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The Agronomy Society of India

This society was organized some 4 years ago by the Agronomists in the Pusa Institute with Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh, our President, as its Founder - President. The Annual General Meeting of this society was held at the Pusa Institute on the 6th May 1963 where Dr. Deshmukh presided. Dr. Sikka, Addl. Agricultural Commissioner of the Govt. of India, who is the Working President, made a speech of Welcome and dwelt on the importance of the society. Dr. Raheja, the Secretary gave an account of the activities of the society and suggested certain changes in subscription, etc. Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh was unanimously re-elected as the President of the society.

I am writing this letter on the eve of my departure out of India.

As you might recollect, the Bharat Krishak Samaj was affiliated to the International Federation of Agricultural Producers as early as the year 1955, i. e., the very first year of our existence. As you might have noticed from the last issue, the officers of Government, who were examined by the Public Accounts Committee, forgot that the Bharat Krishak Samaj was registered as early as 7-2-1955 and so they had no hesitation in making a positive statement that "even upto the holding of the World Agriculture Fair the Samaj was an unregistered body." As now every one knows this is entirely false.

Not only did the Samaj join the International Federation of Agricultural Producers soon after its establishment but in 1959 invited its 11th Session of the General Conference in Delhi. This was the first time that this farmers' international organization held its Conference outside America and Europe. The Conference was very well attended and was a success in every way. The international delegations who visited India on that occasion were literally thrilled by the work done by the Bharat Krishak Samaj when it had hardly completed five years of its existence. We had also arranged the programme in such a way that the delegates could be present at the opening of the World Agriculture Fair on the 11th December 1959 at the hands of late Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the then President of India and in the august presence of the then President of U.S.A., Mr. Eisenhower and numerous other high dignitaries.

It is worthwhile to note that in the beginning the I.F.A.P was reluctant to affiliate the Samaj because the I.F.A.P. insists that the farmers' organizations should be completely non-governmental and independently organisations and not in any way controlled by Government. As I was then the Minister of Agriculture they found it difficult to believe at least in the beginning how the Samaj could be an independent farmers' organization. But they soon realized and were fully convinced that I had not organized the Samaj in my official capacity as Minister of Agriculture, nor was I there either under the constitution or otherwise in my official capacity. They were further convinced of the non-official nature and independence of the organization when they heard me speaking frankly with regard to the policies pursued by Government and advocating the cause of the farmers boldly and unequivocally. I have given this background only incidentally as I am going out of India for attending the 13th Conference of the I.F.A.P. to be held at Bray in Ireland from the 16th to the 29th of this month. This organization has also been kind enough to include me as one of their delegates to the World Food Congress to be held in Washington



from the 4th June to the 18th. I would, therefore, be proceeding to Washington from Bray in Ireland early in June.

I am indeed very happy and proud to be able to attend the World Food Congress. This Food Congress is an item in the Freedom From Hunger Campaign undertaken by the F.A.O. Here also the members of the Krishak Samaj will recollect how the Samaj was the first organization which associated itself fully with the Freedom From Hunger Campaign of the F.A.O. under the leadership of Shri B.R. Sen, Director-General of the F.A.O. Even when this campaign had not made much headway, the Krishak Samaj decided to allocate all the gate-money from the World Agriculture Fair for this campaign and utilize it according to the light and understanding of the Samaj itself for promoting the programme of this Campaign. Resolution No. 10 of the F.A.O. Conference in Rome of November 1959 gives the items on which the funds in the name of this campaign can be spent and this includes education, information and other activities of benefit to agriculture and agriculturists. The Samaj has come into being for these very purposes and therefore the objectives of the Samaj are identical with what is proposed to be done under the campaign. Had it not, however, been for the I.F.A.P.'s kindness to select me as one of their delegates what the Bharat Krishak Samaj did to advance the causes of Freedom From Hunger Campaign would not have found recognition although the Director-General was aware of what the Samaj had done for the Campaign. I may also proudly mention that the Bharat Krishak Samaj was the first and for a long long time the sole contributor to the Government's Freedom From Hunger Campaign Fund started with an appeal by the then President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, and supported by the Prime Minister, the Minister for Food & Agriculture, etc.

Besides the World Food Congress which I will have the honour of attending as a non-official delegate representing the interests of the farmers not only of India but of the world, I am likely to have two other important engagements. One is to

attend a seminar on economic relations between U.S.A. and India in Racine, Wisconsin, under the auspices of the Jonson Foundation and to attend a special meeting at Los Angeles arranged by the Meals for Millions Foundation of California to which the Indian Meals for Millions, of which I am the Founder-President, is affiliated. A similar meeting was held last year at Los Angeles when I was in U.S.A.

