

RAGS TO LOINCLOTHS IN FIFTEEN YEARS

An Economic Plan For India

HUNDREDS of millions of people and acres and thousands of millions of pounds sterling are lightly thrown about in conversation by Sir Datar Singh and N. N. Wadia, two Indian business men at present in New Zealand. The only thing they are short of is time. Even so, however, they have allowed their "Plan" ten years more than the Russians could spare. India's standard of living is to be doubled in 15 years.

Sir Datar Singh, very distinguished-looking in his bushy black beard and white Sikh turban, is adviser on agriculture to the Government of India. Mr. Wadia, who dresses like the rest of Rotary, is a prominent industrialist of Bombay, the City of Smokestacks.

The "Plan" on behalf of which they are visiting New Zealand is the "Bombay Plan" formulated by eight Indian magnates. It was published in Britain as a Penguin Special nearly a year ago, but, through paper shortage, has not yet reached this country. The war has had a double effect upon India. On the one hand it has vastly increased factory output and owners' wealth. On the other hand it has, by inflating prices and removing goods, pushed below the rice-line millions who normally exist just upon it. With financial power to expand the machinery of production at last in Indian hands and the need for doing it now more than ever before Indian eyes, both the Government of India and the Indian Federation of Labour have evolved gigantic schemes for economic betterment. But the business men were in before them and their plan remains the basis of all changes proposed. The Viceroy, indeed, has appointed to his Executive Council, as Minister in charge of Post-War Development, one of the Plan's Industrialist signatories—Sir Ardesir Dalal, once a Civil Servant and more recently head

of the Tata Iron and Steel Company, which ranks among the great industrial plants of the world.

Plans for Irrigation

This side of expansion was Mr. Wadia's concern. *The Listener*, however, was anxious to hear the details of farm improvement upon which all betterment in India must ultimately rest.

"India has 610 million acres of cultivable land, out of which only 360 million acres are at present cultivated, giving 0.9 of an acre per head of population," explained Sir Datar. "Already, however, we have irrigated 60 million acres—largely recovered from the deserts, which, as farms and gardens and orchards, make now some of our best land. There is much more unused land, as you can see from the figures, still to be made fruitful, and much of our cultivated land also has an uncertain rainfall and would do better with irrigation. So after the war we plan to water another 50 million acres. Fortunately most of our rivers rise among mighty mountains, and, being fed by melting snow in summer, are full all the year round. We intend to link them so that water can be diverted out of one river basin into another when there are regional droughts. These schemes will provide electric power also."

The reporter suggested that jungles might be cut down. "No," said Sir Datar, "only 17 per cent. of our country is under forest and that is too little already to prevent erosion and drought and to provide timber. We must also use much more wood fuel in India. At present cowdung is generally burnt, but this should be going back into the land as manure, together with the vast quantities of fertiliser that we are preparing to produce."

Much Need for Change

Did this not indicate that changes in farming practice were needed as well as new lands under cultivation, asked the



INDIAN TRADE DELEGATES in New Zealand: N. N. Wadia (left) and Sir Datar Singh

reporter; and Sir Datar agreed. If 1,400lb. of rice was the average yield in China, 1,450lb. in U.S.A., 2,000lb. in Egypt, 2,300lb. in Japan, and 3,000lb. in Italy, India could not be satisfied with 800lb. Similarly with wheat production. The output there had remained at 800lb. per acre for many decades.

"Not only farming practice," continued Sir Datar, "but a good deal else needs changing. For example, because every household does every part of its own baking and cooking we waste fuel on a terrific scale. Then you are aware of our great herds of cattle. India has the greatest number of cattle in the world—and, incidentally, the poorest milk yield per head. These cattle are not unproductive, as many people outside India suppose, for they provide 80 per cent. of all our draft power as well as our milk. But because they may not be killed, great numbers of old beasts take food that younger ones should be getting. We must gradually get the ordinary bulls castrated and replaced by better stock."

What New Zealand Might Do

Some from New Zealand perhaps, suggested the reporter. Sir Datar, however, was doubtful how much Indian strains could be improved from outside. Local types had evolved resistance to disease and adaptation to climatic conditions.

