

Programme to End Poverty

1

Indian poverty is largely due to dearth of capital and lack of tools. The Indian has to produce wealth with tools and capital worth Rs. 150 while the West European commands over Rs. 3,000 worth of production equipment. Foreign capital cannot bridge this gap. Not even a billion dollar loan can raise the per head capital in India by more than Rs. 10 so that it could at the most be raised to Rs. 160. Native capital is wholly incapable of this task. The last five years have conclusively shown that Indian capital does not invest in the industries that support life and give health. Its largest investments have been in the artificial ghee industry and the cinema and pharmaceuticals have probably followed. This is only natural. The industries and occupations of food, cloth and housing although highly necessary for the health and well-being of the people retain no scope for quick and high profits. A dairy means a long period of waiting and rather low and uncertain profits at the end of five years and more, while a plant of artificial ghee means quick and high profits. By its own showing, capitalism has condemned itself. The State alone can form capital and provide tools and organization for new and healthy occupations and to do that it must have a plan on the basis of social ownership of new capital and must plan for the nation as a whole. The 13-point programme to end poverty contains two main items of capital formation: (1) Food Army, and (2) Industrialization, particularly with the help of cottage industry machines. No industrialist or federation of industrialists can promote the invention of machines or their manufacture. Indian record in inventing machines is to date zero. The State must now step in. Capital is past earnings turned into tools. In the first place, Indian savings are very low and in the second

place even these cannot be turned into tools for lack of production goods industries. The State alone can step up both savings and tools. Among savings available to the State for capital formation would be the normal yearly balance and additions to it from profits out of nationalised industries and sterling balances and, of course, money can also be created in reasonable amounts if it is put to the use of capital formation under a national economic plan. India is living in a state of deferred death. She is eating her past earnings and the rest of the sterling balances will be spent up in another two or three years. Famine will stare in the face and then it will be too late. The key industries of the country must be nationalized during the current year if catastrophe is to be avoided. A plan of capital formation must be put into immediate operation. In addition to the food army and small machine industrialization, volunteer labour is a third item of capital formation. Even if one out of every ten in the adult population were to give an hour of free work to his village on some work of digging and building, the country would be able to finance capital works worth more than one billion rupees without spending anything at all. This will be possible only after the destruction of feudal and capitalist ownership and when the people are enthused into a feeling of mastery over their wealth. Meanwhile, volunteer bands of the more conscious elements in the population must set to work immediately. The destruction of feudalism and capitalism is not alone a dictate of justice or equality but a simple life and death issue for the Indian people. In another two or three years it will be too late and famine will stalk the land.

2

Politics consist of four elements—State,

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Government, Party and Individual. In a democracy, each element has its place and a corresponding chart of duties and rights. In a dictatorship, all barriers are pulled down and distinctions and limitations erased so that all the four elements are mixed into a blur. The Indian State has become the Congress Government. The Congress Government has become the Congress Party and the Congress Party is fast becoming the Prime Minister. The process has gone on before our eyes. Events are heading towards a natural culmination where the Prime Minister would be able to say and act as if he were the Indian State. Pure dictatorship prevails in the ruling party in India. Luckily, India has also an opposition and that is why democracy has still a fighting chance of asserting itself. Some opposition elements want to fight a Congress dictatorship by building up a more efficient and ruthless dictatorship of their own. That way lies disaster and ruin. No dictatorship can knock the inertia out of the old and lazy bones of India. A Socialist dictatorship will be as inefficient, corrupt and policyless as the Congress dictatorship. To put activity into lazy bones, distinctions and limitations among the four elements of which politics is composed must be maintained. Some men must be willing to abdicate power. Even though able to have it they must refuse to possess it. But this is perhaps an unattainable ideal glimpsed only once in recent history. Partial abdication of power is, however, possible for everybody and should be so in a democracy. Recognition of limitations is partial abdication of power. From the national to the village politician, everyone in India must restrain himself in the accumulation and use of power. The four-pillar State is an inevitable consequence of such a recognition. Power of the State must be broken up into as many fragments as there are villages and reposed in the village community. Naturally the central limb of the State must have power enough to maintain the integrity and unity of the State and the rest of it must be fragmented. I do not know of any other way of introducing change and activity into Indian life. The 13-point programme to end poverty, therefore, makes the four-pillar State the framework into which the other twelve items must fit in. A great load of responsibility rests on the Socialist rank and file. In addition to being an agitator, the Socialist must now learn up all that he can about soil and water conditions, raw materials, processing possibilities, common lands, thinking

