

HOW YOU CAN HELP IN THIS FOOD CRISIS

502

(Proceedings of Madras Provincial People's Food Conference
held on 10th August 1947 at the Gokhale Hall.)

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MADRAS PEOPLES FOOD COUNCIL.

No. 8, Westcott Road, MADRAS 14.

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The Madras People's Food Council

No. 8, Westcott Road, MADRAS 14.

OBJECTS:—

1. To represent the people's view-point in relieving the present food crisis.
2. To study and investigate, problems relating to the production, distribution and consumption of food, to educate the public and to make representations to Government on these problems.

PROVISIONAL COUNCIL:—

The following provisional council with power to co-opt. was formed at the Madras Provincial Food Conference on 10th August 1947, at the Gokhale Hall, pending the formation of the elected council under the proposed constitution.

- Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari (President).
- „ K. G. Sivaswamy. } (Secretaries).
„ V. P. Srinivasan. }
- „ T. G. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar (Deputy Mayor).
„ R. Venkataraman (Tamilnad Labour Section).
„ P. R. K. Sarma M.L.C.
„ T. K. Srinivasaiyer (President, District Congress Committee, Tanjore).
„ N. Ramakrishnan (President, District Congress Committee, Chingleput).
„ P. Selvanathan (Harijan Sangh, Madras).
„ R. Kuppuswami, M.L.A.
„ M. Kanniappan, M.L.A.
„ N. S. Varadachari, M.L.A.
„ T. S. Ramanujam.
„ P. Ramamurthy.
„ V. Bhuvaram.
„ Mr. K. B. Menon.
„ S. A. Rahim.
„ N. Somayajulu.
„ C. V. Rajagopalachari.
„ S. Krishnamurthy.
„ G. Srinivasaraghavachari.
„ Y. V. Krishna Rao with power to co-opt.

INTRODUCTORY

A preliminary meeting of representatives of institutions was called by Mr. K. G. Sivaswamy on 3rd August to consider arrangements for holding a Provincial Food Conference. The conference was attended by the following gentlemen:—

- Mr. K. G. Sivaswamy.
„ N. S. Varadachari, M.L.A.
„ R. H. Nathan.
„ R. Anantaraman.
„ J. Simon Paul.
„ C. V. Rajagopalachari.
„ Abdul Hamid Khan, M.L.A.
„ A. R. V. Achar, Member, Corporation of Madras.
„ M. S. Sabhasan (South Indian Teachers' Union).
„ T. G. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar, Deputy Mayor.
„ V. P. Srinivasan.
„ S. Natarajan.
„ Abdul Majid, M.L.A.
„ Sulaiman Sait (Muslim Chamber of Commerce).
„ A. G. Venkatachary.
„ R. Santhanam etc.

It was resolved at the meeting that Mr. T. G. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar be elected as the Chairman of the Reception committee and Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari be requested to preside over the conference. It was resolved further that Mr. K. G. Sivaswamy, Mr. R. Anantaraman and Mr. A. R. V. Achar be the Secretaries of the conference. It was also resolved that in view of the acute growing food crisis that the conference should be immediately held on 10th August. Individual invitations to the conference were issued to all District Congress and Town Congress Committee, Chairmen of Municipal Councils, and Trade Unions, Kisan Sabhas and Agricultural Workers' Unions, Members of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council and members of the Tamilnad Congress Committee. We are thankful to the daily newspapers in Madras for giving the fullest publicity to the conference. Personal invitations were issued to all the ministers and special invitation to the Hon'ble the Prime Minister and the Hon'ble Minister for Food requesting them to be present at the conference and give the benefit of their advice and suggestions. The special invitations to the Hon'ble Prime Minister and the Hon'ble Minister for food were not even acknowledged by them. This is a courtesy which we have often received from the Adviser Government. We are however thankful to the Hon'ble the Food Minister for his statement at the meeting of his Provincial Food Advisory Council on 11th August that the resolutions of this conference will be considered by Government.

The Subjects Committee of the conference met at the Servants of India Society premises on 9th August at 6 p.m. and drafted the resolutions to be moved and the names of speakers.

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DECONTROL

By

MR. K. G. SIVASWAMY.

Mr. K. G. Sivaswamy, Secretary of the Conference made the following observations during the course of his speech explaining the objects of the conference.

This morning there is an announcement in the 'Hindu' of proposals for decontrol by Government from 1st November. These proposals are in short to abolish rural rationing in all districts and statutory rationing in towns in surplus districts. The reason, according to the Madras Government for making this proposal was that the Government of India have pleaded inability to supply rice from outside the province. It was impossible to have province wide-rationing formal and informal when the stocks with the Government were insufficient to meet the demand. The Government of Madras therefore proposed to restrict rationing to absolutely deficit areas. Under this proposal they would have to procure less. Their argument was that a reduction in the intensity of procurement by the Government might help towards broadening the free market and thus easing the situation. Let us examine these proposals. Whenever we talk of a deficit as between supply and demand, we consider as if the deficit will exactly be in proportion to the quantum of shortage of supplies. It is no doubt true that in a controlled market where there is complete rationing, procurement just to the quantity required might be sufficient. But in a free market what happens is this. If the Market is short by one-sixth of production the supply is deficient not merely by this one-sixth but more. Every trader wishes to take advantage of the existence of short supply. The consumer too joins in the game out of sheer instinct of self-preservation. The producer equally begins to hoard both for profit and for self-preservation. The consequence is that not merely there is a deficit of one-sixth in the supply but many times more. The problem we have to tackle is whether in times of shortage of supply it is possible to have partial procurement and partial distribution. Before I deal with this question I have to refer to one fact. Districts in the province have been divided into surplus and deficit districts. The area of these districts has been fixed from the point of view of land revenue administration by district Collectors. It does not happen that there are no deficit areas in surplus districts nor surplus areas in deficit districts. Take Trichinopoly. There is a long paddy-growing area on the Cauvery bank between Erode and Trichinopoly. But there is a dry area ten times bigger than this which depends for its rice consumption on this canal area. Surplus and deficit areas do not generally coincide with revenue areas. The existence of deficit areas in surplus districts is the temptation for the wide prevalence of black markets.

The present proposal is to abolish rationing in surplus districts. The idea behind the scheme seems to be that if only the surplus is procured from the surplus districts and the balance left over and if this balance is allowed free movement within the district but prevented from being exported outside, it will become naturally available for the consumers in the whole district.

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Government have also proposed that they will fix the price in surplus districts at which the owner of surplus produce can sell paddy, at a price equal to the selling price for which they will be buying for the deficit areas. The fallacies in this argument are two. One is that every holder of surplus produce will be willing to freely sell it to the needy in the surplus districts. The second is that he will conform to the Government rules of selling his paddy or rice at just the controlled price. Experience has shown during the years 1944-1946 that what happens is that the needy consumer in surplus districts hardly gets rice and where he gets it he has to pay an exorbitantly high price practically double the controlled price. In fact one should understand that in the Cauvery areas of Trichinopoly district the tenant has to pay, whenever he pays rent in cash, not the controlled price for his paddy rent, but the black market price which ranges between 50 and 100 per cent. While black markets may be wide for those who are surplus with too much cash, the partial owner producers, the tenants, and the labourers will find it extremely difficult to buy rice at the controlled price. It was against all this distressing experience that informal rationing had to be introduced in surplus areas.

Fixation of price without a physical control of stocks has always failed. Decontrol adopted by the Government of India to cure this defect in 1942-43 led to high prices, cornering, and famine in Bengal. As regards non-surplus districts it is proposed that there should be rationing in towns while a free market would exist in rural areas. Under the proposal prices for paddy will be fixed by the Collector in these districts but the owners of surplus produce would be permitted to sell in the free market except in rationed areas. It is said that the Collector would fix the price at which the owner of produce should sell. The district of Coimbatore has passed through a terrible experience in 1944 and 1945 when this scheme was in vogue. The big owners of paddy lands in the Bhavani and Amravathi areas began to sell at extraordinarily high prices because they had a free market. Price fixation by the Collector proved useless. Are these experiences to be repeated again?

Experience has shown that in times of short supply there can be no partial procurement and partial distribution. The food grains policy committee of the Government of India were compelled to recommend district-wide rationing for absolutely deficit areas. That was how it had to be introduced in Malabar from October 1944. Even in surplus areas informal rationing by the issue of identity cards to the needy people can hardly be stopped.