CORRECTION

Before I go any further, however, I must point out an error that has occurred in the last issue of the 'Krishak Samachar.' As printed, it appears that whatever is given under the heading "Clarification in a Nut-shell" was a statement that I made on the floor of the Lok Sabha. Actually, the statement that I made there ends with the following sentences :

".....I welcome my friend Shri Tyagi's suggestion that I should first place what I have to say before the P.A.C." What is given after this sentence has of course been sent both to the honourable Speaker of the Lok Sabha as well as the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, Shri Tyagi, but I did not read it in the House.

It is highly gratifying that the Minister for Food and Agriculture has definitely announced the intention of Government to take price support measures in respect of wheat and rice, to begin with and if necessary to extend it to such commodities as jowar, etc. There has also been an increase of one rupee per maund both for wheat and rice in the previously announced minimum price. While welcoming this policy of Government and the raising of the minimum price I did say in the House that at the present level of prices of other goods and commodities in the country this was inadequate. I also drew an assurance from the Minister that steps to afford this price support would be most promptly taken wherever necessary and not delayed in such a way that what is announced merely remains as an intention of the Government and does not carry the relief announced to the farmers themselves. We have every hope that this assurance would be acted upon. I think Mr. Patil also indicated that the co-

operatives would be entrusted with the task of procuring these commodities wherever necessary.

I am particularly happy at this announcement because in my humble view the idea of state-trading in foodgrains had not achieved the success that was expected of it. The Planning Commission was very keen on this, but did not realize the deficiency in the administrative set-up and the inherent weaknesses of Government in taking up such an activity. I am firmly convinced that the salvation in this respect lies in operating through co-operatives—co-operatives generously helped by Government but not controlled and directed by it. Unfortunately, too often the Government's intentions are implemented only in the reverse. I have to say it with great regret, but that it is so in many instances in the field of co-operatives and it is showing signs of similar weaknesses in the case of the Panchayat Raj. There is, therefore, need to revise attitude and procedure very materially if the co-operatives are expected to function properly. I am fully aware that co-operatives themselves are some times exploited by unscrupulous people, but to condemn the whole cooperative movement is also highly undesirable because even if defective that is the only instrument which can save the producers, consumers and others from ruthless exploitation, which in its own sequence brings in the black-market, adulteration of all kinds and many other anti-social activities. As some one very intimately concerned with the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation, I have been trying my utmost to get the State Apex Marketing Societies interested in inter-State trade especially in foodgrains. I am glad to say that we have made some slender beginning in some places, but there is a tremendous scope for greater activity. In time to come I believe we will be able to step up our share of inter-State trade in agricultural commodities.

For want of time I seek my readers' permission to close here.

Sd : P.S. Deshmukh

President

12-5-1963

The other side of the issue of payment of rent for the World Agriculture Fair

We are happy to understand that no question of transgression of privileges of Parliament would arise in the Samaj's giving out the facts of the matter concerning the payment of rent by the Samaj for holding the World Agriculture Fair in 1959-60. Our President and Samaj have suffered a great deal of condemnation which was wholly unmerited. Our President in a brief statement he was permitted to make in the Lok Sabha on the 9th April confined himself to a personal explanation with respect to what Shri Malhotra had said. The statement is attached as an Appendix. But he refrained from saying anything about the P.A.C. Report inaccuracies and did not put forward the whole of our case in 'Krishak Samachar' also did not give any publicity even to those legitimate contentions which we have on our side.

Thousands of members of the Bharat Krishak Samaj all over India and all our sympathisers felt very hurt and some of them even doubted if we had any defence because the press publicised only one-side of the picture so much so that except the newspapers in the South very little was seen of the brief statement made by the President the very next day of the publication of the P.A.C.'s report on the 15th March, 1963.

We have received many letters from our members and others who had an idea of the unchallengeable position of the Samaj requesting us to nail the lie and let people know the truth. The Samaj resisted even these legitimate requests and suggestions feeling sure in its own mind that ultimately truth will prevail and our untarnished reputation would be restored without doubt. What we have to say in respect of the treatment we received at the hand of the Government in holding the World Agriculture Fair is quite a long story and there is much that public would be interested in. The Samaj may probably one day relate the whole of it, but for the time being we give below our side of the picture of the matter and respectfully show how the honourable members of the P.A.C. were misled into conclusion which real facts and truth do not warrant.

While the report of the P.A.C. received the widest possible publicity, equal publicity was given when the Speaker of the Lok Sabha did not permit our President to make a statement on the floor of the House concerning the observations of the P.A.C. The Speaker did, however, permit Dr. Deshmukh to make a brief statement on 9-4-1963 but to our knowledge not a single newspaper even mentioned that such a statement was made. We think that this was rather unfair to Dr. Deshmukh and the Samaj and we only hope that what is given here will receive as prominent a publicity as was given to the P.A.C.'s report at least now. We are forwarding copies of this issue to all the newspapers and journals in the country as well as many others.

