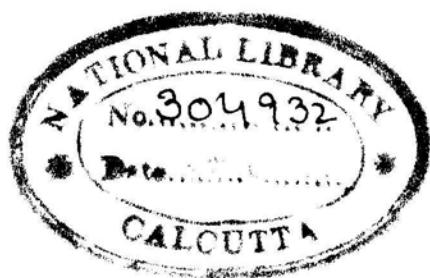


# REVIEW

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ALL INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE

Berhampur (Ganjam)

May, 10, 1955

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We are meeting after three and a half months. Three or four months is not a long time in the history of a Nation. But at the pace we are accustomed to walk on, to be exact at, the rate the world is marching today, every day counts.

It is an eventful period we are living through. The Avadi Resolution, as it is popularly called, has created a new wave of enthusiasm among the people. The fulfilment of the targets of the first Five Year Plan has created a new faith in our capacity to undertake increased burdens. The results of Andhra Elections have shown the people's inherent faith in the path of democratic progress. The Afro-Asian Conference has created a new balance in the international politics. And finally the passage of the Constitution Amendment Bill in the Parliament with a huge majority, almost bordering on unanimity with even business representatives voting for the amendment, has shown once again the will of our people to rise above themselves in the larger interest of the Nation.

This Session, as you know, has been called at Berhampore and will be attended by Acharya Vinobaji. With the approval of the Working Committee and in anticipation of your consent I have taken the liberty of inviting him in our midst. You will remember the message he sent to us at the time of the Avadi Session. While not in the Congress he feels that he has a right and claim upon our services. The cause that he made his own is as much our cause as his. Late

Dr. Einstein is reported to have said as the head of the Enquiry Committee of the atomic scientists: "The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our mode of thinking and thus we drift towards unparalleled catastrophe". Panditji and Vinobaji are today straining their nerves to change our mode of thinking. It is a proud privilege of this organisation that these two sons of this great country, great disciples of a great Seer, great figures in their own right, are with us to guide us and through the Committee the Nation as a whole. I extend to Vinobaji on behalf of all of you and on my behalf our sincere welcome with an assurance once again that, whatever our shortcomings, we shall do our best to discharge the responsibilities for the fulfilment of the commitment that he has made, which is not only his but ours as well.

I am now proceeding to other matters. The Working Committee has all along been feeling that the A. I. C. C. meetings between the two Plenary Sessions should be more in the nature of deliberative meetings than miniature Open Sessions. There is a lot of task awaiting us and if we are to do justice to the same, we should concentrate on a closer study of the problems which in the nature of circumstances may not be entirely possible in the Open Sessions. Therefore, if you all agree, we can after the first bigger meeting, adopt the resolutions of a non-controversial character with a reasonable number of speeches and concentrate on those that require more detailed discussions.

The Avadi resolution on Socialist Pattern of Society has cast tremendous responsibility upon us. It is the next big undertaking in our organisation's history after the Independence Resolution of 1929-30. We are all agreed that the step has been taken none too soon. Political institution

is but a means to an end. The end which constituted the soul and the spirit of our struggle was the emancipation of the masses from bondage, from fear, from want and ignorance. The people have been liberated from the bondage and to a great extent from fear. Our fight for social order based upon justice and equality where want and ignorance will be the things of the past, continues. The Avadi resolution, therefore, does not constitute an enunciation of a new philosophy. It is only the reiteration of the goal in the language everybody could understand. It is only the acceptance of the hard fact that with the political objective having been achieved, the emphasis must now shift to the socio-economic problems. I would however reaffirm that ideologically we never looked at the problem differently. From the angle of practical politics also, social and economic institutions should keep pace with political institutions. Having accepted to work out a Government based upon the consent of the adult population of the country, we have to work out our social and economic life in consonance with that change. A broad-based political structure with a rigid, restrictive or narrow socio-economic structure would produce strains and tensions, the results of which cannot be foretold. Wherever the countries have tried to walk these tricky paths, they have either been compelled to retrace their steps by modifying their democratic structure, at times to the limit of creating a fascist dictatorship or ended in a burst up risking the stability of the whole social fabric. We have therefore to provide a basis to our political life—the basis of a just and equitable social order which would not only sustain the weight of the political fabric but free the country from the cobwebs of an under-developed economy and inhibited social growth. Convinced of this, the Avadi resolution

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was the only legitimate step to take. It has been taken at the appropriate moment. It has received that genuine and enthusiastic response which only a step, which echoes the popular urge, can receive. Even when we were drafting and considering the resolution at Avadi, it was being digested and assimilated by the people in the neighbouring State of Andhra. The people see in it our determination to live upto our history, and fulfil our pledges. They also see in it a promise for their own redemption.

