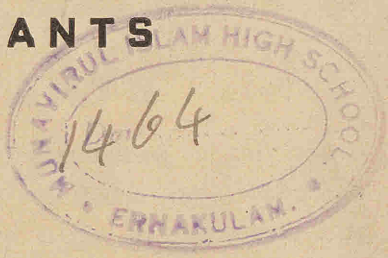
FOOD CONTROLS

Vs

PEASANTS



PROF. N. G. RANGA

ANDHRA PROVINCIAL
PADDY GROWERS' ASSOCIATION
NIDUBROLU

OPENING ADDRESS OF THE SECOND PROVINCIAL GRAIN PRODUCERS' CONFERENCE (21-11-1948) MACHAVARAM.

ANNAS EIGHT

Date .....

FOOD CONTROLS
Vs
PEASANTS

Controls are being reintroduced in our country, although with very great difficulty Mahatma Gandhi and others were able to persuade our Government in November and December 1947 to abandon their policy of controls. Excepting for small sections of people, they are most unpopular with our masses.

WHY CONTROLS ARE BEING RE-INTRODUCED

Unfortunately long before the decontrol policy was fully implemented, the forces at work in favour of control — the urban folk, who want to be assured of their rationed supplies at less than cost prices; the earlier wrongful beneficiaries of controls, such as the corrupt officials, blackmarketeers, the licence-holders and the dealers in licences—have all conspired successfully in forcing upon the Government their present policy of controls. Bankers and industrialists have specially played an important role in this unfortunate development. Bankers have gone on multiplying their bank credit, despite the growing need

for curtailing the total supply of credit in the hands of merchants and others who are not engaged in augmenting the total supplies of goods needed for urgent distribution among peasants and the ordinary masses of our country. That the note circulation, as well as bank credit, should have been allowed to go on multiplying long after the war, inspite of falling production and continued failure of the industrialists and agriculturists to set up their new plants to increase their total production of industrial goods and agricultural commodities, is indeed a criminal folly on the part of our Government. That the economists should have failed to realise how tight the money supplies in the rural areas have become, how plentiful in towns, how the town population has swelled out of all proportion to their productive and useful activity, how an artificial atmosphere of overwhelming prosperity, especially among the trading sections including the retailers and dealers in licenses and permits, for communications as well as controlled goods, has come to prevail, and how as a result the salaried class and the proletariat have been made the victims of these unmitigated evils of plethora of money in the hands of unproductive sections on one side and unscrupulous passion of merchants for profiteering on the

other side is another tragedy of our national life. The industrialists too have contributed their share to this cry for re-imposition of controls by insisting upon too cheap and assured supplies of food grains for their industrial workers in order that they might be able to keep their labour in good humour and prevent any demand for increased wages. The Provincial Governments, as well as the Centre, have been more anxious to avoid urban unrest, to put off demands for higher wages and salaries in proportion to the rising cost of living and to prevent labour strikes and the consequent fall in industrial production and have, therefore, clutched at this convenient demand for recontrols. Thus this viscious circle has spread its tentacles so well that our politicians have felt themselves suddenly stampeded by the overwhelming and too sudden press campaign in favour of re-imposition of controls, with the consequence that, today, we are being whirled into the evils of controls.

This tragedy would not have happened if only, among other reasons, our peasants, agricultural workers and other rural people have been as much well-organised and equipped with the modern weapons of press and platform and organisational

pressure and publicity on Government, and have grown as much vocal and powerful, as the urban people. And also if there had been sufficient and reliable statistics about the cost of living index of rural masses, especially peasants and agricultural workers, as also the actual price index of the producers' goods needed by peasants and consumers' goods supplied to them, at the rates actually paid by peasants and not at the artificial control rates, and the supplies and circulation of money in rural areas for purposes of production and distribution of goods, it would have been easier for politicians and our Government to correctly assess the economic situation both before and after last December i. e, after the policy of controls had been abandoned, and decide whether controls should be introduced at all and if so in what form and to what extent.

Unfortunately we have been rushed into this drastic change in our national economic policy within the short period of four weeks by all the interested sections of urban population and their allies in Government circles. And those few of us, among members of the Parliament and Congressmen, who alone have gained sufficient moral strength to stand up to the unjust and immoral claims of urban populations at the cost of our

rural folk, have not had the material strength atleast by way of a well-knit chain of peasant organisations, Food Grain Producers' Committees, the press and research organisations to present our case, and to marshall our opposition to this artificial campaign for re-controls, as effectively as was needed. Hence the failure of the rural masses to obtain justice at the hands of our Government, economists, the general press and Parliament. Therefore, we have had to go under the inevitable and overwhelming tidal wave of the urban peoples' demand for recontrols and too cheap supplies of food.

WHY PEASANTS OPPOSE CONTROLS

Why are our peasants so much opposed to controls? It is not because they have been unaccustomed to their life being controlled. For, it is a notorious fact that if there were any section of our people, whose economic life has come to be circumscribed by too many artificial controls imposed upon them due to their weakness and unorganised condition, it is the peasants. They have had no control whatsoever upon the marketing of their produce or even upon the purchases of their supply-goods or producers' goods needed by themselves Those who are in-charge of processing industries, such as paddy-husking, cotton-ginning,

cleaning and pressing and those who provide transport facilities, as well as those who are in-charge of credit supplies and markets, have all along enjoyed monopoly interest, have been strangling the peasants and have squeezed the cream outof the results of their productive activity. But most of the peasants have been unaware of these tolls levied by those who are in charge of these key services. Therefore they have learnt to put up with these drains on their resources. But when their food grains are being snatched away by coercive methods by the State at prices which they know to be too unremunerative to themselves, when they have had no control whatsoever over the prices of the various producers' goods they need (such as cattle feed, iron and other agricultural implements), when the wages of agricultural labour have necessarily gone up by four or five times and when they could not obtain even for begging such essential consumers' goods as cloth, sugar, kerosene, building materials, they have realised the arbitrary, unjust and one-sided character of these controls. The wide-spread corruption that has come to prevail among the otherwise also uncontrollable and dishonest officials who have always shown so little respect orfear towards the uneducated and unorganised rural

people, and the unequal manner in which they have administered the controls between different sections of peasants have all contributed to make the peasants hate these controls.

Moreover, it must be remembered that the evils of these controls have come to be superimposed over and above the tolls levied by those who are in charge of the key services which are so essential in making agricultural production available to the ultimate consumers. Since the organisers of the key service are a few moneyed and influential people with powerful and vocal organisations and are in a position to gratify the cupidity of officials, as well as the holders of licenses and trade permits, and since they could shield the corrupt officials from detection and ultimate punishment, they have been taken into partnership by the officialdom in charge of controls, and between them, they have squeezed the peasants to the utmost. Hence, for instance, the refusal of the Madras Government to allow our peasants to supply food grains (either paddy or rice at their respective controlled prices), to requisition the rice mills and place them at the disposal of the Producers cum Consumers Co-operatives, and the Government's action in setting aside the Producers cum Consumers Co-operatives (P. C. Cs)

first by withdrawing their monopoly right for procurement, next by completely putting them out of action, and the failure of the Government to place one or two rice-mills at the disposal of Co-operative Marketing Federations and also to organise new P. C. Cs in places where they are needed and persuade all peasants to become their members. Why did not Government refuse to recognise rice-millowners as procurement agents? Why has it failed to place wagons whenever needed at the disposal of the peasants or groups of them or their P. C. Cs and Marketing Federations. All these and other nefarious methods have become a part of the control policy of Government which has worked to the further weakening of peasants and the strengthening of their exploiters. The old oppressors of peasants who are in charge of the key services have thus come to be placed in charge of this new engine of exploitation of peasants. Therefore what had not been so freely realised by peasants has now come to be known in all its horror—that they are the true exploiters of peasants, that these controls have come to reinforce their strength, that the urban classes, for whose sake the controls have been re-imposed, are the ultimate beneficiaries of their exploitation and compulsory procurement of their food grains

at low prices and that the Government which is enforcing these controls is interested in oppressing them. Hence their vehement opposition to the very policy of controls.

