
CURRENT SCIENCE—50 YEARS AGO

Planned Prosperity for the Peasant.*†

Sir George Schuster was one of the few Finance Ministers of India who took a comprehensive view of Indian finance and studied it in its larger relation to Indian economic life. Hence his interest in Economic Planning and Economic Councils, which he sought to prepare by inviting to India, two experts to report on the collection of economic statistics in India. In the stimulating lecture he recently delivered before the Royal Society of Arts, Sir George believes, as all those must who have given the problem any serious attention unaffected by prepossessions of one kind or other,—that “the vast masses of the Indian population must be based on rural economy and no conceivable degree of industrialisation can alter this within any period that can be foreseen”. It is, therefore, of vital importance to the prosperity of the country that Indian agriculture should take advantage of recent developments in mechanisation of agriculture. But the increasing product of agriculture that will follow must find a sale abroad, but sales abroad are only possible if India will buy industrial goods in return, and a serious obstacle arises in the form of India’s own industrial ambitions. If India will not buy from abroad, she cannot sell abroad, and if she cannot sell, her rural population is doomed to continued poverty. The dilemma is resolved, and the interests of a prosperous agriculture with the growth of Indian industrialisation are reconciled by the argument that “there are certain more elaborate forms of industrial products for which the Indian market alone will not give an economic foundation for independent manufacture, and for which India will not, for a long time to come, have the necessary skilled labour and technique”; among such are “motor-cars, telephones, wireless machines, gramophones, etc.” The category exists, though the list may be questioned. India can proceed along her own industrial advance in the direction of production of cotton piecegoods, iron and steel manufactures, sugar, and so on. Thus Sir George Schuster rests Indian prosperity upon the tripod of improved agriculture,

increased industrialisation, and imports of goods that India cannot expect to produce for herself in the near future on anything like an economic basis.

People are too often inclined to judge a country’s prosperity by reference to figures of production and trade alone, and are either indifferent to problems that affect the standard of the life of the poor or are openly impatient of proposals like Factory and Social Legislation that are calculated to transfer to the workers some share of the gains in production. Sir George is emphatic in his view that “there is a great need for policies which will increase the material wealth of India, but this will be valueless unless they also secure the proper distribution of that wealth, and the greatest need of all is to raise the standard of living of the masses of the people”. The problem is how to bring about a higher standard of life, and “somehow or other to get the rural masses of India out of the rut of their present low standards”. This can be done partly by Government action and partly, as Sir George Schuster says, by convincing “public opinion of the need and getting all those who have any influence in the villages—landlords, District Councils, Municipalities, Universities, etc.—to work upon it. Mass psychology needs to be moved in the matter.”

In view of the recent repudiation of economic planning by the present Finance Minister, it is of much significance that Sir George Schuster reaffirms his faith in economic planning. He holds that “some foresight” is necessary “as to what is to be produced, and an intensive effort to maintain production and presentation for marketing at the highest level of efficiency, so as to produce the best quality at the cheapest price.” He believes that “Governments and especially the Government of a country like India, must take thought and give the lead and impetus in these matters”. The first duty of the Government, in the absence of “sufficient statistical records” and their interpretation and co-ordination, is to arrange for “a map of its own economic country”, and for this purpose a Central Organisation of Economic Intelligence and Statistics must be created. If an intelligent public opinion is to be created, “knowledge must be disseminated”. In the light of this emphatic reaffirmation of the need for a scientific and ordered

* “Indian Economic Life: Past Trends and Future Prospects” by Sir George Schuster; Sir George Birdwood Memorial Lecture; Royal Society of Arts.

† Published in *Curr. Sci.*, Vol. IV, August 1935, p. 78.

basis of study of economic data for the development of the country, it is to be hoped that the Government of India will take early steps to give effect to the recommendations of the experts and arrange for an

Economic Census of India at an early date, even if the Economic Advisory Organisation recommended by Sir Arthur Salter is to wait till the new Constitution is in operation.

NEWS

WHY HAS TECHNOLOGY FAILED IN THE THIRD WORLD?

... "In many developing nations there are wide gaps between grand schemes and snail-paced progress, between official claims and realities in the field, participants [in a seminar, 'Communication and Education,' run by U. Guadalajara, Mexico] found. Claudio de Moura Castro [a Brazilian economist] called for greater reliance on 'low-tech' solutions, such as books, radio and the blackboard. Brazil, he said, has an elaborate computerized data bank, 'but nobody uses it.' Why look to costly high-technology transmission of information, he asked, when the job could be done more easily and more cheaply through the copying machine and the mails? ... Educational technology in the third world, said Oscar Soria [Ajijic Inst. of Internatl. Education], has gone through two stages: great expansion, followed by disappointment.

There has been progress, he said, but the hoped-for miracles never materialized. Much technology 'went into decay. Successes have been islands in an ocean of failure,' he concluded. Specifically, 'there are no global solutions to illiteracy.' He thought developing countries may have come to 'the end of the importation of foreign solutions and that time and patience are needed to create local solutions.' The solution, he added, is not a gadget in orbit but training people on the ground to handle technology."

[(Fred M. Hechinger in *New York Times* 12 Mar 85, p. C9). Reproduced with permission from Press Digest, *Current Contents*®, No. 18, May 6, 1985, p. 13, (Published by the Institute for Scientific Information®, Philadelphia, PA, USA.)]

ARGUMENTS AGAINST BLOOD DOPING

... "There are ... compelling arguments against the practice of blood doping. Even autologous blood is unsafe if it is not collected, stored, and transfused under careful medical supervision. If its use were to be permitted in prestigious international competitions, such as the Olympics, it would be inconsistent and unrealistic to ban it from highly competitive inter-collegiate sports programs; serious joggers would also be sorely tempted to use transfusion if it were medically acceptable and offered the prospect of a slightly improved best time in the Boston Marathon. Widespread recreational use of blood transfusions would inevitably result in serious injury to many normal, healthy persons ... Blood is a drug ...

Like other drugs, blood should be given only for medical indications. In 1976 the Medical Comm. of the Internatl. Olympic Committee formally condemned the practice of blood transfusion for athletes in good health. As of this writing, however, neither the Internatl. Olympic Committee nor the US Olympic Committee has explicitly forbidden blood doping. They should."

[(Harvey G. Klein (Natl. Insts. of Health) in *New England Journal of Medicine* 312(13):854-6, 28 Mar 85) (Reproduced with permission from Press Digest, *Current Contents*®, No. 23, June 10, 1985, p. 12. Published by the Institute for Scientific Information®, Philadelphia, PA, USA.)]