—Secretary,

Bharat Krishak Samaj

THE Bharat Krishak Samaj regrets that the Public Accounts Committee and its worthy Chairman were not kind enough to give the Samaj an opportunity to at least correct some of the mis-statements of facts which form the basis of most of the adverse remarks made in the Public Accounts Committee's report.

2. It is amazing how there could be such glaring errors of facts as the report discloses. For instance, the Committee could not ascertain even the exact name under which the farmer's organization was functioning nor even the year it was started. The committee was told that right upto the holding of the World Agriculture Fair and for a considerable

time later the Bharat Krishak Samaj was not a registered society. We quote "the Bharat Krishak Samaj was not a registered society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, at the time the Exhibition ground was lent to them." Nothing could be 'more untrue than this' since the Farmers Forum, India (Bharat Krishak Samaj) was registered as far back as 7th February 1955 i.e. full 8 years ago (and prior to our taking up any activity on behalf of the Samaj whatsoever. Even our First Convention of farmers, inaugurated by our great Prime Minister on 3-4-1955, was held after registration and not before. Is it not strange that correct information on even such points should not have been

obtained and made available to the Committee when our record shows that even the Ministry of W.H.S. had been sent a copy of the constitution of the Samaj before the Fair was held. In spite of these facts the report says :

"Asked whether the Samaj was a registered body or not before these transactions took place the Committee were informed that the Bharat Krishak Samaj came into being in August 1962 (According to Audit the Bharat Krishak Samaj came into being in April 1958) and till then it was called as the All India Farmers' Council. In this connection the Committee desired to have a detailed note indicating the circum-

stances under which the exhibition ground was lent for the World Agriculture Fair specifying therein whether the Ministry of W.H.S. has entered into any agreement (written or verbal) with the All India Farmers Council or the Bharat Krishak Samaj before renting the land for the Fair. The note received from the Ministry (with the Audit Comments thereon) is enclosed as Appendix II.

3. 'The Ministry of & Food Agriculture knew of the very birth of the Samaj' and its functioning in every detail because in the beginning this Ministry helped the Samaj both with advice as well as financially. It is the established policy of the Government not to give any grant to any organization unless it is a registered Society. Further, right from the year 1954-55, because of the fact that we were getting some financial assistance from the Government, we submitted to the Ministry of Food & Agriculture our audited accounts of the Samaj from the very first year of its existence i. e. 1954-55 onwards.

4. There is an equally false impression created in the minds of the members of the P.A.C. in respect of the Samaj occupying some accommodation in the Krishi Bhavan free of rent. The Committee observes :

"During examination, it also transpired that the 'Bharat Krishak Samaj was functioning from the premises of the Krishi Bhavan without paying any rent.' The room in which they were accommodated belonged to I. C. A. R. who had paid for the block and as such the question of realization of rent

did not arise. In reply to a question whether Government could sub-let their premises to other organizations, the Committee were informed that the Minister who was doing the work of the Samaj was occupying a room in the I. C. A. R. Wing and 'he obtained another room for his staff who were attending to the work of the Samaj'."

'This is a complete travesty of facts.' Every sentence in this quotation is also as untrue and false as what we have said about the registration of Samaj. At no time did the Samaj occupy any place in the Krishi Bhavan either free of rent or on payment of rent. Nor did any "staff who were attending to the work of the Samaj" ever sit at any time in the I. C. A. R. Wing or any part of the Secretariat building. This is another glaring untruth which has misled the P. A. C. and these two mis-statements naturally prejudiced every member of the Committee and if they thought that there were some irregularities, we cannot blame them.

5. The third accusation is that the President of the Samaj utilised his influence as a Minister of Agriculture in securing a 'grant of rupees two lakhs' and that as a Minister he 'hustled the Government into' allowing the Samaj to use the Exhibition grounds without entering into an agreement for rent. Both these accusations are as far-fetched and unfair as the two accusations already referred to.

6. We will take up the question of the grant of Rs. 2 lakhs first. The allegation is that by writing a note directly to the Minister of R & C. E., the President of the Samaj influenced him in making this grant by the use of his personal influence

as a Minister. In this behalf we wish to make the following submissions :

7. Firstly, the Government spokesman himself has very kindly admitted that the grant of Rs. 2 lakhs was Government assistance to the Fair which was thought to be 'useful activity'. There was, therefore, no suggestion of influencing the Minister for Revenue & Civil Expenditure unduly for securing the grant as the grant was for a worthy purpose. Secondly, the grant is in no way excessive taking into account the fact that the total expenditure on the Fair was calculated by us at that time at about 50 lakhs. Thirdly, the WORLD AGRICULTURE FAIR was a very novel and pioneer adventure.

