

Unsub. Asen - May 1962

EDITORIAL

(328)

Uncertain Future

OUR study of India's emergent political pattern after the third general election is completed in this issue with a few selected articles by some political thinkers.

It will be seen from these articles that the assessment of the political situation, while it varies in emphasis according to the political persuasion of the Party leader, broadly there are some features which are noticed by all. Everyone, for instance, marks that the Congress losses are slow and steady; everyone, practically, admits the general weakness of the opposition as a whole and failure of any single Opposition Party to offer an alternative to the Congress; the gains of the 'right-wing' parties of the opposition, and the tragic performance of the left opposition are too obvious to be overlooked. However, these are somewhat facile deductions. When, after noting these deductions, one attempts to go deeper into an analysis of the more fundamental political situation, one encounters a pathetic reliance on conventional norms and a more or less repetitive and imitative thinking instead of some illuminating analysis or any constructive thinking.

Ever since the first general elections of 1952, political leaders and political scientists in India have been preoccupied with certain issues over which certain formulae have been recklessly brandished as solvents to irksome facts. There is the problem of developing an Opposition Party, capable of replacing the Ruling Party. For years together some politicians expended considerable intellectual energy in a debate on whether the Opposition should function as a 'corrective' or as an 'alternative' to the Ruling Party. The very puerility of the formulation showed the immaturity of a leadership intellectually incompetent even to

understand the correct basis of their own political activity. Out of this basic inability arose such other related problems like the nature of Party System in India. The problem is viewed in a mechanical manner and thought of as a problem of reducing the number of parties and avoiding the so-called division of opposition vote. A few politicians are so much fascinated by the Laskian concept of the Party System that consciously and unconsciously they still think of political parties as machines built by some chosen intellectuals on ideas which are fundamentally identical. They are also influenced by the current thinking on 'ideology' versus 'pragmatism' of some American political thinkers, and have accepted their conclusion that 'ideological' approach leads to regimentation and dictatorship and pragmatic approach is the only correct approach for democratic thinkers who believe in a free society. In all this thinking not the least consideration is ever given to the processes of ideological or ideational growth. It is curious that with all the development of social psychology 'ideas' are still being treated as if they were fine germinations of the human brain, a pure vibration of cellular organs, unaffected by social environment. The treatment of ideas by some of these 'scientists', almost suggests that they regard 'ideas' as a biological product, and not a social one. With this approach it becomes logical to treat political parties and Party Systems as intellectual abstractions and not as social phenomena. Once Political Parties are considered as being agglomerations of individuals assembled together on the basis of some abstract ideas and some pragmatic objectives, then, it also follows, that 'adjustments' of 'ideas' and 'objects' is the only convenient and easy method of developing a Party System based on the Las

kian model. It is only a matter for individual intellectuals to adopt a 'reasonable' attitude for 'good' men to come together, irrespective of the 'labels' for these 'labels' after all are paper-badges, mere decorative appellations to which undue importance need not be attached. Individual 'vanity' must be restrained for the greater good of all! Two-Party System, One-Party democracy or Non-Party democracy are attractive alternatives and are being vigorously advocated by a certain type of politician who likes to be a leader without a Party.

After every general election, thrice in succession, these airy, romantic blue-prints for re-organisation of Indian polity are peddled in all gravity and earnestness of divinely inspired dedicated political saints. Everytime, the generality of voters as well as the politically conscious group of activists attached to various Parties have rejected these ideas. There has not developed any trend in the last decade which shows that India will ever move towards the two-Party System of the Laskian concept; and for this we should be grateful to the sanity of the Indian voter. The British model of Party System based on certain adjustment of social and economic life is not only unsuited to India but is positively dangerous to the broad masses of the people. If the Ruling Party succeeds in fostering another Party with fundamentally identical policies, it can only mean success of the ruling classes and castes in evolving a political pattern best adapted for perpetuating their total domination and exploitation. That kind of socially hypocritical and politically fraudulent Party System must never be even allowed to develop in this country. One-Party democracy or the so-called non-Party democracy are only convenient labels invented to cover the power-political motivation of India's traditional ruling class. One-Party democracy or non-Party democracy and even the sugary talk of non-partisan assembly of good men are only intellectual smoke screens invented to espouse a new and vicious form of dictatorship.

Even more dangerous and poisonous is the attack by caste Hindu leaders of the so-called Sarvodaya movement against the adult franchise itself. There have been repeated suggestions for restricting the franchise to the elite, for a reversal to indirect elections. This is an amazing piece of casuistry. It is indulged in most by those who aver their detachment from politics. The detachment is al-

ways expressed in formulations which are invariably suitable to the established leadership and would mean a certain loss to the broad masses. It is rather curious that even when so much power of money, caste, press, is concentrated in the power-elite it should still feel uneasy and apprehensive about the future and should constantly seek new arrangements and patterns which would deprive the people even of their very elementary rights — rights which they exercise in a diffident, faltering manner, and many a times in a manner injurious to themselves.

All this intellectual hibernation leads one to suspect that if India has not gone the way of Pakistan or Burma or UAR it is not because no one thinks these models as worth accepting but because, no one yet has had the grit and the courage to make a determined bid to take the country that way. Intellectual and political timidity has been one of the dominant virtues of India's power-elite. The confused and disarrayed character of Indian politics which shows very little change after one complete decade is a continuous expression of the continuing failure of the present power-elite and its political experimentation. It has been a politics of individuals, a few good but mostly unscrupulous, rarely outstanding but generally mediocre. Such politics can have very little impact on socio-economic processes and is not likely to penetrate the mass-mind. Politics in India, especially the so-called Opposition Politics has been largely a game of throwing pebbles in a boundless ocean. Even when there is a ripple it is so small compared to the vast expanse that it quickly vanishes, completely and without a trace. The task of churning an ocean is a huge task requiring almost super-human energy and collective mass action sustained over a very long period of time. The politically and intellectually timid naturally abhor such a prospect, try to shirk it and even run away from a situation if it is compulsive of such an outcome.

It is our sad conclusion that as yet there is no political force in the country either capable of or even though incapable at least willing and seriously determined to churn the ocean of Indian social life. In the absence of such a determined political movement rooted in socio-economic processes the future remains uncertain and unpredictable. There is yet no visible claimant to the future of India's heritage—a rather pathetic situation, but nonetheless, it seems to us the true one. ●