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Services and Salary-Cuts.*

THE Budget forecast for 1933-34 being expected to yield a surplus, is made the occasion by the various commercial and industrial organizations for pressing on the Central and Local Governments their claims for remission of emergency taxes imposed on trade and produce of the land. At the recent conference of Associated Chambers of Commerce in Calcutta, the following resolution was passed: "This Association draws the attention of the Government of India to the heavy burden of taxation now borne by commerce and industry in this country and records its opinion that any improvement in the financial situation should be reflected in the first place by the alleviation of this burden." Judging from speeches in support of this motion, we infer that both Sir E. C. Benthall and Mr. G. L. Winterbotham are definitely of opinion that restoration of salary-cuts should not be permitted to take precedence over relief to businessmen and industrialists. On the discussions of the Madras Finance Committee the press reports that while a remission of land taxes was urged, the members recognized "the need on the part of the Government to honour their pledge to their servants and sought to impress on the Government the possibility of retaining at least a part of the cut, having regard to the fact that the economic crisis could not be said to have passed away sufficiently to justify any restoration of the entire salary-cut." The recommendations of the General Retrenchment Advisory Committee appointed by the Government of India are not known, but from lobby talks reported in the press it appears that the restoration of salary-cuts and reduced remuneration to the members of All-India and Provincial services were discussed and the Finance Member is stated to have pointed out that "it would not be fair to let the committee shoulder the burden of responsibility for the settlement of this important issue and that it would be much better if the problem were left to the Government to solve on its own responsibility." In the meantime the Bombay Reorganization Committee have presented their report recommending new groupings of services and reduced differential rates of salaries.

*The Madras Retrenchment Committee Report has appeared since this was written. We propose to consider it in a subsequent issue.

We can only hope that the brighter financial position anticipated during the next official year will not be fugitive, because even a political Isaiah cannot prophesy the destiny of world trade, industry and finance. They are so closely linked with the wider and more vital issue of war-debts that unless these are abolished financial prosperity must remain a chimera. It is certainly premature for the Government to accept the recommendations of the Retrenchment Committees without a definite knowledge of the fresh financial burdens which the political reforms may impose on the country. The financial disruption of the year 1932-33 was the crisis of events which, dating from 1919, finally unhinged the whole economic system of the countries involved in the Great War. Is there any justification, however, for supposing that financial depression, economic dislocation and industrial disorganization will be the future normal complexion of political and economic life? We prefer to think that the spectre will be eventually banished by trade prosperity, though it is evident that first some satisfactory solution of the war-debts problem must be reached, of which there seems to be no immediate prospect.

The Bombay Retrenchment Committee opens its report with the pragmatistical sentence, "There is probably no direction in which there is greater room for permanent retrenchment than that of the pay of the services." Inspiration for such a baleful dictum may be the statement reported to have been made by Sir George Schuster when introducing the budget in March last, namely, "A democratic Government is certainly going to cost more and unless you can reduce the standard of pay throughout the services, I do really foresee very great difficulties before this country." Does the apprehension of the Finance Member suggest that he foresaw permanent shrinkage in the revenues for a sufficiently long time to justify his remarks about a general reduction of salaries? Now the financial position in some provinces and in the Central Government has altered for the better. If this improvement is a temporary accident, the Associated Chambers of Commerce, the Landholders' Association and the Services cannot press for any alleviation, until the Government are in a position to gauge their financial position with reference to the reforms. In fact, it is difficult to see how in the present state of uncertainty about future commitments, commerce and industry alone can be

favoured without a corresponding relief being given to the members of the public service. If, however, it can be proved that the general revenues will be augmented by reducing taxes on land, industry and commerce, and the Government were so to limit their relief, we are of opinion that the services will accept such a decision in a cheerful and patriotic spirit, hoping for a permanent and steady improvement of the situation in which their sacrifice and hardship will not be forgotten.

Reduction in the salaries of the different grades of appointments as a temporary measure may be comparatively harmless, but as a permanent feature of the services, it raises once again the old issue specified in the report of the Islington Commission, "The Government should pay so much and so much only to their employees as is necessary to obtain recruits of the right stamp and maintain them in such a degree of comfort and dignity as will shield them from temptation and keep them efficient for the term of their services." The Lee Commission has stated emphatically that the basic pay of the services should not be reduced.