If this new awakening among peasants to a realisation of the cumulative effect of their exploitation caused by the holders of key services, corrupt officials, wrong economic policies of the Government and their dishonest administration were to be canalised into the organisation of Kisan Congress, Food Grain Producers' Organisations, Peasant Marches and an effective Peasant Press, a real beginning could be made for the revolutionary re-organisation of our peasants for their economic class-consciousness and development of their economic challenge against the modern politico-economic order.

CONTROLS INEVITABLE

Let our peasants however realise that controls have again come and cannot now be got rid of. Neither they nor the Provincial Governments have the capacity to get over them, so long as the National Government is unable to put down inflation, increase all-round production and ensure national self-sufficiency in both the essential producers' and consumers' goods.

Everyone knows by now that these are the conditions to fulfil which it takes quite a long time, since neither England nor U. S. A. is in a position to ship to us such large quantities of basic machinery as are needed by us during the next five years if we are to build in our country atleast a few of the giant industrial ventures needed to increase our industrial production. Therefore, it is as well that our peasants and other rural people girdle their loins and prepare themselves to live in a society of controls for the next ten years.

If such are the unpleasant prospects, let us examine whether there are any possibilities for our making the best of a controlled economy.

PEASANTS NEED A PLANNED ECONOMY

First of all, let us remember that during the economic depression of 1929–35 our peasants and their organisations had to ask for State protection by way of fixing and maintaining the floor or minimum price-levels of our agricultural produce, the declaration of moratorium for agricultural debts and cheap credit advances and Co-operative Land Mortgage Banks and marketing facilities, because there seemed to be no end to the fall of prices, because food production and production of other

agricultural goods seemed to be too much in surplus, because the prices of land and agricultural stock began to fall even more precipitately than prices of agricultural produce and because both banks and money-lenders were impatient to foreclose farm mortgages. Unfortunately for us, in most of the countries of the world, Governments did not come to *our* rescue and impose just those controls over the economic privileges of other classes as were so badly needed for our protection. To the extent that they had been imposed, as in United States, France, England, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Sweden and even in Fascist Germany and Italy, the urban people, their merchants, professionals and capitalists complained bitterly against the huge subsidies given to peasants to maintain the prices of most of the agricultural goods — subsidies given to peasants to induce them to reduce the area under different crops and thus bring down their total production so as to push up price levels and also those steps which were intended more directly to raise the prices of wheat cotton etc. Who knows that such an economic depression is not likely to come again in another five or ten years and that, if and when it does come, we will not need all the previously needed measures of protection and other kinds

of assistance? How can we then approach our own Provincial and Central Governments for such controls in our favour and expect them to take expeditiously the needed protective measures to sustain our rural economy and safeguard us against the rapacity of the enormously stronger forces of the urban people and their professional and industrial elements? Will it not become almost a super-human effort for us to win even the minimum protection we will then need? What will be the use of our obtaining some little protection, given so very grudgingly and at a late hour by the State, as had been our experience in 1929-35? What else can happen to us since the Governments will not be having any of its special machinery for enforcing controls and will be loath to organise one afresh, if today we do indeed succeed, which is extremely unlikely in getting rid of controls? Therefore, it is as well for us to realise the possibility for this eventual protection to flow from the present day re-institution of controls and thus get used to the controls and begin to organise ourselves both in and outside the Governmental machinery to protect ourselves well both now and for the future and to make the best possible use of it.

Moreover, the progress of our peasantry, their future protection and prosperity are so largely dependent upon the wholesale re-organisation of their whole economy, according to such plans as are calculated to liberate them from the clutches of middlemen and owners of key services and bank credits, and to assure them complete economic independence. All this can only be achieved in what is known as a planned national economy. Barring actual cultivation and domestic economy, most of the activities connected with agriculturists' contact with other spheres of life will have to be carried on, hereafter, not individually by every peasant, as heretofore with his limited monetary resources, even more limited knowledge of and capacity to deal with the economic forces which are daily growing more complex, but by peasants' Cooperative Societies. Whether we come to have multi-purposes co-operative or a number of co-operatives organised for specific purposes, it is through their cooperatives and collective efforts that our peasants will hereafter have to purchase most of their producers' as well as consumers' goods and sell their agricultural produce as well as cattle etc

To relieve themselves from the terror of economic depression they need assured minimum

price-levels to be maintained by the state. To assure them that their produce will not be too much in surplus and wasted away and that their standard of living will go on rising, there must be state-regulated and democratically-agreed crop planning and better farming. To protect them from the evil effects of seasons, pests and consequent failures of crops, there must be Crop Insurance to be organised by the state. To afford similar protection from the consequences of cattle-epidemics and untimely casualities or death of cattle, State Cattle Insurance scheme too is needed.

AMENITIES FOR AGRICULTURAL LABOUR

Similarly agricultural workers need Labour Exchanges, Unemployment, Health and Old Age Insurance Schemes to assure them of regulated, and continuous employment at decent wage-levels and to protect them from economic helplessness during periods of illness and old age. To settle amicably the economic relations between peasants and agricultural workers, Agricultural Wage-Boards are soon going to be established. To fix the rents payable by tenants to landholders and settle other questions or disputes that may arise in their mutual relations, the Rent-fixation

Committees or Land Courts are soon to be organised by the State. To settle the floor and ceiling prices of agricultural produce, Agricultural Prices Committees have to be organised in every zone and province

Thus, in our own interests, we have to take the initiative and organise a number of new institutions with vast powers to regulate and control our activities with a view to strengthening us in the new economic order and thus increasing our bargaining power.

We have also to prevail upon the State to take a large number of steps and create a huge machinery for the regulation and control of our national economic affairs so as to afford atleast the minimum protection needed by us. All this can only be achieved in a planned economy and we must get ready not only to fight for it but also to protect ourselves from the inevitable evil effects or influences that will flow from such a controlled economy. To face all such new responsibilities, the present training that is being forced upon us, despite ourselves, through these painful controls can be utilised. Whether we will take such full advantage of these controls or not rests largely

upon ourselves, our organisations and our leadership.

It is high time that our peasants and their leaders pay much greater heed than they have so far done to the various means by which the *per capita* and *per acre* production of every crop can be increased. We have to carry on incessant propaganda for the preservation and use of cow-dung for manurial purposes, and not, as at present, simply as fuel, until the cow-dung gass plant becomes popularised. We have also to take a hand in the production and popular use of improved seed and also in the anti-erosion measures. We have to encourage peasants to offerto contribute atleast 50% of the cost of the construction or improvement of minor irrigation works and river and drainage channels conservancy. By the popularisation of methods of economising irrigation waters, we may be able to bring more land under irrigation in delta areas. By these and other measures, we can succeed in producing more of every crop, we can release more land from under the non-food crops for food crops and also increase the total food production by improving its *per acre* production also.

It is the duty of our Kisan Congress to improve the knowledge of peasants (both landed

and landless). about improved methods of agriculture, the working of better implements and better work with greater results within the same working hours.

It is also necessary that our organisations, as well as Governments, should interest themselves in developing such better implements as help our Kisans to do the same amount of work, if not more, within the same working hours as at present, with much less loss of energy and with greater ease, so that our Kisans need not have to tire themselves so much and pave the way towards the improvement of their standard of living without having to suffer any more loss of energy.

It is also a national necessity in the interests of greater agricultural efficiency and production that our village artisans, especially carpenters, blacksmiths and mat-weavers, are provided with necessary raw materials, better tools and larger remuneration in order that they may be able to provide better implements to our agriculturists at lower costs.