8. The Committee, we are glad, has satisfied itself that the President, even as a Minister, had no authority to, nor did he in fact sanction this grant. The only objection that remains is that a note which had not passed through office at the sanctioning stage was put up by the Minister of Agriculture to the Minister of Revenue & Civil Expenditure in the Ministry of Finance seeking approval of the latter to the proposal of giving a grant of Rs. 2 lakhs to Bharat Krishak Samaj. We wonder if the Committee saw the actual file on the subject to find out what exactly transpired. Even the above statement makes it quite clear that although the President might have recorded a note on the file which went to the Minister of Revenue & Civil Expenditure directly, the issue of sanction as well as the payment was all done according to the established procedure and through the Ministries of Finance and Agriculture. We submit therefore that there was nothing so

objectionable or disreputable on his part to have written a note for the personal consideration of the Minister of Revenue & Civil Expenditure. We have not a shadow of doubt that the sanction and payment of this grant was in no way due to this fact alone, and we also feel that this small fact which is a matter of routine occurrence between Ministries and Ministers should not have been made so much of. It is an established practice that for expediting decision etc. matters are taken up at a high level. In fact it is already on record that both the Ministers agreed to give this grant because the Fair was considered "a useful activity." We submit therefore that this accusation also falls completely to the ground.

9. We would like to remind our readers of the historic words uttered by President Eisenhower at the opening of the Fair on 11-12-1959.

"I am signally honoured by the invitation to join President Prasad at the opening of the World Agriculture Fair—the first such Fair ever held. And it is entirely right that it is held here in India.

My country was quick to accept when invited to participate in this unique and historic event. And today I am particularly honoured that India's Chief of State will be with me when, in a few minutes, I officially open the United States Exhibit at the Fair".

While we hope that on reading of this the P.A.C. would do us the favour to hold that in organizing the World Agriculture Fair we did something unique and having done it so successfully we

deserve some little credit and appreciation.

10. Industries Fairs of all kinds and at all levels are held everywhere, but the kind of Agriculture Fair that was held by the Samaj was not undertaken by any country in the 'whole wide world' at any time before us. The reason for this was obvious. It was never considered a paying proposition, and the Government also did not then think that this could be much of a profitable effort. There were a few high officials even in the Ministries of Agriculture and Finance who declared all along that it was going to be a fiasco. It should also be noted that even Government did not envisage any profit at the time the grant was asked for and sanctioned. This is supported by the P.A.C.'s report itself. When the Committee enquired why the grant was not given as loan, the witness replied "if it had been foreseen at that time that there would be profit" (Page 53).

11. Even in the Lok Sabha when the subject came up in the Question Hour once, Dr. M.S. Aney asked a supplementary question that if the loss we suffered was more than Rs.5 lakhs, i.e., more than the Government grant we sought, who would be responsible for it. Our President replied that the Samaj was prepared to take that much risk. In our calculation then we had counted upon Government's assistance of Rs. 5 lakhs. If we are not wrong the Government had actually agreed to pay us an outright grant of Rs. 5 lakhs in two instalments of Rs.2 lakhs and 3 lakhs. But when the time for paying the second instalment of Rs. 3 lakhs came, it was made conditional.

12. The condition placed by Government on its grant of Rs.3 lakhs

was that if the Samaj made a profit of more than rupees five lakhs at the end of the Fair then this amount would be returnable as has been mentioned even in the report of the P.A.C. This also proves that the Government was quite doubtful if the Fair would result in any surplus. The Samaj returned this sum of Rs. 3 lakhs without any demand from Government and even earlier than the payment of the rent. Thus we submit that the total grant of Rs.2 lakhs was by no means excessive nor for a purpose which was unworthy of Government's help. We submit most respectfully that the charge that our President did something unbecoming of a Minister in obtaining the grant of rupees two lakhs for the World Agriculture Fair is not sustainable.

As will be seen from page 51 of the Report, the P.A.C. has been told that the Bharat Krishak Samaj was said to be "a well-known organization", while on page 55 it is stated : "no enquiry appears to have been made about the credentials of the Samaj". This is certainly a contradiction, as the Samaj was in fact a registered organization from the beginning and its audited accounts were known to Government from 1954-55 right up to 1959-60 every year. We submit that the observations made by the Committee that there was no enquiry about the credentials of the Samaj can hardly be said to be justified.

14. On the same page the Committee also speaks of "financial transactions with W.A.F." It is submitted that except the grant of Rs. 2 lakhs and the question about the payment of rent there were no other financial transactions between the Government and the W.A.F. The observation of P.A.C. is therefore

PEACE I WANT

AMONG MANKIND,

BUT I DO NOT WANT

PEACE AT ANY COST,

AND CERTAINLY NOT BY

PLACATING THE

AGGRESSOR,

OR AT ANY COST

OF HONOUR.

