

Letter from Andhra

The New Congress President

THE election of Shri D Sanjeevayya as Congress President was rather unexpected, indicating how hazardous political forecasting is. Shri Sanjeevayya's election is, however, welcome from more than one point of view and most of all from Shri Sanjeevayya's own personal standpoint. He is the first Harijan to be elected Congress President. His loyalty to Congress principles and programmes is undisputed. Besides, he has the qualification — which two recent Congress Presidents, Shri U N Dhebar and Shri N Sanjeeva Reddi, had — of having been Chief Minister of a State.

It would seem that the selection of the Congress President from among Chief Ministers or ex-Chief Ministers of States is becoming a regular practice. It is also noteworthy that the outgoing and incoming Presidents of the Congress should hail from the same State. In fact, it would not be wrong to trace the election of Shri Sanjeevayya to the Congress Gaddi to the exigencies of the political situation in the State and particularly to the situation within the State Congress party.

Embarrassment Saved

Shri Sanjeevayya had been persuaded, or had persuaded himself, to join the Andhra Ministry a few days ago, two months after the election of Shri Sanjeeva Reddi as leader of the Congress legislature party in Andhra Pradesh and the constitution of the Ministry. He was reluctant to do so earlier for his own reasons, one of which was that he would certainly not have been happy in a Cabinet in which the dominant voice would be that of persons whom, as Chief Minister earlier, he had displeased.

The Congress High Command apparently realised the position and decided to save Shri Sanjeevayya from the embarrassment of being the member of a Ministry in which both his official and personal status would be unsatisfactory. It was in this context that Shri Sanjeevayya's election as Congress President was conceived. For one thing it would

remove him from the State scene where his position had become uncomfortable. For another, it would place him in a position where (at least for the time being, as his tenure of office is only for the period till the next Congress meets) he will be able to function with freedom and initiative.

There is reason to suppose that Shri Sanjeeva Reddi is not unhappy at the transfer of Shri Sanjeevayya from Hyderabad to New Delhi, though he realises that Sanjeevayya at New Delhi, as Congress President, can be in some respects a greater embarrassment to him than Sanjeevayya as Minister in the State Cabinet. Congress Presidentship may be only a titular office; yet the occupant of that office can, if he is so inclined, give a State Congress Chief Minister quite a headache. His status as the party chief gives him a certain prestige and position which a Chief Minister cannot ignore with impunity. It is earnestly hoped, therefore, that from his vantage position Shri Sanjeevayya will do nothing directly or indirectly to encourage one or the other of the groups in the Andhra Congress organisation. A complaint against Shri Reddi had been that, as Congress President, he was favouring one of the groups in the Andhra Congress then known as the 'United Front'.

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Projects for Backward Areas

Under the Centre-sponsored programme for development of backward areas in States which suffer from severe drought, scarcity, floods and other natural calamities, the Andhra State Government has formulated a scheme of pilot projects in 12 taluks in 10 Telangana and Rayalaseema districts. The estimated cost of the scheme is Rs 8.07 crores, which, it is expected, will be met by the Central Government.

Parts of Rayalaseema and Telangana have for long been economically backward. They are highly deficient in rainfall and have no other irrigation facilities; except minor irrigation tanks and wells which are mainly rain fed. Agricultural pro-

duction is poor and illiteracy is widespread.

The scheme prepared by the Government includes land improvement and soil conservation measures, improvement of cattle wealth, creation and maintenance of a network of minor irrigation sources like wells and tanks, establishment of cottage and small-scale industries, and liberal provision of co-operative credit.

Lack of Co-ordination

While there is no doubt about the need for all these measures, it would seem that there is considerable wastage of funds and efforts and comparatively little permanent benefit can be expected from *ad hoc* schemes like these in a sphere where the need is rather for co-ordinated efforts. The various schemes of a more or less similar character under community development and panchayati raj programmes need to be co-ordinated and expanded and executed under the supervision of a common agency.

There is very little of such co-ordination at present. Some schemes are Centre-sponsored and others State-sponsored. That no permanent benefit to the areas concerned has accrued is evident from the fact that, despite pumping of funds over a number of years through *ad hoc* relief measures into Rayalaseema, there is no visible change in the economic condition of the people there.

However, in the present set up it is a cry in the wilderness to ask for such co-ordination of schemes. So used are the different departments to functioning in isolation from each other that a plea for co-ordination evokes only cynical disregard.

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