No more time should be lost by the state to organise short-time refresher courses of one or two or four weeks for both agricultural managers and supervisors like the landholding

Kisans, workers and village artisans in order to provide them with the most essential elementary knowlege of the latest methods of agriculture, including the fight against pests, preservation and utilisation of organic manure, rotation of crops, production and utilisation of better labour-saving implements. If the whole-hearted co-operation of our Kisan Congress and leadership are fully invoked and if the National Congress and the Agricultural Department make this a real national campaign, a very large proportion of our rural people can be inspired to take advantage of this training provided on mass-scale at the lowest cost and to make it a culturally enjoyable rural festival and thus raise the general standard of our agriculturists.

It is as well for us all to remember that the improvement of the efficiency of this largest section of our toilers, within the biggest national occupation i. e. agriculture, is the basic pre-requisite for the improvement of the standard of living of all other people in the country.

THE WHY AND WHEREFORE OF THESE EVIL RESULTS OF CONTROLS

If we are to think of protective measures as against the evils of controls in this atmosphere

of official corruption and blackmarketeering and unscrupulous dealers, we must first of all see clearly the reasons for their emergence in the light of our past experiences of controls.

1. One of the most important reasons why controls have led to blackmarketeering is that the existing channels of trade were made use of, with the additional evil of competition being kept out of the gamut of trade, instead of entrusting the whole control trade in food grains to co-operative societies. As is well known the element of competition that prevailed between various merchants used to mitigate to some extent the evils of private trading and when that also was removed and a few private merchants were given the monopoly of trading rights, they have gained the special privilege of levying their tolls upon the ordinary public, who had been taking special advantage of the existing sellers' market.

2. The leaders of some of the Cooperatives have fallen a prey to the temptation of making special profits by exploiting their share in the sellers' market and the ignorance and incapacity of their members as well as of others to control their vagaries.

3. Government officials (high and low from the Supply Department to the Agricultural Department) have gone shares with the merchants and some of the Cooperatives and have exploited mercilessly both the peasants and the ultimate consumer. They have also colluded with the merchants, both at the supply and distribution centres, in adulterating the controlled commodities, lowering their quality, loading them with dirt etc., and thereby ensuring undue profits for all the middlemen, including themselves, and making the consumers suffer to that extent.

4. The railway staff and the lorry owners also have taken undue advantage of their key position and have exacted heavy price for their services, thus forcing the middlemen to charge more than the controlled rates or to lower the quality of supplies to recover the payments thus made at the cost of consumers.

5. The officers of the Civil Supplies Department, together with the local revenue and village staff, have shown special consideration towards big landholders by accepting bribes, abstained from procuring all the surplus food grains available with them and have tried to make up for this non-procurement from the rich by procuring

forcibly very much more than what was due and what could safely be taken away from the smaller peasants, thereby causing untold misery to vast masses of small peasantry and forcing them in many cases to purchase food grains at blackmarket rates for their own family consumption later in the year.

6. Ration officers in towns have taken huge bribes from hotel-keepers and allowed them much more than what ought to be allotted to them and they have also winked at many illegal activities of ration-shop dealers in return for dishonest gratification, thus robbing the general urban poor of their legitimate rations.

7. The allotments of food grains made to the coastal and upland areas which are always deficit in food production were so megre that the ration or relief shops could not provide rations to the holders of "B" forms for more than 2 or 3 days in the week with the result that the latter had to depend on the so-called blackmarket into which merchants could bring food grains from supply centres at great risk and cost. The consequence of this was that Government became very unpopular and the merchants came to be looked upon as a

necessary evil and were even protected by their very victims, lest there might be no food grains at all for more than half of the week.

8. The rice millers and other merchants in supply centres could not make both ends meet, not to speak of making legitimate profits within the controlled prices, what with the demands of railway staff and supply officers and the unwillingness of bigger landholders to part with their grain at controlled prices and finally place at the disposal of the supply officers the required quantities for transportation to the rationed towns. And therefore, the supply department used to turn a blind eye to their illegal transactions in purchasing food grains at prices much higher than the controlled rates and their illegal transportation to, and eventual sale in, the food deficit areas on the coast and in the upland.

9. The nefarious role played by policemen at all the centres and the heavy price paid by middlemen to every cadre in the Police Department during the career of every consignment of paddy and rice from one place to another ought not to be lost sight of. Indeed every merchant had had to come to permanent arrangements with the

concerned officers in the Supply, Railway and Police and Revenue Departments in order to ensure the continuity of his business, in addition to offering special payments for special consignments which had to be transported and distributed at extra great risks.

10. The controls over the movements of food grains even from village to village had worked considerable havoc and were made to yield enough to fill their pockets by the local police and revenue officials and merchants had had no option but to satisfy their thirst for illegal gratification and then recover through higher prices charged to consumers. More than anything else, this none-too - easy enforcement control over movement from one district to another, from one taluk to another and from one village to another, caused too much pain to the public and led to the widespread participation of the public in its violation. No attempt was made to demarcate areas on either side of the borders of the neighbouring districts in which the supplies from each other might be allowed to be pooled and distributed in an equitable manner, so much so, much inter-district trading in food grains had to take place beyond the pale of control orders.

11. In the allotment of food between rural and urban peoples, invidious distinctions are being made even today in areas which have come to be recognised as deficit areas; that is, while the urban people are granted a ration of 1/2 seer of rice per day per adult, the rural folk of the same area are granted only 1/8 seer. Similar distinctions are being made regarding the allotment of rations in kerosene oil, firewood, sugar, salt etc.

12. Last but not the least was the acceptance by the public of the inevitability of blackmarkets, the need for paying higher prices than the controlled rates and also for protection by themselves of those merchants who ran the risks incidental to blackmarketing and refusal of the public in general to treat anyone who ran the gamut of control authorities as either immoral or unlawful people. Thus blackmarketing and blackmarketeers and officers of the Supply, Agricultural, Police and Revenue departments, who helped both the merchants and people to get round the restrictions and rules of the controls, were looked upon, not so much as pubic enemies as convenient helpers to get over the evils of controls.

Several attempts have been made by various congressmen in different parts of the country and

particularly in Andhra to put an end to black-marketing and to bring to book some of the corrupt officials but they have not succeeded. Because, not only the higher officials in all the concerned departments but also local public were interested in protecting the guilty since they were serving the essential purpose of supplementing the far too inadequate rations through their activities. Moreover, quite a number of publicmen found themselves obliged to protect the guilty because of costs, regional and even political reasons. The evil of getting round the controls became so wide-spread that our congress workers'attempts to bring it under control proved futile. The controlled prices offered to the peasants were so uneconomically low, and the compulsory procurement quotas of food grains were so often beyond the capacity of most of the peasants to safely give away, that large masses of peasantry had no other option but to seek the assistance of officers by every means to retain atleast a portion of the grain absolutely needed for their family maintenance and payments to agricultural labour and workers rendering customary village services.

It is in the light of the above mentioned and other experiences of controls that we have to

think of the protective measures needed to minimise the sufferings of our people and to protect them against the thirst for illegal gratification of all the immoral agencies, from merchants to officers, who have to play their role in the execution as well as negation of controls.

It was to fight these evils flowing from controls and the undemocratic administration of the latter that the Andhra peasants took the lead in the whole of India in organising the first Andhra Food Producers Conference on 14-10-41 in Nidubrolu, the birth place of the Indian Peasant Movement. Sri P. B Naidu deserves the gratitude of Indian peasants for his initiative in organising that conference, and it is interesting to note that he went to the Hague Conference of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers in May, 1947 as one of the delegates of the All India Kisan Congress and Rural Peoples Federation.

In its wake the Rural Peoples Federation came to be organised with Delhi as its headquarters in March, 1945. This Federation, as well as the Kisan Congress, have decided to stand up for the rights of rural people vis-a-vis the urban folk in the administration of controls.

OUR POLICY REGARDING CONTROLS AND PRICE LEVELS

Many champions of the urban people and trading classes have been complaining very bitterly against our insistence upon the payment of remunerative prices for food grains. They include Communists as well as members of the Socialist Party and quite a large number of urban Congressites. They want to delude the public into believing the unbelievable allegation that we wish to profiteer at the expense of urban people, whereas the truth is that we only wish to prevent the age-long exploitation of our peasantry by the non-agricultural classes, most of whom happen to live in towns and eke out their living by industrial, trading and professional occupations.