The Avadi resolution, as I was saying, throws great responsibility upon us. Let us only think of the targets :

- (1) Elimination of unemployment within ten years ;
- (2) Introduction of Basic Education upto the secondary stage in ten years ;
- (3) raising the standard of living of our people by doubling the per capita income within fifteen years ;
- (4) Creating equality of opportunities in all the spheres of our social and economic life.

You will appreciate that this is a job that demands all the courage, skill, patience, tactfulness and vision, the country as a whole can bring to bear upon the task. As an organisation entrusted by the nation with the responsibility of carrying out its policies and programmes, it becomes our duty to assess our strength and make good the deficiencies if and wher ever they are noticeable. I have been touring the country and from such active contacts I have been able to establish, I can say that Congress has the requisite potential to discharge

the responsibility that the nation has placed upon it with so much trust and confidence. We have the material; it has an urge to serve; and it is willing to be shaped. But the pulls and pushes of the moment, want of any test, lack of training and lack of properly integrated ideological background, have created a certain degree of confusion in our ranks and a fall in our standards. We have now a Standing Committee of the Working Committee which is examining this question. Its report with recommendations of the Working Committee will be before you. It will be for you to give to the Working Committee necessary instructions and authority to tackle these problems.

What we need at the moment is an army of selfless, informed and disciplined workers clear in their aims and objectives and wedded to the philosophy which has guided our movement for the last forty years. Selflessness can come from within. No effort that we can make from outside produces selflessness. But so far as information and discipline are concerned the organisation can certainly do something. While it was sufficient in the old days of struggle for freedom to have the spirit and courage to stand up against oppression, in the changed circumstances what is needed is a clear conception of the realities, born of study and confidence in the capacity of the organisation, born of the the great performance during the last seven years and the unique opportunities that lie ahead of us. The basic need continues to be service and greater service.

The next consideration is that such services should be disciplined. I do not use the word discipline in its narrow sense. Congress has

never believed in regimentation. But all the same we cannot afford to be an amorphous mass of quantity without any relation to quality. In the former days there was very little to gain and much to lose. The conditions in the country have changed and some of the people look to the Congress as a fair and lovely meadow where they can graze at their sweet will and to their hearts content. We are, therefore, called upon to devise checks which would make it impossible for anybody to try his luck at the cost of the prestige of the organisation or the interest of the people. It is very difficult to devise such checks at the primary members level. But there is no reason why we cannot raise the standard of our active membership.

There are certain negative checks which are possible even today. For instance, groupism, casteism, communalism are some of the patent shortcomings that have crept in the organisation. I must say here again that it is not the base that is always at fault. In more than fifty per cent of the cases, it is the top that takes the lead. Detached functioning has become impossible in some of these cases. One has to belong to one or the other group if one wants to serve the Congress. Good men finding it too heavy a price to pay stand aside in sheer helplessness. What is worse, the new recruit, generally a young and enthusiastic person is obliged by circumstances to take his lessons in nation's service through group politics. Casteism and communalism also act as curbs to the growth of the organisation to its fullest heights. Sadly enough, elections appear to afford to them a good opportunity to bring pressure upon the political parties and the latter are compelled to enter into various kinds of compromises not even

the external gloss of philanthropic objectives can hide.

I can assure you that the Working Committee is conscious of the fact that a punitive approach is not in itself a sufficient remedy. Every endeavour will be made to devise a positive programme through constructive work to raise the level of the organisation both in point of quality and strength. But there may be cases where the Working Committee may be left with no other alternative but to use its disciplinary authority to cleanse the channels of the country's political life of the dross of groupism, casteism and communalism. You will agree that inaction in such cases will be positive disservice to the organisation.

The delegate elections and the elections of office-bearers have been causing a great deal of difficulty and leaving in the wake a legacy of unpleasantness and bitterness amongst the workers. Partly, this is the result of ignorance about the role of elections in a political organisation ; but mainly it is the result of greed to secure position of vantage to push one's candidates at the forthcoming General Elections. We have to come to some decision in such cases. There is a clear duty cast on us to say emphatically that the Parliamentary Board may not regard itself bound to accept any recommendation of any election committee about whose bonafides there is reasonable doubt ; and of any election committee whose proposals do not carry an assurance that the same have been made after impartial examination of the records of service of the nominees. As far as possible no person, if he is a sitting member, should be considered for ticket who has not maintained contact with his constituency or, if he is not a sitting member, who has



not to his credit some active service in that area which he seeks to represent.