It is true that the cost of administration must not exceed what the country can bear, but it is dangerous to reduce the pay of officers to scales which may not shield them from temptation. It would be an act of high statesmanship to achieve permanent reduction in the cost of administration without affecting the tone and spirit of its members built up so laboriously through generations, and without injuring the true interests of a vast multitude of uneducated and helpless people whose best protection is the service tradition of integrity and efficiency. The stability and success of democracy depend less on retrenchment of cost than on outlook and temper. It is doubtful whether reduced scales of pay in public administration will continue to attract the gifted members of the universities, while commerce, law and medicine offer more glittering prizes to industrious and talented young men.

If the returning prosperity finds the Government still compelled to reduce remuneration in the services, there are two ways of treating such a reduction. The cost of educating the children, house-rent and medical bills are important items in the domestic budget of every Government official and the difference between the old

and reduced rates,—if the latter prove inevitable,—might be made good to the services by providing reasonable relief in these directions. The financial sacrifice which an officer is called upon to make might be compensated by free education of his children, free medical service for the family and a house allowance calculated at five per cent on the salary, subject to a maximum of rupees one hundred. In this case a uniform salary-cut of ten per cent will not be equitable, but a graded scheme of five per cent on salaries upto five hundred, ten per cent upto a thousand and fifteen per cent on higher salaries will have to be considered especially in view of the fact that under a permanent cut, the existing standard of life becomes upset by seriously diminishing the margin of comforts and provision for the family.

This scheme may, however, prove no cheaper than the continuance of present rates of pay and we, therefore, suggest another alternative. In times of budget surplus the savings accruing from the reduction of salaries may be consolidated in Service Trust Funds which will be available for utilization by the Government. At the time of retirement the officer would receive a bonus of fifty per cent of the amount which has accumulated to his credit through the cut in the salary. He may not be

permitted to obtain any loan from the Funds nor be entitled to claim interest. This bonus will be purely in the nature of provision for the family which occupies the anxious thoughts of all Government servants at all times. In case of death the family would receive the whole amount which has accrued to the credit of the officer though no interest need be paid. While a prosperity budget is certain to provide opportunities for every community and institution to benefit, it is not fair to single out one class of devoted servants for unconditional sacrifice. The second scheme that we have suggested imposes no additional burdens on commercial and agricultural classes, nor will they unhinge the budget of the Government. Will it not be found to allay the apprehension that "the democratic government in India is certainly going to cost more"? It will certainly preserve unimpaired the high reputation of the public services which their members have built up through generations of hard work and devotion to duty. It is almost a truism to say that the greatest and safest asset of the people under any form of government is an efficient, loyal and pure administration and the reformed government in India will be able to protect and advance the interests of her people only by maintaining the best traditions of her public service.

Verification of the Phenomenon of Partial Absorption of Soft X-Rays.

By Dr. M. N. Saha, D.Sc., F.R.S., Allahabad.

A RECENT communique by F. G. Chalklin and L. P. Chalklin to the Academy of Sciences, Paris (*Compt. Rend.*, 1932, 194, 374)* deals with the verification by a new method of the phenomena of Partial Absorption of X-ray quanta by Dr. B. B. Ray of the University College of Science, Calcutta, which was first announced in *Nature*, 125, 1930, and published in greater detail in the *Zs. f. Physik*, 66, 231. Dr. B. B. Ray observed that when monochromatic X-rays (say Ni K_{α} , or K_{α} and K_{β} of Fe) are passed through thin layers of light elements like Carbon, Oxygen and Nitrogen and spectro-photographed, there appear on the plate, besides the original line, lines at lower frequencies corresponding to $\nu - \nu'$ where ν is the frequency of the original irradiating quanta, and ν' is the characteristic K absorption of the

element traversed. At first, Dr. Ray was inclined to the view that the modified line was an X-ray analogue of Raman Effect, but in a subsequent issue of *Nature*, 127, 305, 1932, it was pointed out simultaneously by Dr. Ray and by Messrs. Bhargava and Mukherjee (Allahabad) that the phenomenon was due to absorption of part of the quantum by the electrons in the K shell of the medium traversed. What happens may be thus described:—As a quantum passes through the K shell of O (or any other light element), it gives to the K electron just sufficient energy so that it may be removed to infinity: so it is deprived of this amount from its stock of energy and reappears as a modified quantum with the energy content $h(\nu - \nu')$. Bhargava and Mukherjee further pointed out that this phenomenon might be treated along with the class of phenomena investigated by Robinson and De Broglie in which X-ray

* See Research Notes, p. 247.