Let us examine wherefrom this cry for decontrol generally arises. It arose in the district of Coimbatore from the District Food Committee which wanted the abolition of informal rationing in rural areas. This cry is made whenever there is short supply and distribution is inefficient, under private traders. It is also made when big land owners want to sell in the free market their own surplus grains. The inefficiency in distribution should be no reason for decontrol in a free market for the consumer will be far worse. Another argument for decontrol is that the official machinery is

corrupt. But I would say that as compared with the unsocial and criminal conduct of certain landholders and traders, the influence they bring to bear as a result of their political and economic status on the officials for loosening controls in their favour, the behaviour of the officials is many times better. Corruption is not unilateral, but is forced on the subordinates, and in days of high costs of living to avoid such temptation, it is irresistible on the part of a poor subordinate of the Government. The cry of decontrol is a desperate cry on the part of honest consumers and an interested cry on the part of owners of surplus produce. Who really makes this cry? How is it that the cry comes just from those land owners who urge upon the minister to increase the price of food grains by 50 percent? How is it the cry does not come from the genuine producer of paddy or millets but mostly from the rentier class who have got surpluses to sell. This cry hardly comes from the far greater number of tenant producers. It is the district food committees packed with rentiers that have been crying for high prices sometimes for decontrol. Recently the Tinnevely District Food Committee has made a proposal that it is not enough to give retrospective effect to bonuses from last February or March but should be given from December 1946.

The cry of decontrol at a time when Government is even not hopeful of supplying a ration of 8 ozs. while the overwhelming majority of people require $1\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. of rice a day is an unsocial cry. Its very expression and publicity will only lead to further hoarding by traders and land owners so that they may have their gala day in a free market with their produce. In the interest of preventing deterioration in public health, and making available the little food produce for the common man, we should all make a dead set against any form of decontrol at present.

I have very great pleasure in requesting Mr. T. G. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar to welcome the delegates and Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari to preside.

ADDRESS

OF

MR. T. G. LAKSHMANASWAMY MUDALIAR.

(Deputy Mayor, Madras Corporation)

Chairman of the Reception Committee.

AFTER dealing with the primary importance of the food question at the present hour in the interest of public health and the health of the coming generations, the chairman mainly dealt with the need for preventing black-markets, the danger underlying the grant of bonus to holders of surplus produce, and the distress that is caused by an increase in price to the low income groups who form an overwhelming majority of consumers in this province.

"We have to understand that the millet consumers form more than half the percentage of population only in four or five Districts and, the rest in all the districts are rice consumers. The control of rice supplies is therefore of essential importance. We have further to remember that those who sell in the black-market are only a small number of the population. These owners of surplus produce parted with their surplus out of fear for the 'Adviser Government'. This sanction has disappeared with the advent of the Congress Ministries. Neither social consciousness has so awakened as to take the place of this fear sanction and impel these surplus holders to heartily co-operate in procurement plans. Hoarding has increased, as compared with the figures of last year in the districts of South Arcot and Trichinopoly. In the district of Trichinopoly procurement of rice has decreased from 42,000 tons during the last year to 29,000 tons during the present year.

Our total production has been estimated as about 5 million tons. At the rate of $1\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. per adult our requirement has been estimated as 6.8 millions. Allowing something for seeds, our deficit has been estimated as about 2 million tons. The figures of total production can never be wrong as they have been checked and examined by the Government of Madras. On the basis of 12 Ozs. for non-owners of produce, the estimated requirement will fall to about 4 million tons. This ought to be more than sample for the requirements of the province. There is therefore no case for a reduction of the rice ration from 12 to 8 Ozs. This reduction in the ration is a clear expression of the failure of Government to control the sources of production in the larger interest of consumers. Two reasons have been given by the Commissioner of Civil Supplies for this failure in procurement. The one is the indifference and the selfishness of Village Food Committees. The other is the self-interest and inefficiency of the producers' societies who are given monopoly powers of procurement in acquiring the full quota. The ministry was warned that agencies which consist of the representatives of surplus

holders of produce will defeat the whole scheme of procurement and that peoples' committees should rigorously exclude sellers of produce. This advice was not however heeded.

Let me now examine how far the grant of a bonus from State funds to the sellers of produce as a reward is necessary for the success of procurement. Most of these sellers are selling at the black-market at increased prices which is more than the controlled price between 25 and 100 per cent. A bonus of Rs. 1-8-0 for a bag of 2 maunds of rice will hardly be an inducement to the black-marketeers to stop their nefarious practice. The high cost of living is mentioned as one of the reasons for the grant of bonus. The receivers of bonus form an insignificant portion of the population. There are about 67 lakhs of Pattas in this province cultivating about 275 lakhs of acres. The sellers of surplus produce can only be those who have a surplus to sell after meeting the domestic and agricultural needs. This class should at least be paying a land revenue of Rs. 50 and above. Their number is no more than one lakh and 80 thousand and they cultivate 62 lakhs of acres. These thus form $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of the population cultivating about 25 per cent of the area. The remaining 97 $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of the pattadars cultivating 75 per cent of the area will hardly get any benefit by the grant of this bonus. We have also to note that the pattadars paying a land revenue between Rs. 50 and Rs. 100 cannot all be solvent and afford to have a surplus for sale. If we therefore take into consideration only the pattadars who are paying a land revenue of Rs. 100 and above and who will form the main class of sellers of produce, these cultivate about 14 per cent of the land and form one per cent of the pattadars. Their number is 59,670 according to the figures supplied in the Government publication "Rural Problems in Madras" by S. Y. Krishnaswami. This number will be further less if we calculate it only for rice-producing areas. The bonus therefore will only enrich the rich who stand on the other hand in great need of being mopped up of their surplus purchasing power in the interest of controlling the prices of food commodities and consumer goods. The bonus amount is not only to be given to those who have hoarded but to all those who have supplied paddy and rice since January last. A bonus of four annas per maund of rice has been granted in April last by the present ministry. To this another 12 annas is to be added now. It would amount to about 7 to 8 crores of rupees in a year on 18 lakhs of tons of rice to be procured and this huge sum should either be paid by Government or the consumer. The consumer generally buys about Rs. 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ worth of rice in a month and he will be paying a monthly poll tax of 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ annas just to enrich about a lakh of landholders out of a total of 62 lakhs of pattadars. This seems to be the food policy of the present Government! It is a well known fact that the fundamental policy in this country of consumers with low purchasing power should be to maintain the price structure undisturbed as far as possible. Why a poor man should be asked to make a contribution for this handful of sellers of surplus produce is un-understandable. You will find therefore that there is no justification either for an increase in the bonus or the price for the consumer.

Another argument that is often repeated is that the bonus helps to relieve the burden of excess cultivation charges. If it can be proved that the average owner cultivator finds it un-profitable to raise a food crop there

can be a case for a rise in price but never for a bonus to a few sellers of produce. (A number of circumstances should be considered in dealing with this subject of cultivation expenses. Recent surveys by economists have shown that a large number of owners of small and medium-sized holdings have not only repaid their past debts but are able to save more than during pre-war times. Secondly, cultivation expenses are higher in dry lands where cattle have to be purchased and maintained and in lands under well cultivation. These, it should be noted, are not paddy growing lands. Thirdly, the expenses for supervising and absentee owners who engage labour for all purposes at high costs are naturally high. This should not be the criterion for fixing prices. Fourthly the real sufferer by cultivation expense is the tenant in paddy areas who has to buy and maintain cattle and implements. The benefit of a higher price never reaches the tenant class. Most of the big owners are not cultivators but rentiers. The argument therefore that a bonus helps towards relieving the burden of cultivation expenses cannot hold water.

Our present problems are how to stop the black-markets, increase the rations, and reduce the price. May I appeal to this conference to come to wise decisions on these matters. We are thankful to Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari for having agreed to preside over this conference and I gladly invite him on your behalf to conduct its deliberations.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

OF

MR. T. T. KRISHNAMACHARI.

There has been more talk of food than of anything else during the last six years in this country but the position has if anything deteriorated while increase in population and the progressive increase in urbanisation has further complicated the problem.

In Madras there has been no material increase in the acreage under rice millets or pulses in spite of all the campaigns conducted by Government as the area under rice for 1944/45 still remains at about 50 lakhs of acres. It is not that agriculturists are so foolish as not to be acutely aware of augmenting their self-interest. Any survey of the acreage under groundnut during the past ten years will show how quick they are to adapt themselves to the changing conditions of the demand for this product as during the year 41/42 when the demand slumped badly they reduced the acreage from 39 lakhs to 28 lakhs which has since risen to near the almost peak figure of 37/38.