Why do we lay so much stress on price levels? Because it is through this mechanism of price-levels that the distribution of our national wealth as between different classes and individuals is being regulated; because it is this mechanism which settles the remuneration of people in different occupations; because it is this which influences the flow of population from one occupation to another, and from one place to another, and determines the purchasing capacity of people of different

occupations; because it is through their control of this mechanism that the merchants and their principals, the industrialists and professionals and their allies, the Government servants and their part-beneficiaries, the urban lower-middle class professionals and proletariat, have continually been defrauding the peasantry as a whole and impoverishing the whole of the rural people by pricing at lower levels the services rendered by rural people and especially peasants as a whole. It has now become clear, thanks to these controls, how we are being discriminated against and how the entrepreneur class or even the lower-middle class professionals are enjoying all their special public social advantages in the fields of education, sanitation, public health, markets, communications and civic amenities.

But which peasants or their allies, the agricultural workers, can abandon their demand for progressive,adequate and just levels of agricultural wages, remuneration for the peasants, manures for the land and cattle-feed for the cattle, whose co-operation is so badly needed in the production of food grains and fodder and fibres and oilseeds? Ours is a challenge against the present economic dispensation and the misuse of its instrument of

distribution of wealth, namely price mechanism. Ours is certainly a challenge against the monopoly gained by the merchant class and their urban allies over the use of this price mechanism. Ours is indeed the offensive against this monopoly and in favour of its democratic use. We are out to gain our due share of the control over it through the organisation of Open Markets and Cooperative Marketing Societies,the fixation of open minimum price-levels aslong as private enterprise is permitted to operate, establishment of Producers cum Consumers Cooperatives (P. C. Cs) with monopoly powers to procure,process and distribute foodgrains and cooperatising all the trading and processing activities in the progress of our food grains from the producers to the ultimate consumers. We demand that the fixation of the prices of our agricultural produce ought not to be left to the mercy of the urban interests and their glaringly unjust manipulations against peasants and all other rural people. We have atleast come to realise that whoever is in charge of this price mechanism holds the Democles sword against all others and that until and unless peasants and rural people gain sufficient control over it in order to prevent its misuse against them, there can be no safety for their well-being. Indeed, it is only by insisting

upon their right to participate on equal terms in the regulation of this price-mechanism and winning that right and using it dexterously and justly that our peasants can arrest the age-old drain of the fruits of their labour into the towns and their continuous impoverishment for a corresponding enrichment of the urban peoples.

Our having discovered this very essential truth and told our peasants that they should take charge of this tremendously powerful mechanism of price-fixation has become our offence against the urban people who have till now been vaxing rich at our cost. Our having warned our peasants against this mischief of urban classes and advised them to so fortify themselves through the development of Co-operative Marketing, and to insist upon the payment of such reasonable and remunerative prices for their produce as would leave scope for some progress in the standard of living of both themselves and their workers—both customary and casual- and also cover the other normal costs of cultivation, including the charges for the main tenance in proper condition and fertility of the soils has upset the equanimity of the champions of urban exploiters of rural people. Our demand that the prices paid for our produce should be

such as to enable our rural workers to enjoy a higher standard of living and atleast as rich a social environment as the urban workers do and to help our peasants to feed their people, cattle and land adequately and maintain their whole class and not according to the vagaries of merchants, industrialists, professionals and other urban classes. We demand that in the fixation of these price levels, ours must be one of the two most important voices and that the consumers' needs should be given no more weight than ours and that the need for removing the present inequalities between the levels of remuneration for us and for the urban people is given due weight and that our price levels should compare more favourably with those of urban products—whether goods or services. If such a demand is opposed by the champions of urban people, we have no other go but to girdle ourselves for the struggle for the recognition of our legitimate rights, whatever might be the cost.

It is in the light of this fundamental position of our Kisan Congress, a position which was accepted by Mahatma Gandhi and which has lit the whole of his campaign for our regeneration and reconstruction, that we have to proceed with our discussions with all other classes of our people

and Government in the fixation of agricultural prices.

Judged from this standpoint, we find that the recommendations of the Bengal Famine Commission were one-sided, anti-peasant-wise and pro-urban. They had no right whatsoever to assume that the pre-war parity between urban and rural remunerations and industrial and agricultural prices was not unjust. On the other hand, the pre-war price-levels were hopelessly tilted against our peasantry and rural people. Similarly we cannot accept the recommendations of the 'Krishnamachari Committee for the Stabilisation of Agricultural Prices' that the parity between the agricultural and industrial prices as they prevailed in 1929 i.e. pre-depression period, should be taken as just, because even those price-levels resulted in heavy drain of our rural peoples' wealth to swell the standard of living of urban people. Moreover the so called rise in the levels of agricultural prices during and after the war has not been as high, in all essentials and by way of real wages to workers, real remuneration to peasants and the protection of our cattle and wealth, as those of industrial and trading and professional services. In fact while the town people were assured

of some quantity of food and larger rations of other consumers' goods at controlled prices, the rural people were deprived of their own food grains with the result that large numbers of them have had to purchase food grains during certain seasons in blackmarket and were not assured of any supplies of either consumers' or producers' goods even at blackmarket rates. Therefore, it is our considered view that there is much leeway to make up by way of raising the prices of agricultural produce, before any comparable and just parity can be achieved between the levels of remuneration for rural and urban services and levels of prices for agricultural and non-agricultural and industrial goods.

Therefore, we demand atleast 12 1/2 *per cent* increase all over India on the present levels of prices of food grains, if at all our peasants are to be able to raise the agricultural wages from As. 12/- to one rupee per day during normal seasons without in anyway reducing higher wages, wherever they have come to prevail and then make their both ends meet.

Hence our demand that the minimum price of paddy of the surplus food areas should be raised

from Rs. 13-8-0 to Rs. 15/ , so far as the delta areas of Madras are concerned.

It should be remembered that the Madras Price level of paddy is lower than that of all other provinces excepting Orissa and even when it is raised to Rs. 15/- it will continue to be lower and therefore our demand is not at all unreasonable even from the point of view of the local consumers.

It is strange how our Provincial Governments have so far not devised a higher level of prices above this basic price for compulsory procurement purposes. One of the reasons why procurement has been very unpopular and has proved a damper upon the natural keenness of peasants to produce more and more and to increase their supplies to the market is the failure of the Government to realise the need for offering proper incentives. On the other hand, our Provincial Governments have pursued the wrong policy of penalising those peasants who were unwilling to voluntarily part with their grain and waited until compulsory procurement is made by paying them a lower price than the basic price. This wrong policy must be reversed and a higher procurement price should be offered to all peasants,

for all the grain that has to be procured from them. To impose coercive measures to procure food grains from any peasant should itself be treated as enough punishment and moral castigation and it should not be accompanied by an additional punishment of a lower price.

OBJECTS OF RURAL PEOPLES FEDERATION

The Federation of Rural Peoples Organisations therefore suggested the formation of Food Councils in all centres with a view to invoke the cooperation of the representatives of the people in administering the controls and thus in harmonising and controlling the activities of officials and also in the proper distribution of various commodities as between urban and rural areas and rural areas and population and also as between one family and another within the same area. It has also suggested that all private trading should be eliminated and monopoly procurement should be made either directly by the State or indirectly by Cooperative Societies. The Federation also insisted upon the payment of remunerative prices to the peasants to be accompanied by the supply to them at controlled prices of all the needed producers' goods as well as consumers' goods.

