

February 13, 1954

Hindus in the Cabinet,

Irrespective of the chances of the United Front (Muslim) and of the Muslim League in the elections, the issues on which the East Pakistan elections are being fought are by now clear. Mr Fazlul Huq and his associates know their strong points. The United Front (Muslim) is fighting the elections on the slogan, "Eastern Bengal for Eastern Bengalis". Adoption of Bengali as one of the State languages is the other major election slogan of the Front. Both these slogans have popular appeal. This explains why Mr Mohammed Ali, the Pakistani Prime Minister, has repeatedly affirmed his support to the demand that Bengali must be adopted as one of the State languages. It is also significant that he has, over and over again, stress-

ed in his recent election speeches the need for encouraging Eastern Bengal's deep-rooted social and cultural traditions.

If the United Front (Muslim) is relying on the provincial instincts and inclinations of East Bengal, the Muslim League is raising the bogey of Islam in danger. Mr Nurul Amin, the Chief Minister, is warning the people that "the coming general election would be a sort of referendum to decide if East Pakistan would remain a part of Pakistan, or join Bharat". This is a subtle warning against the alleged fifth-columnist inclinations of the East Bengal minorities, as well as against the non-Islamic characteristics of the United Front (Muslim).

Like Congress, the Muslim

League emphasises that it alone

can maintain political cohesion in the new State, although it is blunt in its insistence on the religious basis of the State of Pakistan. There is some similarity in the political aspect of the election campaigns in Travancore-Cochin and Eastern Pakistan. But the comparative progress to democracy since independence in both countries is reflected in the economic aspect of the election campaign. Failure of the economic policy of Congress is a major issue in the Travancore-Cochin elections. Economic problems are not the main issues on which the East Pakistan elections are being fought, although economic recession and acute shortage of the necessities of life continue to threaten East Bengal's political and economic stability.

Weekly Notes

Guinea-pigs of Free India

DR C P RAMASWAMI AIYAR, Vice-Chancellor of the Annamalai University, is one of the few public men in this country to display sustained concern over the growing sense of frustration among students. Participating in a symposium on "World University Service, Universities and Human Society" at Delhi University this week, he attributed this frustration to the fact that the young in India had to face grim problems "too early in life and too continuously".

The report of the speech in the local papers does not indicate whether he specified these "grim problems" or not. Anyway, apart from the obvious problems that face the young in this over-populated and economically backward country, harried by the difficulties and anxieties of a state of transition, there is at least one source of bewilderment which might well have been avoided but which actually is not. And just now that perhaps constitutes the grimmest of problems to the student population.

The frequent changes in educational policy, the reckless alterations of curricula, the muddle over the issue of the medium of instruction and the tendency to upset the very basis of education every now and then add up to an evil which is the worst that has ever assailed the student population in this coun-

try. Freedom has meant thoughtless licence in the field of education; and anyone who by the accident of politics comes to have something to do with education is only too prone to indulge in experimentation at the cost of the helpless student.

The young have indeed become so many guinea-pigs for the testing of educational fancies and whims, which, though well-intentioned in certain cases, spell nothing but disaster to the progress of education and the sound growth of young minds. If the educational system needs to be changed, let it be changed at one stroke and on a national basis, instead of in a piecemeal manner and on a territorial basis, State by State or area by area. In any case, let the student know now at least—after six years of freedom—where exactly he stands in regard to his educational future and the prospects of a reasonable livelihood. If that is done, half his present frustration is bound to disappear and he may at last feel that he is something more than a creature of experiment.

The New Price Index

IT is gratifying to note that the Government of India is preparing a new index of wholesale prices with 1948-49 as the base year which will replace the current index of wholesale prices based on 1939

prices. As the economic determinants undergo a major shift with the march of time, such replacements are most necessary lest we wallow in meaningless nostalgia.

A complete history of index numbers is yet to be written. The earliest index number was published by Dutot in 1738 regarding the prices in the times of Louis XII and of Louis XIV. Since that time there has been almost a continuous process of constructing and reconstructing index numbers all over the world.

In our country the earliest index number of wholesale prices was compiled from 37 articles of which 14 were of the food crop, 17 of raw produce group and 6 of manufactured group. The base year was 1871 and was later on shifted to 1873. This index was too crude and its base too old to serve as a General Index number of wholesale prices over recent decades and the series was discontinued in 1941.

Assisting the Small Man

SHRI A D SHROFF performed a valuable service to small-scale industries in the country when, in his address to the Mysore Chamber of Commerce recently, he spoke of the "inordinate and in some cases even unconscionable delay in payment of their bills by Government departments. . . ." Given their lack of