The condition of the landless labourer is if anything worse than that of his counterpart in urban areas. The small landowner is not much better off as where his family provides the labour he perhaps is able with difficulty to raise enough crops for his needs of food grains. He has no real surplus left with which he could buy the other needs for life which have to be paid for in cash and which have risen terribly steeply in price, not to speak of his difficulty to obtain livestock at economic prices or agricultural implements either. But he is hardly vocal.

The most vocal class is the parasitical rentier or the big landlord who has a large surplus for sale and is out to exploit the needs of the country to coerce the Government to pay more prices dole out bonuses in cash and kind and obtain if possible even a remission in land rent while getting all attempts at the levy of additional taxes like an income tax on his agricultural income scotched. Mr. Ramachandra Reddy of Nellore the chairman of that body called the Agricultural Chamber which he has himself created is a good example of this class. And it is they that have made procurement well nigh a failure helped by their friends on the political plane who have the temerity to demand a bonus of as much as Rs. 6 per maund of paddy. Some procurement figures that have been placed in my hands for the districts of West and East Godavary, Krishna, Guntur and Nellore where procurement of rice has been this year about 42 thousand tons as against 62 thousand tons for the same period last year will show how patriotic our landlord friends are.

While I condemn the pro-landlord mentality of the Madras ministry and feel that they have shown neither zeal initiative or energy to face the problems that are before them I must make an exception in the case of Dr. Rajan who has in spite of the handicaps of having to work with such a team has shown that he is match for the unpatriotic and reactionary lot of landlords and their political friends with whom he has to deal. While I am

doubtful that he will ultimately succeed, I must condemn the attempts to discredit him as a landlord while all know that as a professional man he could make far more money than this hobby of his can give him. (The problems before us are how to produce more food, how to procure the food grains that are raised, how to distribute them, how to finance the deficit that has to be met for imported foodgrains besides deciding what the consumer for whom all this is done is to pay for his needs and how to provide him with the wherewithal for the purpose. It is such a huge problem that the rentier and the big landlord cultivator find only a small niche in this overall picture.

I have no need to be an expert in Western Economics to draw the attention of all concerned to the fact that the prices for the articles of human necessity are intimately connected with wages and an interplay between these forces if allowed to operate unchecked ends in a state of misery for all. (As I said before the rentier and the big landowner with a large surplus produce to sell will benefit by large increases in the price of agricultural produce and also remain unaffected by the misery that an upward trend in prices will cause to the millions of his fellow human beings, but his less fortunate counterpart who lives on land will feel the effects of such unchecked price increase coming back to him as a boomerang in the shape of an increase in the prices of all his other needs much higher than what he himself gets for his goods. (It is time we call a halt for this vicious movement in prices that is of benefit to a very small section of the people who have done little or nothing to help to ease the food situation in the country.)

The prices have to be stabilised at 160/170 points as compared with 1939 figures which the Central Pay Commission has used as a basis for fixing the wage structure of the country generally and this figure approximates to the lower limit recommended by the Famine Commission which was 180/240. The Governments, Provincial and Central will have to decide on the means to bring down prices of all the necessities of life to this level even if it be by subsidies which is the only way of countering the inflationary trends that now show no signs of starting on the downward curve. Price controls must be reorganised and price administration modernised. In a generally deficit economy there can be no question of going back to the halcyon days of the business community and abolishing all controls. With the economic and social objectives, we have before us which will demand attention, now that the foreigner is leaving we can never allow freedom for the exploiters to act. This fact needs no belief in ISMS but only a broad appreciation of the factors that surround us and the goal that we have before us. The cry of the future of the wage earner has to be not so much for increased wages as for lower prices. His experience in the past must have taught him that by the time his agitation for increased wages results in a niggardly increase, the prices of his necessities have more than offset the increase.

The Government must set up standards of production and must insist on landowners having more than ten acres of land delivering a stated quantity of food grains to the procurement agency and failure to do so unless adequately explained should be punished by the Government, taking over such land for the time being to be handed over to somebody who can do better without any

question of acquiring any permanent rights over it. There must be no increase in food prices. Bonuses to producers should only be in kind and even that in such a form as they cannot be sold again in the market. Registration of all landless labourers must be carried out so that an investigation into their conditions of life might be undertaken, and production bonuses paid as coupons translatable into some article should be paid to the landless labour and to the small producers. The Agricultural department must be run on realistic lines and should not be a means of experimenting with fads of particular officers or particular ministers who might have dabbled at some time of their lives in some branch of agriculture. Further augmentation of the area under cash crop should be forbidden by a prohibitory ordinance supported later by permanent legislation requiring the Government's permission for such conversion. All these are only temporary palliatives. No permanent cure is possible without a radical change in the scheme of landownership. We have to experiment with it and see whether co-operative cultivation by small owners or collectivist cultivation under the ownership of the state or large farms privately owned but under Government regulation will yield the best results. All these schemes will have to be explored. I would suggest that as a first step the Government should take over all lands belonging to trusts and charitable endowments and test out an experiment in collectivist farming.

Meanwhile the public had better understand that the land-owning classes are powerfully entrenched in the provincial sphere as the Industrialist and the Finance capitalists are at the Centre. The cry for lower prices and rigorous procurements must be kept alive and above all the common man must resist the temptation to join in the cry for the abolishment of controls as a bad and corrupt administration of controls which we are experiencing does not mean that there is a paradise waiting for us when controls are lifted or that in a deficit economy like ours we can do without it altogether.

As I have certain other engagements I request Mr. N. Ramakrishnan, President, Chengleput District Congress Committee to preside and conduct the business of the Conference.

MESSAGES TO THE CONFERENCE

The Secretary thereafter read messages to the conference.

Letter from Hon'ble Dr. Rajendra Prasad to Mr. K. G. Sivaswamy :—

(Note :—Though this letter was received earlier, we publish it as a useful note).

"We had an informal Food Conference here on the 13th July and the Food Minister and the Food Secretary of Madras had come to attend that. The food situation in Madras was thoroughly gone into between my Food Secretary and the Food Minister of Madras. I have always been opposed to any rise in the price of paddy and I had resisted the demand from almost all provinces for rise in price. But it seems that circumstances forced the Ministry in Madras to make this announcement about a rise in price. The food situation is so critical that the Ministry succumbed to the temptation of announcing a rise in price in the hope that this will improve the procurement and thus avert the crisis. If it does succeed in improving the procurement it will be a blessing though I very much fear that it will not have the desired effect. The Ministry were also pressed by a number of M. L. As to agree to the rise in price. It is no use now finding fault with it as the announcement has been made and we cannot go back upon it. I hope every one in Madras will help in the procurement because therein only lies the salvation of Madras. We cannot expect to have greater imports and although some provinces have promised extra quota for relief of Madras and Bombay, yet unless Madras helps itself, it will not be able to avert the crisis. It is therefore necessary that everyone should forget the past and try his utmost to see that the province is able to meet its rationing liabilities and avert any breakdown in their rationing system and I am sure you will give the fullest cooperation in this."

Letter from Mr. D. R. Gadgil, Chairman, Commodity Price Advisory Board, Government of India and Managing Director The Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Poona 4 :—

"I am extremely glad you are taking up this question of pressure groups and prices. Until there is a thorough examination of the procedures by which agitations for price increases are sponsored and succeed, there is little hope of maintaining any stability in our economy."

Food Situation in South Kanara

By

B. SUBANNA SHETTY, Karnatak Secretary, South Indian Federation of Agricultural workers Unions.

Copy of representation made to the Hon. Minister for Food
on 15th July 1947

The food situation in South Kanara has become very grave and unless prompt steps are taken, the tragedy of the Bengal Famine will be re-enacted here in all its horrors.

The total stock of rice in the district now will barely suffice for two weeks on the reduced ration of 8 Oz. per adult, and the prospects of imports are fast receding to vanishing point.

Our district was never self-sufficient. Our yield used to last us only nine months. To add to this the crop last year suffered heavily owing to heavy rains and floods with the result that our yield has been about twenty five percent below normal.

Out of this reduced yield six thousand tons were loaned to Malabar, but only one thousand five hundred tons out of this quantity have been returned so far. All other means of augmenting our stock have been fully exploited. Procurement to the last grain has been done. Ryots and cultivators have been promised ration cards and their rice stock has been seized. Still not even a fraction of deficit is made up. 8 Oz. ration is also seriously affecting the work of the agricultural labour. Slow starvation may be said to have already begun and at any time we may hear actual deaths due to starvation.