INITIATIVE OF PRAKASAM'S MINISTRY

Only one Provincial Congress Government has made a sincere attempt to come to grips with the extraordinary immoral situation created by the corrupt administration and the one-sided rules and regulations of the system of controls. That was the Prakasam's Ministry in Madras (1946-47). It established the Food Councils. We now suggest 'Distribution Councils' to take their place from villages right upto district levels. It also sought to organise the Producers cum Consumers Coopera tive Societies (P. C. Cs) in all the surplus districts. Through these means it tried to eliminate all middlemen and private trading, to encourage both producers and consumers to take up the responsibilities of monopoly trading in a co-ope-rative manner and to induce producers to get into direct contact with consumers and thus win for themselves all the legitimate profits of marketing with all the assistance of the State in obtaining transportation and distribution facilities.

To supplement and to supervise their activi-ties, to guide and help them, the Food Councils were organised. These councils were especially charged with the very essential task of distributing rationed producers' and consumers' goods at

controlled prices as between urban and rural areas. But unfortunately, they were constituted with a nominated personnel instead of allowing their members to be elected by all the voters, with the result that several important political sections felt aggrieved and when later Prakasam's Ministry fell, the new ministry which is led by those discontented political elements has pursued the suicidal policy of putting out of action both the Food Councils at the village and taluk levels and the Producers cum Consumers Cooperatives and bringing back again in full power the old evil forces i. e., the private traders and the corrupt officials as well as those large sections of public which had taken pleasure either out of necessity or out of cupidity in getting round the controls.

It is now our duty, since these controls have again come in, to chalk out a programme so far as our Food Grain Producers are concerned for the adequate protection of our people and place it before the Government for its adoption. It is fortunate that the General Body of the Andhra Provincial Congress has adopted a comprehensive plan of action at its Bezwada meeting on 24-10-48 and it is given in appendix (i). We are also giving in appendix (ii) the relevant portions of

the report of the 25 M. P's committee of Congress Party in parliament.

MAKE INDIA SELF-SUFFICIENT IN FOOD

It should be the policy of Government to make India self-sufficient in food at the earliest possible moment. Successive food ministers have declared this to be the Government's aim. But actually such price procurement and bonus policies have been pursued as not to encourage but only to discourage our peasants from placing more of their land under food crops, from straining all their resources to grow more from the same area and also to maximise their contribution of food grains to the markets.

(a) To overcome this serious defect in our food policy it is necessary to pay such attractive prices as compare more or less favourably with the prices of non-food crops.

(b) A more scientific and constructive policy of maximising the production of organic and artificial manures has to be evolved and pursued with vigour. It is regrettable that Government should have so far failed to complete the Sindri Fertilisers Factory, although the Travancore State

with much smaller resources has already begun to produce fertilisers through its factory.

(c) The present policy of controls over the movement of oil cakes within the same province is highly defective; leads to so much wastage, and also mal-distribution within the districts with the consequent profiteering by merchants. The distribution of sun-hemp seed has been queered by allowing merchants to corner the total supplies. These defects have to be removed vigorously and urgently.

(d) It is unfortunate that so far no dynamic efforts have been made to make a large-scale use of the Cow-Dung cum Gas Plant which was set up at the Agricultural Institute at Delhi. If this plant is brought into general use, it will become possible for our people to get all the fuel value from out of the cow-dung while preserving the whole of it for manurial purposes, and thus avoid the present wastage of either fuel or manure due to our putting the dung to one use alone. Through this means, India can very soon become self-sufficient in manures also, while economising the sue of timber for fuel purposes.

(e) Not enough is being done by way of development, repairs and realignment of the

large number of minor irrigation works, including tanks and wells, tube-wells and other uses of electricity irrigation. If only our ministries are keen on developing this source of additional and assured supplies of food grains, they can easily augment our total national food production by atleast a million tons. Our Kisan Congress is confident that if only Governments are dynamic and willing to invoke and utilise the cooperation of our peasants, atleast 50 *per cent* of the cost of such irrigation development will be borne by our peasants by way of their labour and material contribution and also by the payment of money in one or five equal annual instalments. It is tragic how this constructive means for the rapid increase in our food supplies are not being fully exploited by our ministries.

(f) It will be a first class tragedy if by any chance the Central Government were to postpone even by a day the planning, acceptance and construction of such major irrigation and drainage works of national importance as Krishna-Pennar (Sangameswar), Rampadsagar, Mahanadi, Tapti, Narbada, Ganga projects as well as other flood control and river conservancy schemes even for the sake of controlling inflation, because every

month and year lost in any such postponement will only delay the eventual achievement of self-sufficiency of food and the consequent greater ability of India to relieve the shortage of supplies and the resultant inflation. Let it not be forgotten that if only these projects had been taken up in 1942 as part of the Grow More Food Campaign, we would have been within sight by now of their completion and the consequent, augmentation of our food production. Therefore it is the duty of the Government to go ahead not only with their execution of the present schemes but also with the active preparation of other similar schemes.

(g) It is high time that our ministry should realise that to provide incentives to higher production is as good a policy in agriculture as in industry. So far our Governments have concentrated upon providing such incentives only to industrialists and professional classes and have not dreamt of extending them to our agriculturists.

(h) The Grow More Food Campaign was inaugurated by Kisan Congress and blessed by Mahatma Gandhi as long ago as 1912 as one of the main incentives calculated to increase our food

production. But although the Madras Government accepted our scheme in 1942 and the Central Government in 1944 and more than a million acres of new land is supposed to have been brought under the plough, the total supplies of our food production have not increased noticeably because that campaign has not been followed up by a just and attractive policy of agricultural prices, and timely and adequate supplies of manures, iron and other agricultural implements, cattle feed (seeds, oil-cake etc,) and building materials at controlled prices. At no time and no where were the peasants and their organisations taken into Government's confidence and given adequate representation in any of the organisations which advised the Government in fixing the prices and ensuring the proper supplies of producers' and consumers' goods needed so badly by peasants. Hence the failure of this well-conceived campaign

(i) Those who organise the campaigns of the urban people for Cheap Food policy should realise the consequences of the failure of Government to make food production attractive and remunerative and also remember the terrible price the nation had had to pay for the enforcement of this Cheap

Food policy and the consequent deprivation of just incentives to our own food producers. We have had to import more than Rs. 100 crores worth of food grains, thus weakening our foreign exchange position and depleting very fast our hard-earned sterling balances and to spend from Rs. 18 to 20 crores by way of subsidising the foreign food grains in order to bring down their prices to the level of our internal food prices.

Has not this anti-peasant campaign been too costly? Is it not suicidal that we should have paid higher prices to foreign food producers than to our own and then subsidised it to the tune of nearly 18% in order to keep down our own prices to unremunerative levels? Would it not have been much better for our Governments to have utilised the Rs. 18 crores, and if need be much more, which were wasted in subsidising foreign food imports, in order to raise our own internal food prices and then subsidising the prices of food needed by our industrial workers as well as professionals of the towns? Indeed, would it not be a much better policy to pay a really remunerative price to our own food producers and then to pursue such measures in the sale and distribution of food grains as are calculated to subsidise the prices

of food grains needed by the urban and rural poor earning less than Rs. 30/- per month, the supply of one free meal a day to all the school-going children and the distribution of food rations through relief shops or cooperative stores to the lower middle classes getting an income of Rs. 30 - to 100/- per month per family, and then expecting all others, as well as the above groups, to purchase whatever food grains they want at open market price? Would not such a policy have prevented the present unjust and unnecessary subsidisation of the food consumption of all the rich and the upper middle classes at the cost of the peasants while making it much easier for the lower middle classes and the poor to obtain the prescribed rations? Such indeed has been the policy pursued by England and more especially by the South Eastern European countries and even Russia.

PRODUCERS cum CONSUMERS CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES

The Producers cum Consumers Co-operatives should be organised in every village with district and provincial societies, if it all we are to liberate our masses from the clutches of middlemen and their blackmarketing and corrupt officials. Adequate funds should be made available to them not only

through their share capital as was attempted by Prakasam's Ministry but also through the State placing both short-term and long term credit at their disposal, directly as well as through the scheduled banks and the Reserve Bank.

The management board of the Societies should be democratically elected by the qualified shareholders in every village, while the District and Provincial Boards should be elected by the directors of the village boards.

