan and "national front" in Indonesia were similar to the Gandhian ideal of gram rajya.

The only European nation conducting similar experiments, he mentioned, was Yugoslavia.