So, within the next few days the situation will completely get out of control. Even such a surplus area like the Coondapoor Taluk in the District has only three weeks stock since seventy thousand muras of rice were taken away to Mangalore recently.

I therefore, appeal in the name of humanity to the food ministers of the Provincial and Central Governments to realise the gravity of situation and come to our rescue and thus avert the impending catastrophe.

II

Letter, dated 29th July 1947 to Mr. K. G. Sivaswamy

"Some agriculturist tenants have died in Coondapur Taluk due to diarrhoea and some others are suffering from Cholera in Udipi taluk. This is due to unwholesome foods. Every tenant in the district is given only 8 oz. of rice. Most of the agricultural tenants are not given ration cards although the cultivation was over some 15 days back. Rice stock to the last grain has been taken away by officers from the houses of agricultural tenants. Most of the agricultural tenants in the district are suffering from diarrhoea. Although I talked twice in the District Food Committee meeting, the District Collector did not take action for the immediate distribution of rice ration cards to the agricultural tenants in this connection. I request you to inform this fact to the concerned minister at Madras and arrange for the immediate distribution of rice ration cards to agricultural tenants of this district. No use of appointing Zamindars and landlords as members of the Provincial Food Advisory Committee. We don't find our representations either in provincial or District Food Committees. Although Government promised to give 10 oz. of millets over and above 8 oz. of rice, millets are not given to our card holders in this district in rural areas till yesterday. Our rice stock will last till 15th August. The procurement figures given to Revenue Board by District officials is incorrect. They have been able to procure only 54 thousand tons of rice this year. The population of our district is 22 lakhs according to present total. The policy of the present

Government has hit hard the agriculturist tenants of our district. Although I sent an appeal to our food minister some 15 days back I have not been able to get a reply. I had been with him in Trichy Jail in 1940 Satyagraha movement. He has completely forgotten the congress workers.

Secretary, Malabar Kisan Sangham, Chalapuram Post.

Malabar is admittedly a deficit District and as such the Government should have taken effective measures for proper procurement and intensifying the Grow More Food Campaign. But unfortunately they have followed a most unhelpful attitude in regard to procurement as well as food production. So far as procurement is concerned, they have not touched the big landlords. For if only all the available surplus in the hands of a few big jenmis had been procured, they would have been able to realise more than seventy thousand tons of rice. It will be seen from Government report itself that they have been able to procure in the year 1945-46 only seventy thousand tons leaving one lac tons unprocured in the hands of big landlords enabling them to sell it in the black market. Instead of procuring from the big landlords they have put poor peasants to hardships by taking away every grain of paddy in their hands without leaving anything for their domestic consumption. That is why we suggest in the resolution on procurement that the peasants must be allowed to pay their rent in cash and that the available surplus in the hands of the peasants be directly delivered in the Co-operative Stores so that the paddy does not go into the godowns of landlords from where it may find its way into the blackmarket.

Regarding food production on an intensive scale to supplement the meagre resources of Malabar our suggestion is to intensify the Grow More Food Campaign of the Government which is now only on paper. The Government has not only not encouraged the Grow More Food Campaign in Malabar but has put obstacles in its way. It is estimated that there are more than one lakh of acres of waste lands in Chirakkal Taluk alone. And in Kurumbranad Taluk there are twenty thousand acres of waste lands known as Koothali Estate belonging to the Government, in one compact area. The peasants had come forward to cultivate these waste lands but the Government have denied every facility. Not only that, recently the peasants in Chirakkal Taluk had planted 10,000 tapioca seedlings in Mangatparamba which is in the legal possession of the peasants, they having already paid Rs. 29-10-0, as tax in October last. Further there are 18,000 tapioca plants ready for harvest in the same area. On 15th July 1947 the Joint Magistrate of Tellicherry passed an exparte order without any provocation, prohibiting any fresh "Agricultural activities" or entry into the fenced area for any purpose including the harvesting of the tapioca crop planted last year. On the 15th of July a batch of forty M.S.P. men went to the area and removed all the recently planted 10,000 tapioca seedlings. The matter was represented to Hon'ble Mr. K. Madhava Menon, Minister for Agriculture and to Hon'ble Mr. Kala Venkata Rao, Minister for Land Revenue. Mr. Madhava Menon told us that the Joint Magistrate was perfectly justified in ordering removal of the 10,000 seedlings though we referred him to the Government Press Note dated 2-6-'47 extending concessions for Grow More Food Campaign "exempting technical infringement of irrigation rules" and guaranteeing

"non-destruction of forfeited crops on encroachments". We also told him that the peasants were in legal possession of the plot. But he said that if the peasants were allowed to cultivate this year also they would claim the land as a matter of right. We represented to him that the Government could have levied fresh tax for the seedlings planted and could have given notice to the peasants not to cultivate the area after the present crop which might be ready next year was harvested. The food situation is serious and in view of this critical situation Government could have stayed its hands for the present and allowed people to grow more food. But in spite of all the pleadings the Minister for Agriculture was adamant and would not like discussing the question. That is how the Minister for Agriculture views intensification of food production in Malabar.

If only the Government had really wanted to supplement the meagre food resources in Malabar, they could have given facilities for cultivating vast extent of cultivable waste land in possession of the Government as well as compelled the landlords to give their lands for cultivation according to the recommendations of the Kutty Krishna Menon Committee. The Kutty Krishna Menon Committee had recommended that all available land must be cultivated either by the jenmis within a fixed period or the same must be granted to the peasants by the Collector for cultivation. This recommendation was made when there was no food scarcity in Malabar. Now when there is food famine the Government does not care to implement these recommendations. The Agricultural Minister's contribution to "Grow More Food" is his defence with a gusto of the destruction of food crops in Malabar.

EFFECTIVE PROCUREMENT

(1) The Conference realises that procurement of paddy was a failure in Malabar due to defective methods. According to official figures, total production of rice is 3,62,820 tons; producers requirements 1,66,381 tons, seed requirements 24,860 tons leaving a procurable surplus of 1,71,579 tons of rice. Of this only 68,507 tons was procured in 1944-45 and 70,372 tons in 1945-46. This means that the Government has not been able to procure even half the procurable surplus, thus leaving over one lakh tons with the landlords for black market sales.

This Conference therefore requests the Government to take the following steps to make the procurement successful.

1. Immediately publish the quantities of paddy procured from the big land-lords. This will help the people to know how much is left with land-lords and they can help the Government in tracing the land-lords' hoards.

2. Enforce payment of rent in cash to the land-lord. By this the source of blackmarket can be rooted out. Even according to the existing law the tenant is not bound to pay his rent in kind. The only thing the Government need do is not to employ the Malabar Special Police to collect the rent of the land-lord.

3. Seek the co-operation of the people in tracking the blackmarket and not penalise those who intercept contraband paddy and take them to the stores as has been done in collusion with blackmarketeers and land-lords.

GROW MORE FOOD

This Conference understands that the policy of the Government with regard to food production has been most unhelpful and destructive. The recent destruction of 10000 tapioca plants in Mangatparamba in North Malabar is an instance of the policy pursued by the Government. Last October the peasants paid Rs. 29-10 0 as tax for cultivating the waste land (Govt. waste) called Mangatparamba where 18000 plants of tapioca are standing ready for harvesting. The freshly planted 10,000 plants of tapioca have been destroyed by the M.S.P. under orders from the Joint Magistrate without any provocation, in spite of the Government Press Note dated 2nd July 1947, guaranteeing 'non-destruction of forfeited crops in encroachment'.

This Conference therefore calls upon the Government to discontinue its policy of destruction of food crops and immediately take the following steps to intensify food production.

1. Immediately make available for cultivation all Government waste including 20,000 acres of Government waste known as Koothali Estate in Kurumbranad and 300 acres in Chirakkal taluk known as Mangatparamba.

2. Implement the recommendations of the Kutty Krishna Menon Committee, re. Punam lands.

(a) Fix the rent of the Punam land at double the land revenue (the tax to be paid by the landlord)

(b) All punam lands in the hands of the Jenmis must be brought under cultivation either by the Jenmi or the same must be given for cultivation.

REMOVE CORRUPTION IN THE CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES

Due to corruption and nepotism there is widespread dissatisfaction against the Co-operative Societies which are the procurement and rationing agency in Malabar. The Societies have made huge profits and it is learnt that blackmarket is rampant.

The Conference therefore suggests the following steps to the Government to root out corruption.