—GANDHIJI

hard to comprehend. The other grant of Rs. 3 lakhs has been duly returned. We would like to add that the expenditure incurred out of grant of Rs. 2 lakhs was also duly audited by Government auditors and found to have been spent for the purpose for which it was taken.

15. Since the Ministry of W.H.S. could not make up its mind what rent it should charge us for over 14 months we had all along been saying that the Government should charge the rent on the basis of what they charged to the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry for their International Industries Exhibition of 1955. Neither the Samaj nor its President has gone back on this oral commitment and it is, therefore, quite wrong to say that the Samaj has "resiled from its commitment". This statement again cannot be reconciled with the definitely admitted fact that the "Samaj had not repudiated the liability." The Samaj of course contends that

it has fully discharged the liability and even paid more than what could be claimed from it.

It could also be noted that even the time when the payment of Rs. 3.29 lakhs was made by the Samaj has been incorrectly given to the Committee. In actual fact the cheque for this amount was sent on 23.2.61. The Committee was told that the payment was made in March 1962 which is wrong by a whole year. This mis-statement again must have worked to the prejudice of the Samaj and not in its favour so far as the P.A.C. is concerned.

16. This organization, called the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry, made up as it is of the merchants and industrialists of the country, could easily get very rich a subsidy of rupees ten lakhs from the same Govt. for an Industries Exhibition and yet no one ever questioned why and how? But a meagre grant of Rs.2 lakhs to the much more difficult and distinctly much less profitable World Agriculture Fair is grudged so much that the Samaj and its President have only condemnation and disrepute as their only reward. 'Federation' again was 'as private a body as the Samaj' and thus no better. But our Samaj because it is a 'private body' is looked down upon by the P.A.C. Not so the Fedration.

17. How did all this happen that the Federation walked away with ten lakhs and for the cause of farmers and agriculture two lakhs are considered too much? As soon as the Federation decided to hold the Exhibition in 1955 it was readily agreed by Government that the 'Federation should not be charged anything either for the structures' that existed on a fully developed area of 44.5 acres with

roads, electric lines, water supply, sanitary arrangements etc., nor even ground rent for this area. This area was naturally found insufficient for an International Exhibition and so what happened? Afresh area of 31.5 acres was agreed to 'be developed' by the Government at 'Government cost for the Faderation's Exhibition'. Not only this. The Government spent lakhs of rupees of its own and built a brand new and massive pavilion called the 'Octagonal Pavilion'. This area also was provided with new roads, electric lines, as well as water supply and sanitary arrangements. And all this done at the cost of the Government.

18. If the Public Accounts Committee will please call for the file concerning the Exhibition, they will find that the 'Government spent out of the Consolidated Fund of India a total sum of Rs. 15½ lakhs' on the development of this new area of 31.5 acres including the construction of the Octagonal Pavilion. And yet the Government realised from the Federation a totalsum of Rs. 5,21,259 out of which the only rent they recovered was a paltry sum of Rs. 69,300. Why and how was this? Because the 'Federation was to pay' ground rent 'only' for 31.5 acres of the newly developed land and 'nothing' whatever for the use of 44.5 acres with all the structures standing thereon with so many facilities provided already. No charge whatever was made for electric lines, water pipes or sanitary arrangements, etc. The only other 'payment the Federation made and the Government was happy to receive was Rs. 4,51,959 as partial costs of the Octagonal Pavilion and not rent.' All Govt. efforts as well as what P.A.C. has observed in perfect and appalling ignorance of facts are directed to unlawfully

coerce 'the Samaj' in meeting the fantastic claim of Rs. 9/- per sq. foot for these very same and similar structures for which the Federation PAID NOTHING at all.

19. What a glaring if not a shocking difference in the treatment of two organizations? Not a single paisa was spent so far as the W.A.F. and the Samaj were concerned in the way in which Rs.15½ lakhs were spent on the Federation's Exhibition. Is receipt of Rs. 5.21 lakhs after giving away 15½ lakhs a better business proposition than receiving Rs. 3.29 lakhs without spending a single pie?

20. In order to save ourselves from frivolous accusations we had already decided that we will not handle any work which the C.P.W.D. can do because we did not want any suspicions to prevail against our management. This is the reason that we paid to the C.P.W.D. some Rs.14 lakhs because most of the work was done through C.P.W.D. and every payment made be us was by crossed cheques in the names of the Executive Engineers in charge only. Unlike the Federation whom they charged hardly 33% of the cost incurred by Government on even new construction 'the C.P.W.D. charged us not only full cost of the smallest structure that they built for us but in addition their supervision charges of 12 to 17½ per cent.' All this was fully and willingly paid, and in advance.

21. The C.P.W.D. had never to wait even for a day to receive the payments, while the C.P.W.D. is withholding payments which are legitimately due to us. We respectfully ask, was it any misbehaviour on the part of our President if for holding such an unusual Fair for the farmers of India, and for im-

provement of Indian agriculture, we took a grant of two lakhs? We emphatically submit it was NOT.

