

excessive optimism about the possible safe magnitude of the exportable surplus. Unless production goes up significantly next year, it would hardly be advisable to deplete our stocks drastically to say below 2 to 3 lakh tons.

Estimates of production unfortunately do not lend themselves to simple arithmetical calculation because the concept of "capacity" in the sugar industry depends, inter alia, on such variable factors as cane yield, sugar recovery, length of sugar season, etc. The Report of the Food Ministry, 1956-57, gives no estimate of present capacity in the sugar industry. The Planning Commission's Programmes for Industrial Development gave the rated capacity of the industry as 16.8 lakh tons in April 1956. The Food Ministry Report discloses that "out of the additional capacity licensed since 1953, a further capacity of 2.50 lakh tons is expected to materialise during 1956-57, besides about 1 lakh tons which came into production during the previous year". Thus the industry is well on its way to surpass the targets laid down for it in the Second Plan, viz production of 22.5 lakh tons and a capacity of 25 lakh tons in 1960-61! But this welcome performance may or may not be repeated during the next season, the principal uncertainty being on account of the crop yield and the relative prices of gur and sugar.

When our opening stocks were only 1.13 lakh tons in 1954-55 or about 6 per cent of annual consumption prices tended to rise and imports had to be rushed through. If a similar situation is to be avoided, about 12 per cent of the annual consumption should be considered necessary as carry-over stock for next year. Prudence demands, therefore, that stocks at the end of the season should not be allowed to go below 2.5 lakh tons. This would allow an export of about 180,000 tons this year, i.e., a further quota of not more than 50,000 tons.

### Our Delhi Letter

## The Lone Battle

SELDOM before in the capital has there been greater emphasis on austerity and economy. Whether in the closed-door meetings of the Congress Parliamentary Party or in the open forum of Parliament or by way of resolutions tabled for the forthcoming session of the All India Congress Committee, no opportunity has been spared to attack official extravagance. The protest emanates from a wide range of public figures, the top-ranking leaders are as eloquent and sarcastic in voicing it as their comparative juniors or the back-benchers. It cuts across party lines and smothers slogans. Congressmen have joined the Communists in denouncing the Second Plan as a "bogey" that cannot justify increased imposts on the poor man without first swinging the axe heavily on the well-to-do.

Ostentation and waste are easy to see in New Delhi and no wonder that people's representatives are angered when they see them flourish at the taxpayer's expense. From minor lapses to major misdemeanours, the evidence mounts. Abuse of privilege occasions as much gossip as any blatant breach of the rules. Official cars are noticed taking children to and from school, or parked in the vegetable markets. A Central Minister reportedly moved from his three bed room house to a bigger and better mansion not because he needed more accommodation but because an astrologer told him that continuance in the former residence would be inauspicious for his future. It has come to light that a former Minister of State visited a colleague and later called upon the P W D to explain why his friend had been given a carpet worth Rs 10,000 while his own carpet was worth only Rs 7,000. An investigation ordered by the Prime Minister into the electricity bills of various ministers revealed that while the lowest monthly bill was Rs 57 the highest was Rs 1200 and odd. (These bills are paid for by the Government).

Thus tongues wag and do not depend entirely on inside information for juicy bits to lick and chew. Official handouts are incriminating enough. Rs 2 crores have been spent on the luxury Ashoka Hotel. Rs 5½ crores are to be spent on building a defence headquarters in New Delhi to provide a sitting target for not merely the Government's critics at home. Rs 40 lakhs are earmarked for building the Governor's house in Chandigarh, His Excellency's sprawling estate that presently houses his limited family and entourage being considered inadequate to maintain the dignity of the gubernatorial office.

No wonder that Acharya Kriplani should describe the trend with biting candour. Gandhiji, he told an approving Lok Sabha, had envisaged that on the attainment of Swaraj, the Government House buildings in Delhi and the State capitals would be converted into hospitals. Now they had been converted into rest houses, declared the PSP leader, for weary and exhausted politicians!

Amid this rampant chicanery, corruption, nepotism and patronage, one man who sincerely feels that the rot should be stemmed and that the Congress should not go the way of the Kuomintang is the Congress President, Shri Dhebar. It is fortunate that he enjoys the sympathy and sometimes the support of the Prime Minister. But he has come out more often with suggestions for cleaning the Augean stables of the sodden, decadent and undisciplined organisation than he has secured their acceptance. Doggedly Shri Dhebar continues fighting a lone battle. Originally he thought that Pandit Nehru alone could revitalise the Congress and courageously he urged him to give up the office of the Prime Minister and take over as the Congress President, offering not merely to vacate the Congress Presidency himself but also to serve under Nehru as Vice-President.