Another attraction at the delegates election is of monopolising seats and places of positions in government and the party. It is not realised that such a monopolistic attitude can have no place in a democratic organisation. Congress has to be a flowing river where new elements and new blood should get ample scope for training in responsibility. At times, this scramble is the outcome of a fear that only persons, who hold some kind of office in the organisation will be heard. The ground for that fear should be removed. Congressmen, whether in office or outside, should have ample scope to serve the organisation and the people according to their abilities. You will have to consider the proposal of the Working Committee as to the need for restraint on multiplicity of posts.

It has also been noticed, though in a few cases, that Congressmen in office in the Government try to influence the course of delegates and office-bearers elections. While constitutionally this cannot be objected to, at a practical level their involvement often gives cause for a feeling that those in power mean also to capture the organisational control. This results in disturbing the balance and harmony between the organisational wing and the administrative wing.

But the most important aspect of the Purity and Strengthening of the Organisation resolution is the training and equipment of our worker. There is such a dearth of literature, information and training facilities for our workers. You will see that the first step in this direction has been taken. Study classes are being organised and some literature has been prepared. This must develop

till every active member is initiated in the philosophy, acquires the necessary ideological background and is harnessed in some constructive activity

As regards women there will be some proposals before you in regard to the representation in the Congress organisation. The A. I. C. C. is already inviting the organisers and in consultation with them they will take steps to formulate and implement the programme to associate increasingly the womanhood of the country in the fulfilment of the great task.

I cannot help referring to the most unfortunate incident that took place in Goalpara in Assam. The most objectionable feature of this incident is that some of the Congressmen in that district associated themselves with what is nothing short of an anti-national movement. Disruption was an old disease in this country in the past. It has taken many forms and shapes in the past. While one can bear with a demand for linguistic provinces, it is surely a disruptionist tendency to carry it to the limit of resorting to violence against our own co-citizens. Every Indian has an inalienable right to live in every part of India whatever the language he speaks or the language group he belongs to. The States Reorganisation Commission has been established to satisfy the reasonable aspirations of the people who believe in linguistic states, but we have to be clear that we do not carry the demand to the limit of dictation. You will have to consider, therefore, what steps should be taken to see that the atmosphere of harmony and cordial relationship is guaranteed so that the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission, when they are received, are considered with detached minds.

I am equally sure, every Pradesh Congress Committee will make itself responsible to see that neither its constituent bodies nor Congressmen in its area violate the instructions issued by the Working Committee from time to time in this connection.

The Government of India, have already taken two active steps, namely, the amendment of article XXXI (a) of the Constitution and Nationalisation of the Imperial Bank of India. The proposed modifications in the Company Law and modification of the Income Tax Schedule suggested in the last budget speech in the Parliament are also pointers in the direction of the new objectives we have framed.

But the major problem that confronts us is unemployment and the need for greater production. Unemployment is a phenomenon which will have to be tackled from all possible directions. I do not underrate the role of heavy and large scale industries in increasing the wealth of the country to fight its poverty. But the only available medium which can go a long way in tackling this problem of unemployment is the expansion of the large scale and the Village Industries sector. This is now accepted by every one. Decentralisation, if it is not to make for disintegration, must also be planned. Both the Planning Commission and the Khadi and Village Industries Board are putting their heads together for that purpose. But the major problem will be the creation of the necessary organisation to push through the programme. The Congress has always advocated the cause of village and cottage industries. It will therefore be expected of the Congress that it lends the maximum support to the expansion of village industries. We have to take an active

interest not only in the preparation of the programme but in the implementation of it. Village Industries, in spite of the protective measures which necessarily will have to be adopted if they have to stand in competition with large-scale industries, will have to be developed on a scientific basis. We shall have to train our workers for the great job. We have a great stake—the fulfilment of our pledge to provide employment and fuller employment to every citizen in the country within ten years or failure to fulfil it. We cannot transfer the whole responsibility upon the Government. We have to play our part in the fulfilment of our target within the stipulated time. A well spread out organisation like the Congress only can do so. This means we should try to understand the problem of unemployment and village industries.

There is also the need for creating a favourable atmosphere for Basic Education. The fulcrum of any educational activity is the teacher. To the extent that we succeed in converting him, to that extent only shall we succeed in carrying the experiment in Education to a fruition.

There are the Community Projects and the National Extension Services also. They are playing an important role in creating consciousness among the people of the villages and attracting them to a new way of life. But we have to give them the necessary social direction and utilise their energies for increasing the wealth of the nation. Then and then only, will the benefit, these blocks and centres have given, can be placed on a permanent footing.