As far as possible such of the displaced merchants as are willing to cooperate with these P. C. Cs should be preferably employed in the management of these societies, while care is taken to avoid those who have dealt in blackmarketing as a matter of exploitation and special profit.

All those who will have to man the executive, clerical and accounting staff of the P. C. Cs Cooperative Stores and other organisations concerned with procurement and distribution of controlled commodities, especially food grains, should be given special training in the economics and social ethics of controls as well as accounting and auditing. As far as possible those Gandhians who have displayed special taste for constructive

work and who have put in a minimum amount of constructive work and gained the confidence of the local people should be placed in responsible positions in cooperative and supply departments in order to ensure honesty, drive and public spirit in the activities of the Cooperatives.

Such of the rice mills as are needed by P. C Cs. should be taken over by the State on payment of reasonable rents and placed at the disposal of P. C. Cs. either at the village or district levels to be operated by them for the hulling of rice so that the rice millers may not be able to take advantage of this key service and levy an unduly high toll upon peasants and their P. C. Cs. It may be open to rice-mill owners to join the P. C. Cs. and place their mills voluntarily at their disposal and thus aid in the complete cooperatisation of rice milling and rice trade.

The P. C. Cs. should be given the monopoly right in procuring from 50 *per cent* to 75 *per cent* of the food grains from all the surplus food producers, while the producers being free to sell the remaining portion of the surpluses in the open market either to P. C. Cs. or to any private merchant at the prevailing free price.

Every food producer who places any portion of his food grains at the disposal of the P. C. C. at the procurement price should be accepted as a share-holder and given his due share in the final dividend to be distributed to the share-holders from out of the surplus realised out of the margin between the procurement price and the ultimate price at which different classes of consumers are provided with the food grains.

What portion for compulsory procurement: The P. C. Cs should have the right to compulsorily procure not less than 50 *per cent* and not more than 75 *per cent* of all the surplus food grains available, provided such surpluses are less than 200 bags of paddy of 166 lbs each per family. Those whose surpluses are more than 200 and 225 should be expected to place all their surpluses at the procurement price alone, because whatever profits there might be in the free market ought not to be made available to them, since their total incomes are already high and the free market should be kept open only for the benefit of small producers.

All the food grain that is compulsorily procured has to be placed at the disposal of the Co-operatives of urban and other food deficit areas at procurement prices plus transport and other

operational expenses, plus 3 *per cent* as encouragement to the Co-operatives. The rest of the food grains purchased by the P. C. Cs or private merchants at open market price levels from the surplus food producers, or at times even from others, may be sold in P. C. C's own shops in towns, as distinguished from the Co-operatives charged with the distribution of rations from out of the compulsorily procured food grains or the private merchants' own shops.

National Ceiling Price: A ceiling price may be fixed from time to time by Government in order to restrain the price levels in free market. So long as there is an over-all shortage of food grain, it can only be a notional price, but it can have some moral effect upon the activities of the merchants and the free market.

It is possible to make a workable estimate of the food surpluses available with every producer because of the statistics available for the food grains compulsorily procured during the last 6 years of food procurement regime. The Food Councils which are being proposed may be given the right to vary these estimates by not more than 12½ *per cent* in order to make up for any possible wrong estimates made in the past.

In arriving at such estimates of food surpluses, two things have to be kept carefully in mind. (i) Too small producers (inadequate producers) who own less than 5 acres of wet land or 10 acres of dry land ought not to be treated as surplus producers even if any compulsory procurement has been made from them in the past. (ii) The food grains needed by peasants to be paid to agricultural workers and customary village artisans should be carefully estimated and procured from the peasants and placed at the disposal of the local Cooperative Society or the P. C. C. to be made available to agricultural workers at the scheduled ration rates. Such grain ought not to be left with the peasants lest they should abstain from paying their workers in grain and later sell it to them at much higher prices (iii) That portion of the food grains compulsorily procured from the surplus producers as is needed to provide an adequate ration to all the non-food producers in the village throughout the year should also be kept in the local grain stores in the village to be distributed through the Cooperative Society or P. C. C. whichever may be entrusted with that work.

If at any time the inadequate producers come to be genuinely in need of food supplies, they have

to be supplied from the village store the required minimum rations at the procurement prices.

Rich people in towns as well as villages will be free to purchase whatever ration they desire in the free market and they need not be assured any rations by Government, since they can afford to pay higher prices and thus provide some incentive to producers to produce more and bring more into the open market, even by economising on their domestic use of food grains.

If we are to minimise the evils of controls and help the food grain producers and their co-partners in agricultural production not to offer any resistance to food procurement for the feeding of towns, we must take care to assure the people of any village that all the food grains needed for the consumption of its people will be left in it and only its surplus stocks will be taken away for the feeding of towns. This procedure may cause temporary embarassment to Government in that these local insurance stocks may reduce the total quantities of food grains they may need to feed the towns. But this is only the means to be adopted in these days of uncertain transport facilities, overall food deficits and the corrupt and inefficient officers of the control system. Thus, local "Grain

Banks" are the best insurance against the corruption and inefficiency of the control system.

By following the above methods of procuring and distributing food grains, the State would make it possible for the poor to get their rations at specially lowered prices, and the middle classes at the procurement prices. These two sections of people will also be free to supplement their rations either by food grains purchased in open markets at higher prices or by non-cereal consumable goods.

As for the rich, their food will not be subsidised, nor will its price be especially kept down by controls as at present to the discouragement of the food grains producers. They will have to pay such higher prices.

To facilitate the compulsory procurement by the P.C.C. of 50 *per cent* to 75 *per cent* of the grain surpluses of the surplus producers, it is necessary to enable the P.C.Cs to purchase these procurable surpluses by forward contracts very much in advance of the harvest and to advance to the producers 50 *per cent* to 75 *per cent* of the sale price. Such food grains procured in advance may be left in the care of producers on condition that they are stored properly and safely and the fire

insurance costs are shared equally between the P. C. C and the Government. Heavy penalties, including imprisonment, may be provided for any misuse or illegal loss of such grain stores.

By this means storage difficulties can be obviated and procurement in advance by the Cooperatives of peasants can be facilitated.

Whatever profits the P. C. Cs are likely to make in the purchase and sale of unprocured food surpluses and sold at free market rates can be distributed between all the suppliers of such additional surpluses.

All the producers' and consumers' goods needed by the local food grain producers should be supplied to them only through the P. C. Cs at controlled prices. In view of the over-all shortage in the supplies of these commodities, peasants may be classified into convenient groups of non-surplus, smaller and bigger peasants, and each group may be allotted a certain portion of the producers' or consumers' goods and actual distribution to individuals may be decided upon either by drawing lots or on the advice of the local Distribution Councils, as per local conditions. Yarn

and cloth distribution should be made only through Weavers' Cooperative Societies and P. C. Cs respectively and handspinning and handloom weaving should be specially encouraged to supplement mill production.

The P. C. Cs may be allowed to pay interest on the private investments made to it at 6 to 9 *per cent*, on bank credits at rates not exceeding 6 *per cent* and on the share capital upto 6 *per cent* and the surplus income to be distributed as dividend in proportion to the food grains supplied to it.

Care has to be taken not to introduce rationing for the middle classes of towns especially in surplus food producing areas unless they are found to be in favour of it.

In places where they express themselves against any such rationing through their Municipal Councils and Congress Committees, food grains should be made available through Government's Fair Price Shops or Cooperative Societies.

So far as villages in deficit areas are concerned, informal rationing may be introduced if the local Distribution Councils desire, and should

be worked on the lines suggested by these councils.

The movements of food grains allowed to be sold in free market should not be restricted either on village or district plane. This will eliminate the present police 'zulum'.

Whatever food imports are brought in should be made available to the food deficit areas as well as towns and cities at the same prices at which the procured food grains are offered and only as a part of the statutorily distributed rations so that the free market can operate as a very good incentive to our own producers for greater production of food grains.