22. This incidentally also explains the background of our dispute with the Government that how claiming Rs.35.58 lakhs from us by way of rent is most unreasonable and unfair, and if we are resisting a claim like this is the Samaj or its President guilty of any misconduct? We humbly submit that they are not, nor could be, if the whole matter was judged fairly.

23. We now come to the charge that the President of the Samaj hustled the Government in handing over possession of the land without signing the agreement and the Ministry of Works, Housing & Supply was powerless to resist the President's pressure because he was a Minister. If one just read some of the statements made in the P.A.C.'s report itself, he will, we are sure, absolve us from this accusation also.

24. As is borne out by the Public Accounts Committee's report, 'we were after the W.H.S. Ministry from the 12th April, 1958, to give us an idea of the rent' that we would have to pay. Even the facts admitted in the report will show to every one that it was the W.H.S. Ministry which was responsible for the delay and not we. After keeping quiet for over 14 months the Government shocked us out of our wits by demanding a rent of Rs. 9/-per sq. ft. calculated on the area of the plinth, not even of carpet area, and charging us at the same rate even for uncovered structures or structures without any enclosures. The ground rent was also to be paid at Rs.4840/-per acre.

25. At the time these rates were communicated to us i.e. in June

LET US STRAIN

EVERY SINEW

TO DRIVE OUT

THE EVIL AGGRESSOR

1959 we had received advances from our participants—Indian and foreign, and had entered into agreements for their putting up their pavilions. We were, therefore, between the devil and the deep sea. 'It was impossible for us to bind ourselves to pay a rent of 35½ lakhs of rupees when our total budget estimates indicated that we will have to incur an expenditure of about 45—50 lakhs and expect a revenue not exceeding Rs. 50 lakhs.' Just imagine, how we could have committed ourselves that we will pay a rent of Rs. 35½ lakhs out of this maximum expected income of Rs. 50 lakhs. In our calculation of expenditure of about 50 lakhs or so the item of rent was not included.

26. The draft agreement containing the details of the demand was sent to us not even a month before the Fair was to be inaugurated by Dr. Rajendra Prasad in the presence of President Eisenhower. According to the P.A.C. itself, the draft agreement "prepared in September 1959 was not sent to us till 18-11-1959 (P.54 of the report)." If the Ministry was sure of the reasonableness of its demand why was there so much delay? The fact was that the Ministry itself was conscious of the absurdity of its demand because it was neither

based on the basis agreed to by us nor on Fundamental Rules. We would like to ask, who had hustled whom and who is to be blamed? It is a pity that the Public Accounts Committee did not enquire from Government the basis of their calculation of Rs. 9/- per sq. ft. and Rs. 4840/- per acre. The P.A.C. should have also seen that we spent at least Rs. 5 lakhs on repairing the old structures, that we repaired all the roads, lawns, put down electric lines at our cost and also secured for India pedigree horses, cows, rams and other animals free of cost and at least two magnificent pavilions, viz., the American pavilion and the Russian costing not less than 35 to 40 lakhs. Even if we leave aside many other advantages we secured for the country any fair assessment of our performance should not disregard what substantial benefits we secured for the country and added so much to Government assets.

27. Although we have contributed in this and various other ways to Government and the country, there is not one word of appreciation from Government excepting the Prime Minister.

28. We are glad the 'Committee' had been 'told that at least Rs. 4 lakhs are due to the Samaj.' Rs. 1.73 lakhs out of which is admitted to be a cash balance of unspent funds in the hands of the C.P.W.D. while the remainder of Rs. 2 lakhs is in the shape of electric and other equipment with Government. 'According to our accounts the Government owes us a sum of Rs. 7.58 lakhs.' The Govt. was not justified in withholding the payment of these amounts because this was a transaction quite separate from the dispute with regard to rent. We submit that this pay-

ment should not be withheld any further. The Samaj has already served the Government with a notice for the return of this amount.

29. Fortunately for us between the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry Exhibition of 1955 and our Fair of 1959, an Exhibition by the Printers' Association of Delhi took place in the year 1957. While the Federation was not charged anything for the existing structures on the previously developed area nor even ground rent, the Printers' Association was charged one anna per square foot for covered area and Rs. 550/- per acre per

* * *

On the Stout Shoulders of Farmers Our Nation Depends

* * *

month as ground rent for a period of 2½ months. In fact the Bharat Krishak Samaj has made the payment of Rs. 3.29 lakhs on the basis on which the Printers' Association was charged, and this, we emphatically submit, is the proper and reasonable rent which we considered we ought to pay and which we paid promptly. We consider it reasonable and proper because it is based on the Government's Fundamental Rule, F.R. 45—A, and not arbitrary. Instead of 2½ months period, for which the Printers' Association was charged, we have made payment for 4 months although our Fair actually lasted for only 81 days.