Above all, there is Bhoodan and Sampattidan movement. It has, apart from an economic significance, a great spiritual significance. It aims at

converting the outlook and the minds of the people. It aims at giving a direction to our social and economic programme. It aims at giving a new content and meaning to the social order we envisage. While attempting to render material assistance to the people, it aims to revive that creative urge and spirit of sacrifice and on which alone can we hope, to build up a strong and healthy social order. It becomes our responsibility, therefore, to throw ourselves heart and soul in this great activity.

While I have dwelt upon the problems of organisation and the other important problems, I cannot overlook the need for attending to the problem of preparing the organisation for the General Elections next year. We have clarified our aims. The general outline of the Second Five-Year Plan will further clarify our programme. We are trying to keep up with other problems that face the country. We should simultaneously think about this problem too. The most important problem, so far as the general elections are concerned, is the question of selection of candidates. You will remember how Panditji felt about this question at the time of the last general elections. In spite of the short time at his disposal, he and the Parliamentary Board made their best effort to select candidates on the basis of 'merit and service'. Experience has shown that this cannot be done within a few weeks before the general elections. While it is not the intention of the Working Committee or the Parliamentary Board to prepare a final list of selectees directly, it is our duty, if we mean to carry conviction to the people that we are giving them the best representation possible, to undertake the collection of data, settling the principles of selection and scrutiny as early as possible. I have

already made it clear above and would make it clear once again, that whatever the recommendations of the subordinate selection boards or committees they can be acceptable to the Parliamentary Board only to the extent they carry an impress of the impartiality of the subordinate committees. There is also another aspect of this problem. While we cannot ignore the need for giving a stable government to the people, and therefore, securing a stable majority, we have a responsibility no less important to see that every section and interest in the country get proper representation including women and others who have a just ground to complain at the moment that they are not receiving adequate representation.

Finally, I come to the Constructive Programme. You know that the Working Committee has divided India into six zones and has appointed zonal organisers for each. Their first duty will be to secure an idea of the constructive work done either directly by the Congress organisation or by the Congressmen individually. The first phase will be survey of the work and the strengthening of the existing organisations. Simultaneously through the Pradesh Congress Committees and District Congress Committees efforts will be made to bring gradually every active member in the current of some constructive activity having regard to his aptitude. I realise a growing feeling that our membership is limited and the active members are neither active nor effective. We have no idea to adopt a rigid narrow approach to the question of the constructive work programme.

We feel we should evolve something worth while that will satisfy the creative urge and the spirit of adventure of young men also. You will be pleased to know that some of the Pradesh Congress Committees have taken active interest

in the formation of Youth Camps and about 500 camps have already been formed with about 50,000 young men and women. It is expected that we shall be able to assist in the formation of about a thousand labour camps this year. It is also expected that the Youth Section will soon be vitalised and will enter into the villages. It is expected that this will be a feeder activity to our Seva Dal and other voluntary activity. We are thinking about the students organisation also on a non-political basis. Such care as is possible is being taken to give a real mass basis to the organisation in the light of the new objective. Our relations with INTUC are as happy and cordial as one can expect. We are trying to tie up the loose ends and fill up the gaps. We are opening with every P.C.C. a Kisan Wing, a small committee to attend specifically to the problems of kisans. A small sub-Committee has been set up to examine the progress of the Land Reforms in the country. We shall do our best to see that the States receive fullest assistance in the preparation and implementation of the legislation to carry out the programme of Land Reforms suggested in the first Five Year Plan. I have already dealt with the question of bringing women under the organisation in a large number.

The Pradesh Congress Committee convenors are meeting on the 20th of this month and will be discussing the questions pertaining to the women for three days.

You will thus see that the expanse of the constructive work is neither narrow nor exclusive. It will be a part of the integrated whole functioning through the political wing, the legislative wing, and in co-operation with the special constructive workers' organisation, such as, the Khadi and Village Industries Board, Bhoodan, Harijan Sevak

Sangh, Bharat Sevak Samaj, Community Projects and National Extension Service centres, the various wings of the Congress such as, Women, Youth and other sections. But the core and centre of the constructive activity and its aims will be training and effective participation of each and every active member and members of the legislatures elected on Congress ticket, in some activity not just superficially but in the real sense of the term.

Friends, I have given you an account of what has been done and what is being worked out. I hope and trust we shall have the benefit of your advice and fullest co-operation in carrying out these programmes.