In case the local price level of food grains need not be raised to that of food imports in view of the local price being found satisfactory by both peasants and agricultural workers, then whatever difference there may be between external and internal price levels will have to be subsidised equally both by Central and Provincial Governments.

In fixing the floor and procurement levels of prices, it is the duty of the Government to take into fullest cooperation and consultation both the

peasants and agricultural workers Careful estimates of the costs of cultivation have to be made with the aid of facts collected by the Statistical Department of the Government of India for different food crops and other crops which compete with them for acreage and agricultural stock, labour and capital and also of the standard of living of both peasants and workers.

Floor Price Levels: Once the remunerative levels of prices are worked out, they should be treated as floor or the basic levels. Such a floor price must cover all costs of cultivation, including a decent level of wages and supervision costs. At these prices Government and the P. C. Cs on its behalf should be prepared to purchase whatever quantity of food grains the peasants are prepared to offer either during the days of Sellers' Market or in the future when the Buyers' Market may set in.

Procurement Price Levels: In addition it is necessary to work out procurement levels of prices which will be sufficiently higher than the remunerative levels so as to be attractive enough to make compulsory procurement not so unpopular and to leave a sufficient incentive for peasants to produce more and offer to the State more and

more of their food grains. The 25 M. Ps' Committee of the Central Parliament has also recommended these two levels of prices in addition to ceiling levels.

Agricultural Wages: Average and reasonable levels of wages will also have to be worked out both in terms of grain and cash and every possible step has to be taken (either voluntary or compulsory) to see that such declared wages, within a margin of 2 annas in the rupee to suit different conditions, are actually paid to workers so that justice is done to both workers and peasants.

Example of Other Countries: It should be remembered that in Holland, Norway and Sweden agricultural prices are fixed not in any arbitrary manner for the convenience of urban people but in definite and direct relation to, and based upon, the standard of cost of living of agricultural workers and also of peasants and all other costs of cultivation, so much so, both the agricultural workers and peasants are always united in demanding any particular level of prices for the produce for which they both are jointly responsible. During the last 4 years, England and France in Europe, and Australia and Newzealand in the Pacific have

followed suit. It is high time that in our country also the same method of arriving at floor and procurement prices is adopted. Then it will be unnecessary and even impossible for the champions of urban people to argue against our demand for the payment of remunerative prices for our food grains and other crops.

Representation for Kisan Congress: To obviate the present inequalities in the allotment of iron, steel, cement and other building materials and to ensure adequate railway priorities for the movement of agricultural produce and also for the supply of commodities needed by agriculturists, it is necessary that the Kisan Congress is provided adequate representation on the Commodity Allotment Committees of the Industry & Supply Department's and the Railway Priorities Committees as well as the Import and Export Advisory Committees.

Distribution Councils: Distribution Councils have to be organised on the lines of earlier Madras Food Councils. Every village should have such a council. All its members should be elected by all Panchayat voters. The nominees of Village Congress and Kisan Congress Committees and the Co-operative Societies or P. C. Cs should be co opted

to it .The members of these councils should elect the members of the Taluk Councils and those the members of the District Councils and those again the members of the Provincial Council. Not more than two of the local legislators, one of them being a Harijan, should be co-opted to the District Council. The Provincial Council is to be presided over by the Minister or his Deputy, all other councils having their elected chairmen. The concerned District Collectors and Supply Officers should also be co-opted to the District and Taluk Committees.

It is the responsibility of these councils to advise the local P. C. Cs and Cooperative Stores in the procurement of food grains and distribution of consumers' goods among villagers. They have also to supervise the activities of the local P. C. Cs and Cooperative Societies as well as the free markets and advise the Government as to the steps to be taken to improve the working of cooperatives in both procurement and distribution of goods. The District and Taluk Councils are to advise the Collector and Tahsildar respectively and Supply Officers as to allocation of supplies of consumers' goods as between the towns and villages and also as between different villages. They

have also to advise the Government regarding the prices to be paid for food grains and wages to be paid to workers. They have to be consulted by the Provincial Government before Government lands are distributed either temporarily or permanently among prospective cultivators for additional food grains production. The Grow More Food Campaign and the distribution of manures, oil-cakes, seeds and other cattle-feed should be carried out by the Agricultural and Revenue Departments in consultation with the concerned Distribution Councils. The administrative officers will be free to differ from the recommendations of the Councils and act on their own responsibility, but for stated reasons. However, it is the duty of Government to transfer, and if necessary suspend, any officer if any Distribution Council at the appropriate level recommends twice within a period of 3 months in favour of such punishment for stated reasons.

The Lower Distribution Councils should be given the power of recalling any of their representatives in the higher councils 6 months after a member is elected and at later intervals of not less than 6 months. These Councils should be elected once every 3 years. Under no circumstances

should their members be nominated. The members of these councils should have the power to inspect the grain stores maintained in the villages and in towns and also the grain that is being distributed through the P. C. Cs and Cooperatives (retail as well as wholesale).

No Cooperative store should be closed or its Board of Directors suspended by Government unless the concerned Distribution Council at its level is agreeable to it. At the same time, Government should have the right to order investigation into the affairs of any Cooperative Society and place the facts before both the Council as well as the general body of the Cooperative Society, besides having the power to prosecute any of the guilty persons.

It is true that controls over our activities resulting from the establishment of such institutions and regulations do restrict the freedom of our peasantry and other unorganised rural people and urban poor. They have to be protected from the rapacity of blackmarketeers and corrupt officials. They can be protected only by the institution of democratic checks and balances atevery centre of control administration, i. e., wherever, and with whichever officer, initiative, discretion

and decision are reposed to control that authority and that officer and oblige them to behave in a democratic manner. Even the Cooperatives have to be carefully watched, advised and controlled in order to prevent their executives from indulging in corruption, factious spirit, favouritism and in otherwise misusing their powers. Therefore every care has to be taken by the State to encourage different classes of our people to organise themselves and to give due opportunities for all such organisations to advise and supervise the activities of control officers and cooperatives.

To check corruption: In order to prevent corruption both at the P. C. C. and the Distribution Council levels and any oppression of the people through the collusion between Revenue Officials, District Councils and Supply Officials and even the Cooperative Societies, it is necessary to appoint a Special Judicial Tribunal, with a High Court Judge as its Chairman and the representatives of both producers and consumers and District Councils and cooperatives as assessors and with power to appoint the necessary number of social investigators to obtain secret information about any mal-practice and collect evidence and then to launch prosecutions and deal out justice

against the guilty In giving punishments, besides imposing imprisonments and fines, this Tribunal should be empowered to castigate the guilty for moral terpitude in case their guilt cannot be so clearly established as to merit either imprisonment or fine, then disqualify them from holding any responsible posts either in Government service, or in the Councils or Cooperatives or any public body and call upon his resignation.

(b) This Special Tribunal is suggested advisedly because of our past experience of the failure of the Provincial Government to conduct impartial enquiry as quickly and as effectively as was needed and their proneness to import personal factious or partisan prejudices into the investigations and prosecutions to be made and punishments to be given.

(c) A Judicial Tribunal of this type can be expected to be sufficiently independent while having the necessary experience and fitness to deal with such cases of corruption, favouritism, dishonesty and misuse of public trust with the help of the experienced assessors. Appeals may lie from the decisions of the Tribunal to the Full Bench of the High Court.

(d) The assessors should be chosen by lot from

panels of names submitted by their respective organisations and each assessor should function for as long as the completion of any particular batch of cases takes and should not ordinarily function for more than 6 months within any year.

In conclusion we appeal to our peasants to organise themselves into their producers' Committees in every District and Province and to link them with their local corresponding Kisan Congress organisations. Unless these producers' committees concentrate upon the study of the working of controls, collect information regarding the experiences of peasants and other rural people in various villages, watch the work of the various P. C. Cs, Cooperative Stores and Distribution Councils and work out from time to time various practicable policies and programmes and suggest detailed alterations in the system of controls and its actual working to the concerned local as well as provincial authorities, it will not be possible either for the Kisan Congress or the National Congress which have to attend to various other equally important needs of our people to protect our peasants.