But extra milk products would certainly be needed from somewhere despite the 300 per cent. increase in milk yield planned for. All New Zealand's skim milk could be taken by a wealthier India, and as much cheese and butter as we could spare—always provided, of course, that our prices could meet competition from other sources.

"But could India, indeed, be made wealthier," we asked. "Were not improvements of the last century largely swallowed up in the phenomenal increase in population. Or would not the village money-lender get the increase in income from improved farming?"

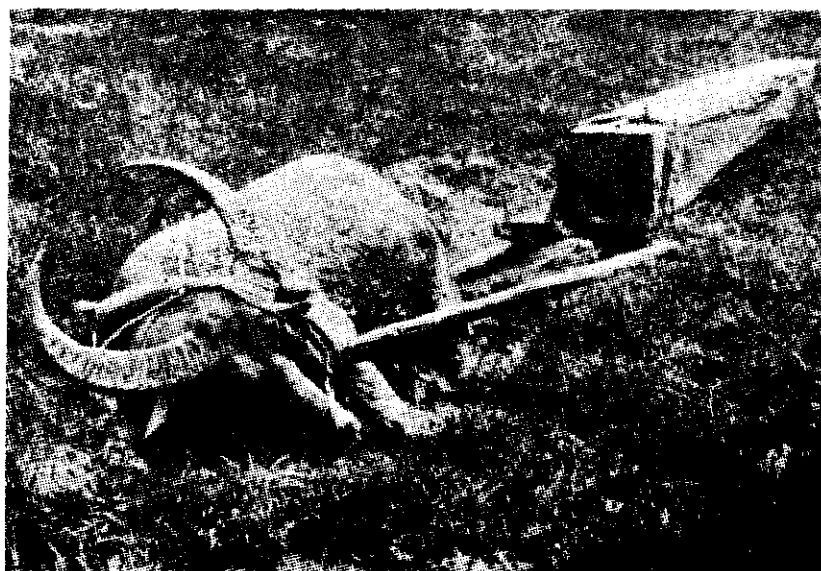
"It is true," said Sir Datar Singh, "that we are 400 millions already and increase by five million every year. But our Plan is to double the standard of living in 15 years, not to increase it a mere 15 per cent. or so in pace with population. Though ultimately," he added, "our expanding population will require other measures. The peasants, indeed, are deeply in debt. Another trouble is that the law of equal inheritance by sons keeps dividing up farms until already enormous numbers are uneconomically small. Co-operative lending and co-operative farming are, I believe, the solution."

Debtor Country No Longer

But where was the money to come from—ten thousand million pounds sterling?

"Always we have been a debtor country to the United Kingdom," said Sir Datar. "Always we have sent wealth west to Europe, and kept poor ourselves. But the war has made the United Kingdom our creditor. Already we have £1,000,000,000 in London and it increases by £300,000,000 every year. This is the basis for the buying we must do from overseas to get our peasants the agricultural tools, our factories the heavy machinery, and our people the extra food that we must have to get modernised. We will tax ourselves for what more we need—some £10,000,000,000 in all."

The prospect of one-fifth of the human race stepping, after millenniums of poverty, towards the standards of life that we call human, was fascinating. The further questions to be asked on how practical were the plans made to attain it were pressing. But the Indian delegates, as we said in opening, are short only of time.



Eighty per cent of India's draft power, as well as her milk, comes from cattle

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together the records of special bands with special vocalists, quite irrespective of the tunes played. Moreover, the name of the arranger of the music was becoming of peculiar interest to the genuine collector. In other words, the tune did not matter, so long as it was played in the style expected from favourite performers and arrangers.

As to the output of this type of music, Mr. Pearce remarked that there were now 105 recording companies in America devoting themselves exclusively to jazz and swing. And there was a distinct difference between the two. The jazz of to-day suggested "a completely improvised performance, whereas swing was a combination of arranged ensembles with the solo interpolated."

The eight years Mr. Pearce has spent in his 2YA session have brought him recognition outside New Zealand—including a recent reference in *Chicago Down Beat* by a world authority on swing, William H. Miller.