

**Letters to the Editor****Heading for Cloth Famine ?**

—A PROTEST

IN the Weekly Notes of your issue dated November 21, 1959, you have, under the above caption, made certain comments about the Indian cotton mill industry and asked whether it has not been "engineering" cloth shortage in the country.

Your comments are based on the assumption that there has been a marked decline in the current year's mill output. How wrong this belief is will be evident from the fact that production during the first 10 months of the current and last year has been 4.100 million yards and 4,112 million yards respectively. It is amazing that with the same rate of production the industry should once be accused of overproduction and then of engineering shortage. Be that as it may, at the present rate of production, the total output of mill cloth in 1959 will be around 5,000 million yards which is certainly not much short of what the Textile Enquiry Committee, 1958, expects the industry to produce, namely, 5,100—5,200 million yards per annum. If production on this level threatens cloth famine in the country, the remedy lies, not with the mills, but with the Enquiry Committee and the Government which have fixed the industry's target.

The industry had responded to the Planning Commission's plea for an ever-increasing output, and had its fingers burnt. In fact, the recent crisis in which it was involved was largely due to its achieving a high rate of production. It is extremely unfair to accuse the industry of being guilty of over-production one day and of under-production another day without caring to find out what production target has been assigned to it, and whether the industry is falling short of it.

THE MILLOWNERS ASSOCIATION  
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November 28

[The Note did not say that there was a "marked decline in the current year's mill output". It said that production had remained "stationary or stagnant". This, at a time when stocks had been steadily going down, it found inexplicable except on the assumption that the industry was deliberately heading to a situation of acute cloth shortage.

Today the mill owners may find it convenient to accept the Joshi Committee's estimates of demand—it was neither a recommendation nor the target fixed by the Planning Commission—as it happens to fit very well with a sellers' market. When these estimates were published, the spokesmen of the mill industry had denounced them as pessimistic underestimates—Ed.]

**Military Implications of Our Transport Policy**

—A COMMENT

MR GEORGE ISAAC'S article "Military Implications of Our Transport Policy" published in your Weekly dated 21st November reiterates his views earlier expressed about the importance of development of road transport instead of making heavy investments on Railways.

While there can be no two opinions about the need for advancing road transport to open up our villages and also to provide an improved method of transportation in many a sphere, it should not be overlooked that a very large part of Rs 1125 crores allocated to the Railways in the 2nd Plan, is for overhauling the existing Railway system and expanding the capacities to take care of the burden of traffic that was already felt and would be expected almost immediately. The railway communication after the second world war needed large scale rehabilitation and modernisation, in any case and if this fact is remembered, the Rs 1125 crore allocation will be considered as the most economic investment that could be made to

cater for the 2nd Plan traffic as well.

Mr Isaac also seems to overlook the pertinent fact that in the present state of development of the oil resources of the country a large scale dependence on road transport in preference to railways willily reduces India to abject dependence for her basic fuel needs, on countries exporting oil. In an emergency of the kind he has in mind, the implications of any large scale dependence on imported fuel are easy to see. It will push India to one or the other power bloc. Unless this is exactly what Mr Isaac desires, it is difficult to see what alternative there is to the development of railways depending entirely on indigenous fuel. The change-over from steam to electric traction in many parts of the country will not be a difficult process.

Mr Isaac also exaggerates when he says that in the event of hostilities breaking out, the country's entire railway network will be paralysed within a few hours. As the experience in Europe during the last war shows, the bombing out and obliteration of marshalling yards did not lead to a shutting down of the railways which continued to do valuable work in furthering the war efforts even under exceptionally trying conditions.

This is of course not to say that roads should not be built to meet the needs of strategy or to exploit the inherent advantages of road transport in many fields.

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