It is necessary that each District Food Producers Committee should develop an efficient re-

search, propaganda and organisational secretariat and also organise atleast once a year peasant marches to the local Tahsildar and District Collector and take every opportunity to meet the Ministers for Food, Industry, Supply and Cooperation Departments and also the Premier of the local ministry and explain to them the experiences and the needs of food producers. They should also obtain representation on the relevant Government committees. It is also their duty to promote additional food production, to facilitate and popularise food procurement and to ensure equitable distribution of food grains among the non-producing rural population and to see that reasonable wages are paid to agricultural workers and food grains are made available to them on easy terms. To discharge these and other functions, they have to seek and obtain the wholehearted cooperation of Kisan Congress, the Agricultural Workers Congress and the National Congress.

APPENDIX I.

The 25 Member Committee of the Congress Party in the Dominion Parliament made the following suggestion in regard to the re-imposition of controls.

1. The Committee are of the view that in deficit provinces or areas statutory rationing of food grains has to be maintained in the cities and as far as possible in other areas where there is acute scarcity. In provinces or areas, which are self-sufficient or are surplus in the production of food grains, the system of partial rationing limited to low-income groups with freedom to supplement from the open market, as is being done at present in some provinces, may be continued. Fair-price shops should be opened in as many places as possible in non-rationed areas.

2. For all these purposes the Central and Provincial Governments should secure adequate quantities of food grains through imports and local procurement. The Committee feel that it is worthwhile to obtain as much wheat and rice as possible from abroad with a view to build up a reserve, besides meeting the current requirements. At the same time, there should be compulsory levy of food grains, after leaving enough grain for peasant's family, agricultural labour, seeds etc., from all agriculturists having more than a minimum acreage, as may be prescribed by Provincial Governments. This procurement must be made at a price attractive enough to induce peasants to grow food crops in preference to other crops and make it easy to enforce the procurement policy.

3. There should also be fixed for the principal food grains the floor price a little below the procurement price but covering costs of cultivation and reasonable profits to the cultivators, and the Government should undertake to buy unlimited quantities of grains at the floor price. In the interests of consumers, it is also necessary to fix ceiling prices somewhat above the procurement prices above which no grain should be sold or bought. But peasants should be free to sell in the open market surplus grain left after contributing their quota according to the procurement scheme. So long as this grain is sold between the floor and ceiling prices, complete freedom of movement should be ensured.

The Committee feel strongly that the procurement prices should be announced well before the harvest so that the peasants may reap the benefit of such prices. As far as possible, even forward contracts may be made with them by Government for delivery of grain at those prices. But a few members are opposed to fixing of ceiling price.

4. The Committee generally approve of the scheme of control of cloth recently adopted by the Government. They also agree that the control of prices and distribution of such other commodities as paper, cement, steel and coal should be continued. The price of sugar should be reduced, while assuring to the peasants a fair price for their cane. The price and distribution of kerosene should be continued to be controlled. The production of finer cloth should be restricted as far as possible and the production of varieties of durable cloth which are needed by the masses should be maximised.

APPENDIX II.

Resolution 'On Controls' passed at the General Body meeting of APCC held at Vijayawada on 24-10-48 under the Presidentship of ACHARYA RANGA

The War-time controls have reared many evils. They are :

1. Corruption and mal-practices among the Government officials have assumed enormous proportions.

2. The mill-owners, aided by the corrupt Government Officials, have on the one hand procured food grains compulsorily from Kisans at a low price and on the other have amassed huge profits in black-market.

3. This compulsory procurement of surplus food-grains from peasants has left landless labourers and other rural people destitute. The Government, instead of assuming responsibility for supply of food grains to rural people, have in the name of control and rationing imposed restrictions on movement of food grains from one place to another and consequently famine conditions came to prevail in the villages.

GANDHIJI'S ADVICE

These controls and rationing have caused widespread discontent which consequently began to spread against the Congress and Congress Governments and

gave rise to country-wide anti-control agitation. The Father of the Nation, GANDHIJI, perceiving this discontent and agitation, demanded that controls and rationing that breed corruption and black-market, especially with regard to cloth and food-stuffs, be removed forthwith. The Government of India yielded to the demand by deciding on a policy of progressive de-control from December 1947. Following this decision, rationing was removed to some extent; but the transport bottle-necks, sale of goods through licenses, control and price-control, which bred the twin evils of black-market and corruption, were not abolished.

This Committee expresses its disappointment at the Government's decision to re-introduce controls, without giving the policy of de-control a fair trial.

Dis-satisfaction over Government's Action

This Committee expresses its dis-satisfaction over the Government's decision to re-introduce controls with the plea of fighting inflation, yielding to the propaganda of, and pressure exerted by, Government servants, businessmen, economists and industrialists.

This Committee is afraid that the controls and rationing will bring more hardships than facilities to the people, and in their wake will evoke their aversion towards Congress and Congress Governments and may give strength to the vicious propaganda of anti-Congress forces.

This Committee, with a view to minimising the evil effects of Controls, requests the Government to implement the following suggestion in matters of price-fixation, procurement and distribution of paddy, cloth, kerosene, fertilisers, iron, agricultural implements, cattle feed and other commodities essential to rural and other people

SUPPLY COMMITTEES

1. The Government shall establish Supply Committees in every village and town comprising 5 to 10 members elected according to the Panchayat or Municipal Electoral Lists and one representative from each local Panchayat Board, Co-operative Society and Village Kisan Congress and Congress Committees.

These Committees are suggested as a replica to the Food Committees formerly formed by the Madras Government.

Taluk Committees shall consist of two members elected by Village Committees of every Firka of the concerned Taluk. In the same way District Committee shall comprise of one elected member from each Taluk committee in the concerned District. Then finally, the Provincial Committee, which has to devise and implement proper food grain procurement and distribution policy, shall consist of members elected from the District Committees. Under any circum-

stances these committees shall not be nominated. District and Taluk Supply Officers shall be ex-officio members of their respective District and Taluk Committees.

2. Government, in order to root out the social evils bred by corrupt officials, private licensed dealers and black-marketeers and to make procurement and distribution of controlled goods more effective, shall constitute Producer-cum-Consumer Co-operative Societies. These P. C. C. Societies shall work under the General Supervision of the Supply Committees. In no case contract business shall be entrusted to individuals. Yarn distribution shall entirely be entrusted to Hand-loom Weavers Co-operative Societies. The mill cloth shall be distributed through other cooperative societies.

PROCUREMENT

3. To encourage and protect the food-grain producer, the minimum price of a two-maund coarse paddy bag in surplus districts should be fixed at Rs. 15.

The Government shall purchase only half of the surplus food grains from the peasant at a remunerative minimum price, and stock such grains in the village cooperative societies to be supplied to such rural people as could not produce food grains sufficient for their needs. The remainder alone shall be supplied to towns and other deficit areas.

RATIONING

4. Rationing shall not be enforced in towns of surplus districts. Cheap Grain Depots may be established in such towns for the sake of poor urban people.

5. Rationing may be enforced in villages and towns in deficit districts only at the request of the local people.

6. As an incentive to increase food-grains production and effective procurement, such commodities as manures, seeds, agricultural implements, kerosene, cement and cloth essential for rural people shall be supplied in abundance and distributed equitably amongst them at controlled prices.

7. In areas where rationing is in force, duplicate ration cards shall be kept.

8. If a resolution is passed twice within a period of three months by the Local Panchayat Board or Municipality or by the Supply Committee condemning any Supply Officer, or Rationing Officer or Agricultural Department employee for corruption and improper behaviour, action shall be taken against him.

9. Government should purchase on forward contract system at least 50 *per cent* of surplus food stocks of the peasants, paying an advance of 50 to 70 *per cent* to the peasants.

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