30. We have not only paid rent for the structures but ground rent on every inch of ground in the Exhibition Grounds which we utilised including even the area on which the structures stand. The Government demand has been so unreasonable as to demand ground rent at Rs. 4840/- per acre for even grounds outside the Exhibition are used for parking only and from which we derived no income. Even utility structures like latrines in our case did not escape the attention and we were asked to pay Rs. 2/- per sq. ft. for it. Can we be blamed for not signing such an agreement put forth on the eve of the Fair?

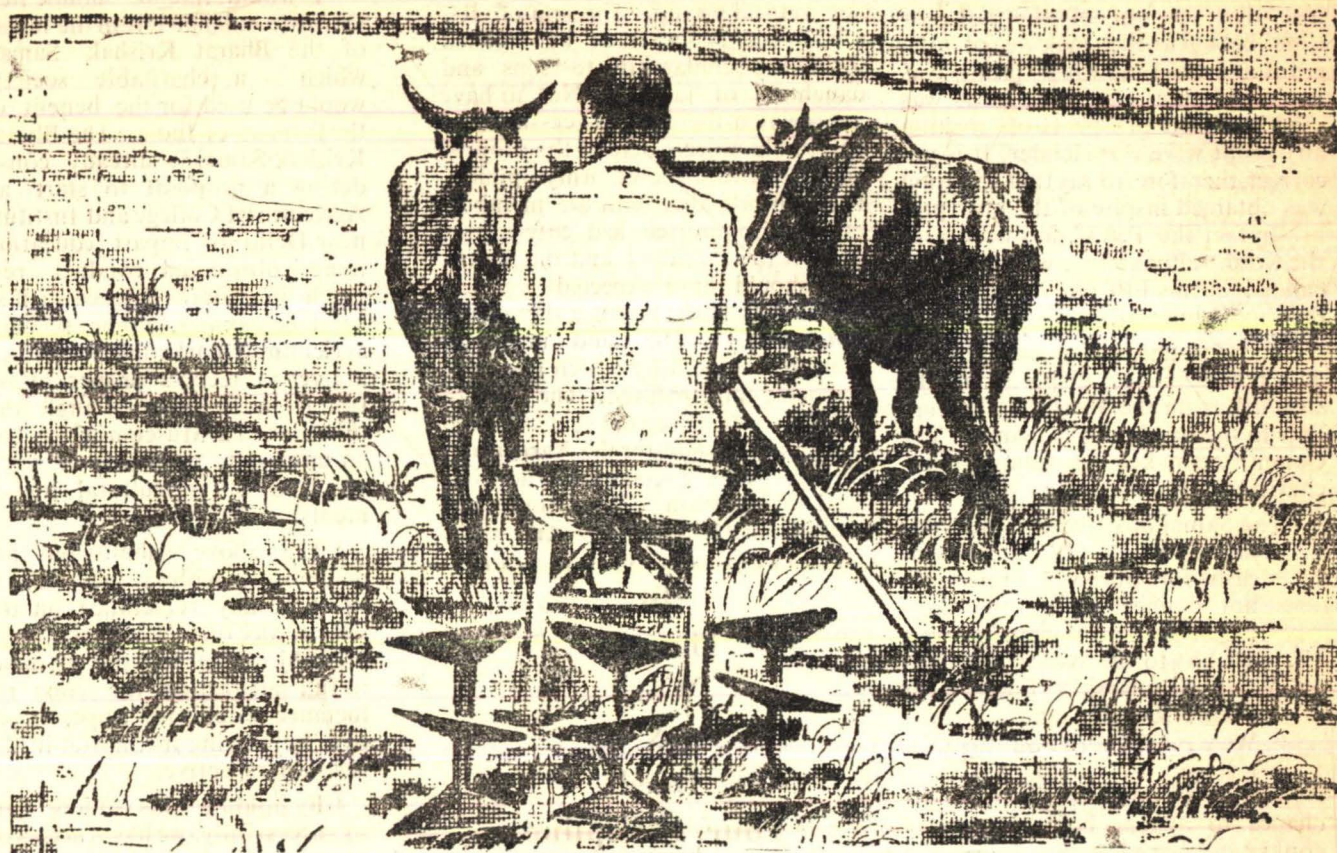
31. It has been revealed in the correspondence between the Government and the Printers' Association that in actual facts the structures for which the Government is asking us to pay Rs. 9/- per sq. ft. for their occupation for a period of 81 days did not cost more than Rs. 7/- sq. ft. when they were actually constructed. If the P.A.C. would like to know what the present book value of these structures was in 1959-60 they should call for those records. We submit that it must have been zero.