habits—in short, industrial and economic possibilities of his village or town community. He must at the same time be seized with the revolutionary passion of the four pillar State. Furthermore, his relations with his community must be responsible and he must be aware of his limitations. Socialists must now unfold a warm and live debate around the programme to end poverty in their communities. These centers of debate and agitation will in time and if necessary become the centers of revolutionary power for the destruction of feudalism and capitalism, for the setting up of the four pillar State and for the removal of poverty.

3

Adulteration is the keynote of Indian life. Food is adulterated and so is oil and ghee and all mutual dealings are adulterated. No one can be quite sure about anything except that falsity and bribery is almost a part of every transaction. In such a national situation many men are losing faith in political changes and insist on raising up character as a prerequisite for everything else. How is character to be built up? In the situation that exists today, the greatest danger to character comes from greed and big money, wasteful expenditure and the social prestige that is falsely associated with it. Men want money, those at the top want more of it and anyhow, in order to maintain themselves in luxury and prestige, and those at the bottom want a little bit more so as to fill their belly. The attack on greed must, therefore, take place at the top. This is the only way to rid the population of its present obsession with money. The programme to end poverty lays down a maximum expenditure of Rs. 1,000 per average family. It is futile to lay down such a maximum for the services alone because capitalists and landlords who have much higher incomes can easily corrupt them. Total loss of national character and austerity conditions prevailing in the country dictate such a ceiling on people's incomes and expenditures. That is the only way to make people think and feel along lines of general uplift in place of their present obsession with individual uplift. No amount of religion or education can achieve this diverting of people's attention from individual uplift to general uplift unless the law steps in and makes punishable all spending above Rs. 1,000 per family. Once this is done, prices will fall, habits will change, speculation will no longer be useful and education or

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religion can then step in to root out other remnants of falsity and bribery. Education is at present built up on the same premises as the general falsity of Indian character. It neither trains the person's mind nor equips him for a living. An increasing shift from barren education into the subjects known as poly-technical or technical education is required. Parents and sons and daughters will heave a sigh of relief at such a shift. A very large part of what is known as university education today will in the years to come be taken up by a network of people's universities and high schools. Such institutions are meant for young men and women who take to some occupation after the matriculation, work in it for some years and then take a six months' or a year's leave to attend them. Such men and women in Europe obtain an education superior to that of the Indian graduate. Education and culture must take roots in the soil and this can be done only if the national language is made compulsory in the universities straightaway. A master campaign of literacy can be easily undertaken in a four-pillar State which has been rid of landed and capitalist ownership.

Recreational education is as false and barren as any other aspect of Indian life. Often young students have no other diversion except to march up and down the main road of their town and look at the fashion and vanities of women. Of any adventure in the realm of ideas and human relationships there is but little. Strains of songs also produce a mental state of impotent complaint. All this must stop. The programme to end poverty makes it incumbent upon the State to start or help in the starting of cultural institutes, youth clubs and women's clubs. This will undoubtedly bring variety and joy into the songs and talk of the people. Finally, the Anti-Corruption Department of the State must be, like High Court Judges, independent of the Government. The four-pillar State, by making the village or the city community largely responsible to itself, by handing over a large part of the administration to it, will remove such corruption as inevitably comes in India with the system that rules from above. The philosophical elements in character formation are very decisive but they form a different story.