1. Elected directorate as well as elected secretary for Societies.

2. Elected village Food Committees with statutory powers to check blackmarket.

S. Sambasivam—Secretary Tamilnad S.I.F.A. W.U. :—

"Unable to attend. Condemn false propaganda against Doctor Rajan. Wish success conference".

V. Narasimhaswami—Secretary, S.I.F.A. W.U. North Vizag :—

"Arrived late at Madras owing to the late arrival of Calcutta Mail. Sufferings terrible in North Vizag owing to 8 oz. ration."

General Secretary S. I. Ry., Workers Union, Golden Rock (No. 423) :—

"I give below my personal experience of witnessing the villages and paddy fields in Tanjore District. There are big Mirasdars who are hoarding hundreds of Kalams of paddy and selling at the Black Market rate in several places with the knowledge of several local Government officials. An immediate step is to be taken to comb village after village and unearth the food stuffs. Same is the case in Trichy and Madura Districts.

A new kind of disease is prevalent to paddy crops in most of the villages in Tanjore District and the crop are being eaten away by a kind of worms and the Kuruva crops are cut at the root by rats. This should be brought to the notice to the Central and Provincial Governments at once to depute the Agricultural experts to save the crop or else the food position for the coming year will be still more worse than the previous years.

Regarding the fixation of rations, I beg to offer my suggestions.

(1) The capitalists and men over Rs. 500 monthly income should be given only 6 Oz. rice and hard working manual labourers employed in Workshops and paddy fields should be allowed 12 Oz.

(2) The habitual eaters of millets should be supplied the same, instead of rice being supplied as at present.

(3) Chief varieties of cloths in 4 cubits of dhoties, 2 cubits towels; 6, 8, 9, yards sarees and shirting cloth ranging from 4 as. to 8 as. per yard should be arranged for the use of working class, since the supply received in the villages are of finer quality and costly. The hand loom clothes should also be controlled."

President, Coimbatore District Textile Workers' Union :

"Mr. K. P. Thiruvengatam will attend the conference. Greetings and success."

President, The South Madras Electric Supply Corporation Employees' Union :—

"Food production cannot be maintained at optimum level unless the following three conditions are satisfied.

1. A living wage for the tiller of the soil and a permanent place of residence.

2. Security of service.

3. The price structure of essential articles for sustenance should be controlled.

To ensure a living wage the present method of cultivation should be recognised thoroughly. Lease and Pannai system should be abolished. Varam system should be alone enforced.

The respective responsibilities and expenditure should be so determined that after meeting all the expenses of cultivation including kist and water cess, the balance of produce should be equally divided between the owner of the soil and the actual cultivator. Only 5 acres of land form a unit of cultivation and no cultivation should be given more than one unit for cultivation.

The price of the produce should be fixed and controlled by the state so as to ensure 4% dividend on the value of the land controlled at the price level obtaining at 1938—1939.

Uneconomic holdings of ryots which own below 15 acres should be consolidated for co-operative farming with an extent of 50 to 100 acres as a unit. Co-operative farming should be enforced by law. Small-scale land mortgage banks should be started to extend credit facilities to cultivators only.

Cattle insurance must be provided for.

Every cultivator should be provided with a permanent place for his residence.

No cultivator is liable to be dismissed unless for satisfactory reasons such as gross negligence, breach of faith, incapacity to work. The state should immediately take steps not only to check the tendency to inflation, but must control the price structure of all commodities actually required for cultivation and feeding of cattle. Immediate scheme, say a 15 year plan for extending electric power to reach almost all the villages in the province.

Finally I once again pray God that the conference will be a success in one and all respects."

Secretary, Hand Loom Weavers Union, Koranad, Mayavaram :—

We are opposed to bonus and high price. The ration for richer classes should be reduced and increased for poorer classes. We support all the resolutions for control of cloth and preventing black markets both in food and cloth.

President, Tanjore District Congress Committee :—

Wish conference success.

R. Srinivasamurthy, President, The Andhra Provincial Palmyra Jaggery Industrial Labour Union, Tanuku :—

"Whereas our Province is in shortage of sugar and whereas some lakhs of toddy tappers are deprived of their profession with the introduction of prohibition, this conference appeals to the Congress Ministry to encourage the manufacture of palmyra jaggery which can be easily refined into sugar and thus provide employment to the tappers who have been unemployed". Wishing Conference success.

South Indian Vedar Kula Villiars' Association, Perambur and Ponneri Taluk agriculturists' association :—

Wishing Conference all success. We are sending Messrs. C. Perumal and Chengalroyan as delegates of this association and Ponneri Taluk Agriculturists Association respectively.

T. Ramaswami Aiyangar, Secretary, The Non-Gazetted Government Officers' Association, Madura-Cum-Ramnad :—

Wishing Conference all success.

Mr. Y. V. Krishna Rao, Joint Secretary, Andhra Provincial Ryots Association, Bezwada :—Wishing conference success.

Secretary, Kisan Congress, Mayavaram :—Wishing all success to the conference.

Harijan Association, 7 Ritchie Street, Narasingapuram, Mount Road, Madras :—Wishing conference success, sending Mr. P. Selvanathan.

President, Tamilnad Kisan Sabha, Tanjore :—Wishing conference success, myself attending—Mr. V. Bhuvarahan.

Mr. L. Sundararaja Iyengar, Secretary, S.I.F.A.W. Ryalaseema :—

I heartily associate myself with your object of demonstrating the public feeling against the worsening situation of reduced rations, high prices and widening black markets. It is regrettable that the ministry whose first duty is to tackle the food problem including the grow more food scheme, is more interested in the evolving of the constitution at Delhi than seriously solving the serious food problem. Either the Government is in favour of vested interests or afraid of same, as procurement so far done is mostly from those poor producers who have not enough to feed themselves and spare. The officers invariably launch prosecutions against the poor. The big landholders are asked by officers "please share as much as you can".

I am one with H. E. the Governor that not an ounce surplus of grain should be left more with the producer. How this should be done is the problem. The only honest method to find out the actual surplus with the producer is to actually measure his stock. This no doubt is a stupendous task involving large expenditure over the necessary staff. More than this we must be assured of getting honest staff as well.

I am of opinion that there is much need for the cooperation of non-officials in achieving this object. It is not by abolishing the food committees, as contemplated by the Government, that the object can be fulfilled but by thoroughly overhauling the committees in such a way that men of character are elected to the various committees to cooperate with the officials in tackling the food problem. I earnestly appeal to the Government not to abolish the food committees in a light-hearted manner."

L. S. Subbarayan, 13 Poli Narayana Pillai Street, Chidambaram :—

High price for food should be reduced.

Mr. T. Sundara Rau Naidu, B.A., B.L., Mayor, Madras Corporation :—

"I am sorry I am unable to attend owing to prior engagements. Please excuse me. But I fully identify myself with the aims and objects of the Conference, and hereby send you my best wishes.

It is true we rejoice very much over the achievement of Independence. But SWARAJ will have no meaning to the masses of the people, nor democracy survive, unless the Government are able to provide them with the basic requirements of life food, clothing and houses, at a reasonable price.

The Government need the advice and guidance of enlightened public opinion in handling this difficult problem and I have no doubt the Conference will offer constructive and faithful suggestions in this behalf.

Once again wishing the conference all success."

Mr. S. A. Devanayagaiyah, M.L.A. 100 Sammidi street, Tirupuliyur :—

Wishing conference success. Unable to attend as I am starting for Ceylon.

President, the S.I.R. Evacuee Employers' Association, Trichinopoly :—

"I assure you that our Association will do all that is possible to cooperate with you and with the Government to help in solving these problems. Further our hardships in the matter of rice ration and clothings are same in this place as elsewhere."

Aindu Nattu Vivasayigal Sangam, Ramnad District :—

Wishing Conference success.

G. Ramaswamy, President The Coimbatore Dist. Salavai Tozhilalar Sangam :—

This union wholeheartedly supports the draft resolutions of the conference to lower the ration for the richer class and increase it for the manual labour class and to put down black marketing at any cost.

R. Gopalan, Secretary Hotel workers' Union, Tanjore :—

Wishing conference success.

Mr. K. S. Gopalaswami, President Karur Textile Workers' Union :—

Wishing conference success.

Mr. A. Ramaswamy, President, The Negapatam Municipal Bill-Collector's Association :—

The chief reason for black markets are the rationing officers themselves. It is a case of the crop hedges destroying the crops. Under such circumstances it is impossible to expect honesty among the lower staff. Essential articles are not available in public ration shops but hotels and clubs get them in plenty. The need of the hour is a committee of honest public workers who should be backed by government. The rations should be increased to 16 Ozs. and mill cloth whatever remains should be again distributed on coupons.

