

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS OF

MR. P. C. BOSE, B.Sc. (Glas.) M.A.E., M.I.E. (Ind.), F.N.I.

Friends : This is the third time in succession—you have done me the honour of electing me your President and I am grateful to you. I am also deeply moved to think that I am the first President of your Association in Independent India. I know it is your affection and love for me—more than my intrinsic value and ability—which has prompted you to take this step. I however feel sure—with your co-operation and advice—I shall be able to discharge my duties in furthering the cause of this Association.

The last year has been crowded with events—which have brought about great changes in this sub-continent of ours. We have achieved our political freedom after paying a great price. India has been divided—and the unfortunate provinces of Bengal and the Punjab have been vivisected. The father of the Indian Nation—Mahatma Gandhi—the only sane person in this insane world of ours—is no more with us. A great national calamity has robbed us—nay the world of its proudest possession. We have been stunned—but this must have been the *will* of God. I firmly believe that this will be the turning point in the history of the world—and the world will be a better place to live in after the blood bath—where there will be little of Nationalism, Provincialism, Communalism and other pernicious “isms”.

Problems : I shall confine myself to the problems of the newly formed province of West Bengal—which has been created due to the partition of parent Bengal. We all know that Bengal—as we used to know her—is one entity. The people speak the same language—take the same kind of food—have the same cultural background,—yet the malignant theory of two nations gained ground and has done the worst mischief possible. It is however no use at this stage to mourn over the loss we have suffered.

The West Bengal is about one third in area of the old Province of Bengal. According to the census figure of 1941 its population is about 2.12 crores or 35.1 per cent. of the undivided Bengal.

This number must have increased substantially due to the growth of population during the inter census period and due to influx of population to Calcutta and adjacent areas from other parts of the country during the war years. Since partition of Bengal—there is a large influx of people from East Bengal into West Bengal. Though there is no reliable figure available, I do not think I shall be far wrong if I say already 10 lakhs have migrated from East Bengal. The area of West Bengal is 28215 square miles which is about 36.4 per cent. of the undivided Bengal. The density of population—if you take present figure to be 25 millions—is 886 per sq. mile. This is a high figure.

As per 1941 census 22 per cent. of the population live in towns. As most of the people coming from East Bengal are settling down in towns—town population of the newly formed province is rapidly rising. This sudden rise in population in town has created new problems of serious magnitude and complexity. West Bengal is faced with problem of feeding, housing, water supply, public health, as also finding employment and means of livelihood for large blocks of people. There is acute shortage of housing in all towns. The water supply is inadequate—arrangements for disposal of human excreta and refuse have in many cases broken down, medical and educational facilities—which at no time were satisfactory—are hopelessly out of gear. I shall give you one concrete example. Town of Nabadwip had according to the census of 1941 only 30,000 people. Daily supply of water was less than 0.4 gallons per head. The drainage system is extremely defective. During the rains a portion of the town adjoining the river remains under water for days together—when the river is in flood. There were about 4000 latrines—which were served by about 120 methars in all. The roads are narrow and tortuous. There is no hospital worth the name. Recent rapid census taken during the end of January 1948 reveals that the population has swelled to 90,000. So just imagine what the present sanitary condition is like. The problem was too big for the municipal authorities—both financially and technically and they approached the Government to come to their rescue in November last. I am glad to inform you—that Government immediately took up the matter and have given grant-in-aid to augment the water supply as well as to improve the method of disposal of night soil. The

work has been taken up by the Public Health (Engineering Directorate) and the work is well in hand. The problem has not been solved in all fronts and I still do not know whether the Municipality is in a position to maintain the services out of its revenue. I can tell you that this is not an isolated instance. Practically all towns—specially the towns near about this metropolis of ours are faced with similar acute problems.

This has thrown a great responsibility on the people and the State.

Food :—Agricultural land in West Bengal has low productivity. Irrigation is ill developed. Compared to East Bengal it has lower percentage of low lands and smaller average rainfall. Majority of the lands is under single crop. The food requirements of the province assessed on the broad basis of minimum nutritive diet suggested in the Bombay plan amount to 4 million tons of rice, 65·7 million maunds of milk, 2·2 million maunds of fish, 70·2 million maunds of edible oils and 64000 tons of sugar per annum. From the land at our disposal it is not possible to get the required quantity of food—if the present system of production of food is allowed to continue. Food production has to be stepped up in all directions. There is serious shortage in milk and livestock. Our demand is three times the present supply. The question arises whether it would be possible ever for West Bengal to be self-sufficient. It can be said almost without fear of contradiction that it is possible if production of food is carried out on intensive and scientific lines. We have to step up not only the quantity but quality of food. Double cropping has to be done—and that is only feasible when there are sufficient ways and means to irrigate the lands at all times of the season.

This, as you know, is only feasible if the multipurpose schemes like Damodar Valley are taken up and completed within the shortest possible time. It is gratifying to note that the Government of India has recognised this fact and highest priority is being given to this scheme. The next item of importance is cheap Power. Unless we have cheap power, nothing is feasible. Both agricultural and industrial development depend on power. Improvement on sanitation and health measures are also dependent on availability of cheap power. Hence we must have more multipurpose schemes like Damodar Valley. It

is said generally that we are poor—where is the money to come from to execute all such expensive schemes. This is an old and obsolete outlook. Money is not *wealth*, but only a symbol of wealth. We have to produce wealth by harnessing the natural resources with the help of Man Power available for the benefit of common man.

In clothing also, we are a deficit province. Production has to be more than double to meet the minimum requirement of 16'5 yds. per person per annum.

So the immediate problems of the State are three folds—food, shelter and clothing. Regarding food and clothing Government have schemes to step up production and make equitable distribution ; but regarding shelter, I am not aware if there is any planning. We know that taking advantage of the pitiful plights of our brethren from East Bengal many land and estate development companies have sprung up—whose only idea is to make the largest amount of profit within the shortest possible time in complete disregard to the minimum sanitary requirements. Narrow roads, little or no water supply, inefficient drainage, absence of arrangement of disposal of refuse and human excreta are the general features of these so-called “Ideal” or “Model” colonies. Such colonies, if allowed to develop, will create miserable slums within the next five years. Government should take up the control of such developments. The first thing the Government ought to do is to enact a Town Planning and Housing Act by which Government should be in a position to guide and prescribe the minimum requirements of healthful living.

Association :—The question arises where does our Association come in to solve or to help to solve the problems referred to above. We have amongst us Civil, Mechanical and Electrical engineers of experience and repute. We have amongst us men in all walks of this profession who by their long standing experience are capable of contributing substantially to the growth and development of the State. We have also amongst us junior members who have taken up this noble profession. It is the duty of the Association and all senior members to train up young Engineers and Technicians by exchange of ideas and experiences, by arranging visits to large constructional works, industries etc. by giving lectures and papers. • The State needs many technical personnel of the right type to execute

the development programme and it is our duty to help the State with men and ideas which would be beneficial to all concerned.

Our Association is nearly of thirty years standing but we are not yet recognised by the State as a body of professional engineers. We demand of the State to recognise us as an Association of Engineers of long standing. We demand that we should have some say in the future development of our country.

We further demand that we should have representatives both at the Centre and in the provinces in all development schemes as non-official advisers. I consider our Association has earned a right for such representation and our demand is just and reasonable.

Let us all unite and work so that our dreams may come true.

ERRATA

In our last issue Sri Subodh Chandra Sen was erroneously mentioned as Member instead of Associate Member and the name of Sri Bidhu Bhusan Das Gupta was wrongly printed as Bibhuti Bhusan Das Gupta.