So far as giving possession of the land before signing the agreement is concerned, it should also be noted that to our knowledge the Federation did not sign an agreement for their Exhibition in 1955, and we learn that even in the case of their recent Industries Fair actual agreement was signed much after the work on the Exhibition grounds was started. It was, therefore, not necessary that there should be a Minister to influence the Ministry of W.H.S. to permit such occupation. The Samaj would have gladly signed the agreement if the W.H.S. Ministry

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had decided upon the terms in time and the terms were reasonable. 'If they had told us that they would charge Rs. 35½ lacs at the outset we should have given up the very idea of holding the Fair altogether.'

In saying (p. 53 VI) that Government paid grant of Rs. 2 lakhs although ultimately the Fair made a huge profit, the P.A.C. has not taken into due account of the lapse of time between the making of the grant and the time when profit was made. At the time the grant was sanctioned the prospects of making any profit were very slender. It is not correct, therefore, to say that the grant was obtained in spite of the huge profit. In fact the P.A.C. has itself used the word "ultimately", whose significance it seems lost on the writer of the report himself.

The Committee has cast 'doubts with regard to the disposal of the surplus' from the World Agriculture Fair in the hands of the Samaj. The Committee makes the following uncharitable observations :

The Samaj has already made donations of Rs. 13.03 lakhs in cash for purposes apparently not connected with the running of the Fair (including Rs. 4 lakhs to the W.A.F. Memorial Scholarship Endowment Fund, Rs. 2½ lakhs to the W.A.F. Memorial Shivaji College).

Had the Committee given us a chance to appear before them we could have placed them in possession of the 'assurance' our President had given to the Prime Minister by our President as far back as 13.9.61, namely, that every naya pasia of the surplus in the hands of the Samaj including what was earmarked for specific charitable purposes was absolutely in tact and that there should be no fear that any funds in our hands would be dissipated so that the Government would not be able to recover from us whatever may be judicially found due. We would repeat this assurance in all solemnity even today.

32. It is pity the Committee was not inclined to consider sympathetically 'the way in which the Samaj had decided to utilize the surplus.' We have allotted Rs. 2½ lakhs for the starting of the World Agriculture Fair Memorial Shivaji College. With

what we have with us in the name of the Freedom From Hunger Campaign, we would like to develop this College further into a first class All India Agricultural College, help starting of Young Farmers' training centers and setting up an agriculture implements museum and undertake other important and highly beneficial activities which the Government has not yet taken up. The sum of Rs. 4 lakhs was proposed to be utilised for giving scholarships to sons and daughters of farmers. Not to have appreciated the good, necessary and charitable objects behind the proposed expenditure shows, in my opinion, the high prejudice with the members of the Committee had entertained against the President and the Samaj. We should have expected a pat on the back for this because these were not mere vague and uncertain ideas but something which had started being implemented. The Shivaji College is in its second year with 380 boys and girls and for the Agriculture College we have secured 150 acres of land in Mitraon village some 20 miles from Delhi on a 99 year lease.

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33. We hope at least after the clarification we have given and the mis-statements that we have corrected, the 'Committee would be prepared' to take a more kindly view of the matter and not only not insist upon taking away any of the funds in our hands but direct the Government should at once return what is due to the Samaj, at least as a 'compensatory award' for the wholly unnecessary and unjustified calumny to which they have been subjected by the Committee. This amount and the Committee's blessings which we respectfully crave would help us tremendously in attaining the objectives we have in view.

34. Lastly, we would like to point out the spirit in which we dealt with this issue from the beginning by quoting two paragraphs from a letter from the Secretary of the Samaj when he sent the cheque of Rs. 3.29 lakhs to the Government as the just and fair payment of rent due from us :

"I would like to submit that the little balance left in the hands of the Bharat Krishak Samaj, which is a charitable society, would be used for the benefit of the farmers of India. The Bharat Krishak Samaj is already considering a proposal to start an Agricultural College and Institute near Delhi to impart education in agriculture and conduct research in Rural Science such as rural economics, home science, agricultural marketing, etc., which are yet to receive proper attention from the farmers' angle and to establish a Museum which has an up-to-date collection of various kinds of agricultural implements.

"The above submissions are made only with a view that if there is any reluctance on the part of any one concerned with the subject to accept the payment in full satisfaction, the same reluctance would, we hope, be got over by viewing the matter in the above perspective.

"By holding this unique Fair so successfully, we have achieved some credit and glory for the country and we request that this aspect of the matter may also not be lost sight of."

In his letter to the Prime Minister dated 13.9.1961, our President wrote :

"I may assure you that all the balance that we have on account of the World Agriculture Fair is completely at your and the Government's disposal provided a proper case is made out and the final payment judicially determined."

35. This will show that we had been ever prepared for a fair decision at any time. The P.A.C.'s report also states that we had never repudiated our liability to pay a reasonable rent. In actual fact we have already paid it.