Mr. S. Subramanian, Secretary, The Salem District Compounders' Association :—

Wishing conference success. "Especially the middle and labour class people suffer much for want of proper food and their health deteriorating day by day. I may suggest a "Diet Committee" which would suggest ways and means to improve the food problem so that every man gets the requisite food for every day life. I also suggest that this committee shall consist of medical men as well, including the Surgeon General with the Government of Madras who shall be the chairman of the Committee".

Mr. R. Subbarayan, President Harijan Sevak Sangh, Shiyali :—

Wishing conference success.

The Rajapalayam Handloom Weavers' Congress :—

Wish success for the conference.

Mr. R. S. Sankariar, Retired District & Sessions Judge, Ooty :—

1. No rationing officer or higher authority shall suspend, cancel or reduce the supply of rationed articles to an authorised Hotel Keeper, without a judicial enquiry regarding alleged malpractices for which any such action is proposed to be taken.

2. Where such a public hotel keeper is running a lodging and boarding house, the authority proposing to take action on a proved malpractice, shall before reducing or suspending or cancelling supplies, first consult the needs of such permanent Boarders and Lodgers, and provide them with food in another suitable hotel or hotels, before imposing such a punishment on the hotel keeper.

RESOLUTIONS.

Mr. N. Ramakrishnan presided in the absence of Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari.

1. Whereas an overwhelming majority of peasant owners have little surpluses to sell, another substantial majority of producers (tenants and labourers) are also purchasers of food grains during parts of the year, and are therefore more keen about a lower price, whereas the benefit of bonus reaches mainly the big non-cultivating owners of land who stand more in need of being mopped up of their surplus purchasing power by way of agricultural income tax, than for any addition to it for meeting the present costs of living, whereas any assistance to the cultivator can reach only by subsidising agricultural requisites as seeds and manures and not at all through bonus and price, whereas a large number of owners of surplus paddy have already sold it without any inducement of a bonus, and to give retrospective effect for it is a gratuitous waste of public funds, whereas sanction of periodical bonuses only whets the appetite of holders of surplus produce to further hoard in the hope of making a greater profit, this conference condemns the policy of bonus for surplus holders of paddy.

2. In as much as price is a primary contributing factor to famines in the Indian economy owing to the existence of a large number of consumers with little purchasing power, and as increased price may defeat rationing by driving the poorer classes to reduce their consumption of cereals and to substitute cheaper and unhealthy foods in their place, this conference condemns the present policy of the Government of increasing the consumer price and appeals to them to immediately retrace their steps and not to enforce this increase.

3. This conference condemns all devices of evasion by the Government of Madras of the fixation of price for rice by Government of India such as payment of a higher price for low sort paddy.

4. This conference draws the attention of the members of the Madras legislature to the fact that public opinion is strongly against either the grant of bonus or higher price to owners of surplus produce, and a rise in price for the consumer, and urges them to recommend during the next session of the legislature the stopping of any increase in the price of rice to the consumer, and the grant of any more bonus or higher price for the owners of surplus produce.

5. This conference emphasises the great harm done to rationing by utterances of responsible men and the announcements of the Government of Madras about decontrol which only tend to more hoarding by landholders and traders, and urges the Government to declare firmly its policy of maintaining controls so long as the supply position does not improve.

6. (a) This conference regrets that not only no action has been taken on the ministers' conference resolution passed in August 1946 at Poona that 'the land available for cultivation should be distributed by proper regulation such as licensing between various crops needed by the community and in the required proportion', but there has been absolutely no control even over the change-over from existing food grain crop areas to non-food-grain crop areas. It therefore urges Government to enact the necessary legislation providing for special permits in such cases.

(b) This conference further recommends that the Government should declare a target figure for the change-over from non-food-grain to food-grain crops and reach it within a defined period.

7. This conference urges Government to grant a higher ration of food-grains in municipal towns for low income groups and a lower ration for those getting an annual income of Rs. 2,000 and above.

8. This conference urges Government to control not merely food grains but all essential food articles as grams and pulses, milk, fish and mutton.

9. This conference urges the Government to introduce state farming or collective farming for maximum food production in the lands under its control or management as those of temples and mutts and the like and new project lands and waste lands.

10. This conference urges that co-operative organisations for procurement should exclude sellers of surplus produce either as owners of lands or as traders, and that consumers' societies should exclude non-consumers from their directorate. It further urges that share capital should not be more than a rupee for each member and that qualification for a director should be the quantity of purchases he makes from a store.

11. This conference urges a four-fold programme to prevent black-markets—

(a) Deterrent and exemplary punishments for big owners of surplus produce dealing in black-markets;

(b) an anti-hoarding drive and a campaign on a united front of all political parties; and

(c) full publicity by Government of the quota of grains that ought to be delivered by big landholders;

(d) procurement by State staff.

12. This conference urges Government to reconstitute its food advisory committees in the following ways:—

(a) Village Food Committees to be replaced by Firka Committees which should be consulted about the assessment of surpluses.

(b) District Committees and Provincial Committees to be retained and the Taluk Committees to be abolished.

(c) All Food Committees should mainly represent small producers (as owners, tenants, and labourers) and consumers and representation to surplus sellers of produce should be restricted to a third of the total number.

13. (a) Subsidising agricultural requisites only for cultivators.

(b) Stay of eviction of labourers and tenants from house sites and of tenants from lands in both Zamindari and Ryotwari areas.

(c) Divisional wage boards for deciding agricultural wage disputes.

(d) Maximum rents to be notified as in Bombay as one-fourth for irrigated lands and one-third for dry lands, land revenue to be paid by landholders and water-rate by tenants.

(e) Abolition of Zamindaris within a specified date and subject to protection of sub-tenants under ryots.

(f) Immediate reduction of rents of ryots in Zamindari areas to the prevailing land revenue rates in adjoining areas.

(g) (1) Cancellation of debts (2) Control of loans and rate of interest, and (3) exemption from attachment of materials for husbandry and food grains necessary for the maintenance of the family till the next harvest in the case of cultivating owners, tenants and labourers.

14. This conference condemns the policy of decontrol regarding cloth. It is of opinion that control over textile mill production and distribution requires to be more tightened and that black-marketeers should be given exemplary punishment in law. It urges Government to step up production in mills by providing for joint committees and better living conditions for workers, including the fixing of minimum wages. It also urges that hand-spinning in rural areas should be promoted on a systematised plan on a self-sufficiency basis and without resort to any coercive methods for its development.

15. This conference approves the following constitution for a Provincial People's Food Council whose object shall be the promotion of food production and a sound consumer economy in the province.

(a) (1) One representative each for agricultural labour, tenants and small owners to be elected by Tamilnad, Andhra, Kerala and Karanatak Kisan Sabhas, four representatives of the South Indian Federation of Agricultural Workers' Unions, and one representative of Kisan Congress from each language area to be appointed by the Provincial Congress Committees.

(2) One representative of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation for each language area.

(3) All representatives of Scheduled Castes in the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council.

(4) One representative of N. T. U. C., A. I. T. U. C. and a representative of Industrial Labour from the Labour sections of the Provincial Congress Committees.

(5) All representatives of Trade Unions in the Madras Legislative Assembly.

(6) One representative each for each Chamber of Commerce having jurisdiction over not less than a language area.

(7) One representative of each of the Municipalities of Madras, Trichinopoly, Coimbatore, Bezwada, Cocanada, and Vizagapatam and the Corporation of Madras.

(8) Two representatives of the Muslim League, Tamilnad Congress, and the Communist Party.

(9) One representative of the bigger landholders for each language area to be selected by the Provincial Congress Committee, and

(10) Any three to be co-opted by these representatives.

(b) The annual membership fee for each representative is Rs. 25 in the case of organisations and Rs. 12 in the case of individuals which shall be paid in advance.

(c) There shall be a whole time Secretary for the Council.

(d) The Committee shall issue a periodical Bulletin on food questions.

(e) The Committee shall elect its own president and vice-president.

(f) Until this constitution is brought into being, this conference elects Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari as President and Mr. K. G. Sivaswamy and Mr. V. P. Srinivasan as Secretaries and appoints the following other members of the Committee:—

Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari (President).

„ K. G. Sivaswamy. } (Secretaries).
„ V. P. Srinivasan. }

„ T. G. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar (Deputy Mayor).

„ R. Venkataraman (Tamilnad Labour Section).

„ P. R. K. Sarma M.L.C.

„ T. K. Srinivasaier (President, District Congress Committee, Tanjore).

„ N. Ramakrishnan (President, District Congress Committee, Chingleput).

„ P. Selvanathan (Harijan Sangh, Madras).

„ R. Kuppuswami, M.L.A.

„ M. Kanniappan, M.L.A.

„ N. S. Varadachari, M.L.A.

„ T. S. Ramanujam.

„ P. Ramamurthy.

„ V. Bhuvarahan.

„ Mr. K. B. Menon.

„ S. A. Rahim.

„ N. Somayajulu.

„ C. V. Rajagopalachari.

„ S. Krishnamurthy.

„ G. Srinivasaraghavachari.

„ Y. V. Krishna Rao with power to co-opt.

Mr. K. G. Sivaswamy proposed the vote of thanks.

NAMES OF SPEAKERS ON THE RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions 1, 2, 3, 5 and 8 proposed by Mr. N. S. Varadachari, M.L.A. Secretary, Congress Legislative Party, and seconded by Mr. K. G. Sivaswamy, President, South Indian Federation of Agricultural Workers Unions. Objected to by Mr. K. N. Subramaniam. Passed one dissenting.

Resolution 4 proposed by Mr. R. Venkataraman President Tamilnad Congress Labour Section, seconded by Mr. C. V. Rajagopalachari Congress representative North Arcot District and supported by Mr. S. A. Rahim of the Congress Socialist Party. Objected to by Mr. A. R. V. Achar, Member, Corporation of Madras. Passed one dissenting.

Resolutions 6 and 7 proposed by Mr. P. R. K. Sarma M.L.C. President of the National Trade Union Congress Tamilnad and seconded by Mr. P. Selvanathan Secretary Madras Harijan Association. Unanimously passed.

Resolution No. 8 proposed by Dr. K. B. Menon and seconded by Mr. Manavala chowdry, B.A. B.L., Passed unanimously.

Resolution No. 10 proposed by Mr. Mohan Kumaramangalam Secretary Madras Communist Party and seconded by Mrs. Kamalammal (Ex-Member of Ration Advisory Committee, Saidapet). Passed unanimously.

Resolution No. 11 proposed by Mr. V. Bhuvarahan President Tamilnad Kisan Sabha and seconded by Mr. S. Krishnamurthy Secretary Madras Civil Liberties Union. Passed unanimously.

Resolution No. 12 proposed by Mr. V. Bhuvarahan President Tamilnad Kisan Sabha and seconded by Mr. Y. V. Krishna Rao Secretary Andhra Provincial Ryots Association and supported by Mr. R. Sriramamurthi, Tanuku. Unanimously carried.

Resolution No. 14 proposed by Mr. Simon Paul Secretary of All India Trade Union Congress, Madras and seconded by Mr. Santhanam of the Communist Party. Passed unanimously.

Resolution No. 15 proposed by Mr. V. P. Srinivasan and seconded by Mr. K. G. Sivaswamy. Unanimously carried.

APPENDIX I.

Statement circulated to the Provincial Food Advisory Committee by the Government of Madras on the 10th August 1947.

The Province has always been depending upon imports of rice, millets, wheat and wheat products to meet its requirements. The size of the imports each year depended generally upon the size of the production of the several crops. After controls over movements of foodgrains were introduced in 1943, it also depended upon allotments made by the Government of India from surplus area and imports from overseas and the availability of supplies.

The average quantities available for consumption during the three periods were as follows:—

Pre-war average: 4,824,672 tons of rice; 3,464,070 tons of millets; 65,748 tons of wheat, making a total of 8,354,490 tons.

Average of war years: 4,751,455 tons of rice, 3,227,088 tons of millets 61,024 tons of wheat, making a total of 8,039,567 tons.

Average of Post-war Years—4,546, 938 tons of rice; 2,145,286 tons of millets; 152,296 tons of Wheat making a total of 7,844,520 tons.

Since 1943 imports of foodgrains into the Province have not been free and have been arranged under what are called the "Basic Plans" of the Government of India. Under these plans, the Government of India allot fixed quantities of several foodgrains—rice, paddy, wheat, wheat products, millets and maize, barley, red gram, black gram, Bengal gram and green gram—taking into account the surpluses available in the surplus provinces of India and the imports anticipated from overseas and with reference to the size of the deficits in deficit provinces.

Owing to several unfavourable seasonal factors, the food situation in the last Kharif year (1st November 1945 to 30th October 1946) became very critical and the Government took the following steps to meet the situation:

(i) Intensive procurement and rural rationing which was in force previously only in the highly deficit districts were extended to all the districts in the Province including surplus districts.

(ii) The scale of ration was successfully reduced from 1lb. of rice to 12 oz., from 12 oz. to 10 oz. of rice and 2 oz. of other grains and from 10 plus 2 oz. to 8 plus 4 oz. The last reduction was made on the 4th of August 1946 and continued to be in force till the middle of December 1946.

(iii) An acreage bonus at Rs. 15 per acre was offered for the area brought under foodcrops in March and April 1946. A bonus at the rate of Re. 1 per maund of paddy and 12 annas and 8 annas per maund of millets was given for delivery of paddy and millets made during the period from 1st June to 15th Aug. 1946. A bonus of Re. 1 per maund of paddy and eight annas per maund of millets was given for short-term crops delivered in the months of September, October and November 1946. An additional bonus of Re. 1 per maund of paddy was given for deliveries to Government procurement agents made between the 16th September up to 31st October 1946

in order to induce producers who were allowed to retain rice for consumption at the rate of 1lb per adult per day to surrender a part of the stocks so reserved for consumption.

(iv) The ration card holders were classified into rice eaters, millet eaters and mixed diet eaters according to their normal dietary habits, so that the millets in stocks which were imported into the province can be put to the maximum use and the drain on the exiguous stocks of rice prevented.

(v) Large quantities of wheat and wheat products and maize were imported from foreign countries under the allotment made by the Government of India and in order to popularise these food grains, the Government sold them at considerably less than the actual cost prices.

PRODUCTION AND PROCUREMENT.

This year (1946-47) the season was more promising, and it was expected that the production of rice would be far better than in the last year. The latest estimate of production of rice this year is 4,795,000 tons against 4,241,000 tons in 1945-46. It was expected that with a better crop and with a prospect of large imports under the Basic Plans of the Government of India, it would be possible to raise the scale of ration to consumers. Wheat and wheat products ceased to come however after November 1946 and it became necessary to conserve the existing stocks of these for habitual wheat and bread eaters, as the Government of India made it clear that the further imports of wheat would not be coming in for some months. Therefore in December 1946, the Government decided to increase the scale of rice ration to rice eaters to 10 oz. per adult per day. This was given effect to in the several districts of the Provinces as and when sufficient stocks were built up between December 1946 and January 1947 except in a few areas. In January 1947, it was considered that it might be possible to increase the scale of ration further to rice eaters and it was ordered that ration should be increased to 12 oz. in the districts as and when sufficient stocks were built up. However this order could not be introduced in some districts or kept in force for a long time in other districts on account of the fall in procurement in several districts and especially in the Circar Districts. Hence it was ordered that over all ration should be reduced to 10 oz. from 25th May 1947. This fall in procurement was rather unexpected by the Government and was contributed mainly by the following factors:—

(1) The constitution of Producers-cum-Consumers Co-operative Societies in the four Circar districts.

(2) The unsatisfactory level of prices (from the point of view of producers) fixed by the Government.

(3) The declaration of the Government that no bonus or increase in prices would be given during the course of the year.

(4) The facilities for black-marketing that existed on account of the fact that ryots in the upland areas who were cultivating cash crops like tobacco, cotton, groundnut, etc., had acquired much money and could therefore afford to pay any price for the much needed rice.

Coupled with this unsatisfactory procurement, came the successive announcements of the Government of India that the prospect of supplies from other parts of India and overseas were not bright and that the deficit provinces would largely rely upon themselves. This Government had, therefore, to consider the measures necessary to prevent the situation from deteriorating seriously and leading to a famine on a large scale. They have therefore taken the following steps.

(a) They ordered increase in the prices of paddy to be paid to producers up to 4 annas per imperial maund by reducing the allowances given to the intermediaries, in order to meet partly the viewpoint of the producers that the existing price levels were low. (b) They reduced the scale of ration to rice eaters to 8 oz. with effect from 13th July and added 2 oz. of millets from 20th July. (c) They have offered a bonus of Re. 1 per maund of paddy, the bonus to be given in half-yearly instalments for deliveries made since 1st January 1947 (half of the bonus being given in cash and the balance in the shape of manure).

THE STOCK SITUATION

The food position at present is illustrated by the following figures;

Stock on hand on 10th July 1947: Rice: 199,477 tons; millets: 24,161 tons; wheat and other coarse grains: 5,472 tons. Total quantity of all foodgrains available: 229,110 tons. Quantity of rice and other foodgrains required for consumption at the present scale of 10 oz. per adult per day (8 oz. of rice plus 2 oz. millets or milo in the case of rice eaters, 1 oz. rice plus 9 oz. millets in the case of millet eaters, and 3 oz. of rice and 7 oz. of millets in the case of mixed diet eaters) for the period from 10th July to the end of the year, i.e., 31st October 1947, with a buffer stock for one month 880,100 tons. Deficit: 661,000 tons.

Against this deficit, the maximum quantity that has been promised and can be expected from the Government of India is only about 28,400 tons of rice and 9,000 tons of millets and 1,000 tons of wheat making a total of 38,400 tons. They may be able to supply further quantities of millets at the rate of 8,000 tons a month. This leaves a deficit of about 600,000 tons of all foodgrains together up to the end of October with a buffer stock for one month. This deficit has to be covered entirely by procurement. The prospects of procurement are not however very promising. Last year, procurement in the corresponding months (though encouragement by means of bonus was given) was only as follows (in tons).

1946—July: Rice: 131,916, millets: 17,384, total 149,600; August: Rice: 61,892; millets 15,012; total 76,904; September: Rice: 26,704, millets 9,581; total 36,235. October: Rice: 138,505; millets 9,900; total 148,405. The total procurement for these four months of 1946 was: Rice: 359,017, millets 52,827.

If the province is to avoid a catastrophe, or a further cut in the ration it will have to do much better than in the last year during the next three months and procure at least 600,000 tons.

Summary of address to the Provincial Food Advisory Committee of the Government of Madras on 11th August by Dr. A. S. Rajan, the Hon'ble Minister for Food on the food position (with kind acknowledgments to the Indian Express and the Mail).

However, I want to make the position of the Government of India, clear namely that they do not commit themselves to the scheme and that they have only allowed us to discuss the same with you and arrive at our own conclusions which should be communicated to them consequent of which communication they would send one of their representatives here to discuss with our Government the chances and the possibilities of the working of the scheme. That is why we have called this conference now."

Proceeding Dr. Rajan said that their advice should be of a type which would help them not only in solving the immediate problem but also agree with the larger scheme now being planned out by the Government of India to solve the food shortage permanently in our country.

There had been many complaints with regard to the convening of the conference. Many a complaint had been received by him that a large number of people had not been invited. Some friends thought that it was on district-war selection. He would like to inform them that it was not. They would see that there were more than one or two representatives from some of the districts. Nor was the selection confined to legislators although some members of the Legislature could be found among them. In this connection the Food Minister said that they had decided to allow a two-day debate on the food situation in the Province in both the Houses on their meeting on September 15. At that time, legislators would certainly get their full chance to discuss this problem threadbare. "But in between all these we wanted to see whether we could get the opinion of those who have been taking part in the production of food and therefore it is that this conference random selection though it may be has been convened." However, reminded the Food Minister, it was open to anyone to tender advice freely on this subject. "I am indeed grateful for all those who attended, the rice conference yesterday, the reports about which have appeared in the Press. I, am sure that the opinions expressed there as well as the suggestion put forward by them would be considered at this conference in reviewing the food situation and in tendering your advice on it."

The question today is this. The gloom of the food position is certainly getting graver day-by-day. I have a statement before me which shows that the stocks of rice on Aug. 1, 1947, were 1,84,860 tons, and this reserve is kept in hand to keep our rationing and distribution going properly.

"The expected procurement of rice during the next three months is roughly 2,20,000 tons and expected imports during those three months are 28,400 tons. So the total reserve at the disposal of the Government is roughly 4,33,000 tons.

"We have done all that. Our officers are exposed to several risks in doing procurement work. They have to cover a large number of districts. They have been troubled enormously and have faced all this. The Collectors, the Magistracy and all those people have been alert to protect these officers.

BIG AND SMALL PRODUCERS

"Again, the fact has been brought to our notice that very often the small producers have been seriously affected and the rich producers have been let free. I believe there is truth in this. Big producers are in a dominating position to-day and they are the strong holds of food. Constituted as they are to-day, the Government cannot displease them. They have to approach them, appeal to their sympathy and ask them to surrender their surplus stocks. But, in spite of all this, there are big people who refuse to surrender, and we must employ stronger measures to make them. We are driven to that extent. If I am compelled to take stronger measures they will have to face the consequences in the interests of the people.

III

The Madras Provincial food Council

(Swatantra, August 15, 1947)

Certain events during the last week should be an eye-opener about whither we are marching. The Hon'ble Minister for Food, when explaining his food policy at Lakshmipuram Young Men's Association on 10th August emphasised certain features of the existing food crisis. According to him the reduction of rice ration is due not to want of production but to hoarding. Secondly in answer to a question he said that the Adviser Government procured better than he as there was no democracy then as Village and Taluq Food Committees. Thirdly the minister patted himself on the back that as his Government is taking all possible efforts by way of inducements and punishments to procure rice, he should not be judged by the result namely the diet of partial starvation he is offering the people but that the blame should be thrown on the landholders who do not surrender their surpluses. It is noteworthy that during the course of his remarks the Minister eulogised the new Provincial Food Council which he has formed as consisting of 'giant producers' to cooperate with him in his food policy. We will examine these statements in the following paragraphs.

Any minister who has any respect for democracy and wants to build up sound democratic traditions in the country ought to have resigned under the circumstances mentioned. The minister is not the servant of a bureaucratic Government but an elected representative. The tragedy of the situation is that the minister himself does not realise that he is answerable to the people for his failure to procure. He does not say that circumstances are beyond human control but that somebody else is responsible for his inefficiency. Another statement of his is that democracy is the stumbling block in the way of efficient procurement, and by way of explanation he referred to the obstructions created by food committees. Is the system bad or its working? Who wanted the Government to pack these committees with

the very people from whom surpluses are to be procured? And when the Minister talked of the 'giant producers' whom he has appointed for his Provincial Food Council, he was unconsciously letting out the real truth, the real cause of the failure of procurement. 'Powerful rentiers' who hardly cultivate but collect rents anti-social elements with no compunction in the matter of causing death and starvation for the sake of profit, the very classes whom the Minister himself has condemned as obstructing procurement, it is these that is represented by an overwhelming majority in his Provincial Food Council. Certainly not democracy but the handful of the selling class who have been given a political importance far out of proportion to their number and directly in proportion to their capacity for unsocial acts that is today choking procurement. Will the Hon'ble Minister explain the basis on which he has constituted his Provincial Food Advisory Council? Not only he referred to the 'giant producers' for whom he had given representation but he mentioned too that there were a 'few representatives of consumers in the Council. Does the Hon'ble Minister know that the real producers of paddy are the small owner peasants and the millions of tenants in paddy-growing areas? Does he know that a large number of partial producers are consumers only in certain months and there are a substantial class of consumers, far greater than holders of produce in many villages and in certain months? Is the price of food-grains to be fixed by neither producers nor consumers but by a handful of rentiers who cannot form more than about 2% of the pattadars? Is this the class to decide our fate about decontrol, rationing, informal rationing, etc.? Wisely has the Provincial Food Conference decided on the same day under the presidency of Mr. T. T. Krishnamchari that a People's Food Council should be formed which should comprise a majority of representatives of Trade Unions, scheduled classes, and agricultural and industrial producers so that black marketeers may be hunted out, control may be made more efficient, and fair price properly fixed by the concerned groups. The working of the food councils nominated by Government has been a black chapter in the history of food events in this province. Whenever they met, they have demanded higher price upto 50%, shed crocodile tears over excess cultivation charges while recommending no relief either for the tenant who has to bear the brunt of such charges, or for the labourer who sweated for a century-old grain wage, talked of decontrol so that they might profiteer out of starvation; pleaded for normal trade channels which had failed us miserably; accused officials of corruption for which they alone were the cause, and it is such type of council that was given the burial by the last ministry that has been revived today. Its very enthronement is an encouragement to hoarders to think that the Government is well under their control and they may merrily indulging in their old devil dance while satisfying their greed with the misery of the starved people.

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