

Nation's Extension Movement

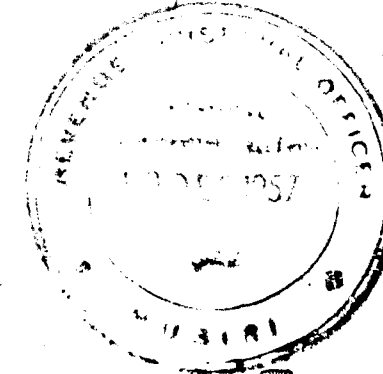
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(A human approach to the solution of India's rural problem)

BY
Shri V. T. Krishnamachari,
Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission

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MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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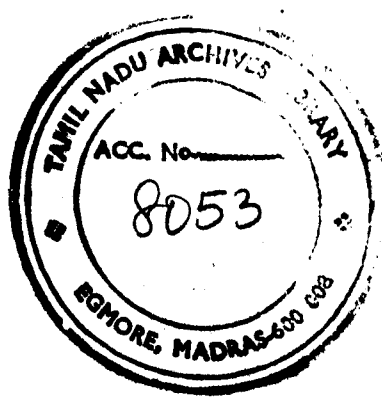


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NATIONAL EXTENSION MOVEMENT

(A human approach to the solution of India's rural problem)

The Prime Minister while presenting the report of the Planning Commission to the Parliament explained that India's Five Year Plan should not be regarded as consisting of a series of projects and works recommended for execution all over the country. He went on to say "It is something much vaster.....the mighty scene of a nation building itself, all of us working together to make a new India, not abstractedly for a nation, but for the 360 million people." Everywhere in the country there are now new hopes and aspirations : rural India is seeking to build up a new life for itself. The National Extension and Community Projects movements are designed to assist the nation in these efforts. The transformation implied in this new pattern of rural society is revolutionary. The recent Mission on Community Organisation and Development in South and South-East Asia organised by the United Nations, while referring to the Community Projects and National Extension Service movements in India remarked "Because of their magnitude and even more because the guiding principle is participation of the people in their own improvement, we regard the community programmes in India as the most significant experiment in economic development and social improvements in Asia at the present time."

The basic idea underlying the National Extension movement—viz, intensive development which aims at reaching every family in the countryside and at securing co-ordinated development of rural life as a whole—is not a new concept. It has been tried in the past. One can refer to such efforts as those of the constructive workers trained by Mahatma Gandhi or Poet Tagore at Sriniketan, or Mr. Spencer Hatch of Y. M. C. A. at Martandam, under the comprehensive rural reconstruction scheme in the former Baroda State, experiments conducted by Mr F. L. Brayne in Gurgaon District in the Punjab, and in more recent times, the Sarvodaya scheme in Bombay, and the Firka Development scheme in Madras. The Grow More Food campaign launched by the Government of India was also an effort in this direction, although it suffered from the limitation of its original objective merely to increased food production. After a careful review of these efforts the G.M.F. Committee made important proposals which were endorsed by the Planning Commission and the Government

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of India. Firstly, the Committee recommended that there should be organised a National Extension movement covering the entire country within a period of 7 or 8 years. Secondly, it worked out the pattern of the official and non-official organisation at all levels—the State, District, Sub-Division and Village—best suited to meet the needs of this new policy—the Welfare State in action. Thirdly, it recommended Central aid to the establishment of the service in States.

N.E.S. and Community Projects Following these recommendations it was decided in consultation with the State Governments in May, 1952 to launch the Community Development Programme. This was inaugurated in 55 project areas all over India on October 2, 1952. More Community Projects were launched in 1953 in two successive instalments and now there are 220 Development Blocks covering about 23,650 villages with a population of 21.5 millions.

The Community Projects involve intensive operations spread over a period of three years; but improvement in rural life is a permanent process. For this reason and based on the recommendations of the Grow More Food Enquiry Committee and the Planning Commission, the Government of India decided early in 1953 on the introduction of the National Extension Service. It was proposed to cover a total of 1,20,000 villages comprising nearly 1/4th of the rural population within the period of the Plan. The National Extension Service was inaugurated all over India on October 2, 1953, a year after the inauguration of the Community Development Programme. As a first instalment 259 blocks were allotted for the year 1953-54.

It is necessary to explain the inter-relation between the Community Development Programme and the National Extension Service. The movements have identical aims. The N. E. S. is a permanent organisation and will cover the whole country. It provides the basic organisation—official and non-official and a minimum financial provision for development. Further funds will be found from the Central Government's assistance to States for different kinds of development and the States' own allotments under different heads. N. E. S. blocks in which successful results have been achieved with the maximum popular co-operation are selected for intensive

development for a period of 3 years. These are called 'Community Projects'. In these the works' programme is more comprehensive. How many N.E.S. blocks can be taken up every year for such temporary intensive development will depend on the available financial resources and local support and enthusiasm.

The total programme for the Plan period is to undertake 1,200 blocks under the National Extension Service. Out of these 700 blocks consisting of about 70,000 villages and a population of 40 millions will receive attention under the intensive development programme. The remaining 500 blocks consisting of about 50,000 villages and a population of 35 millions will come under the working of the Extension Service. It is expected that by the end of the Second Five Year Plan the entire country would be covered by the National Extension Service.

The aim of National Extension Service is not merely to provide for ample food, clothing, shelter, health and recreational facilities in the village. All these are there. But more important than all this material improvement is the realisation that what is required is a change in the mental outlook of the people, instilling in them of an ambition for higher standards of life and the will and the determination to work for such standards. This is essentially a human problem—how to change the outlook of the 70 million families living in the countryside, arouse enthusiasm in them for new knowledge and new ways of life and fill them with the ambition and the will to live a better life. This is indeed one of the most difficult problems that ever faced a nation in the history of the world.

Need for creating a new mental outlook

Fundamental concepts of the N.E.S. movement

In the past, Government's efforts to bring about improvement in rural areas have been directed through fairly well organised Development Departments, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Co-operation, Health, Education, etc. These, however, worked independently of one another following their own programme and without a sense of common objectives. Each Department approached the villager through its own hierarchy and the weakest link in each of these Departments was usually the last official who had to be in touch with the

Rural life—an inter-related whole

villager. This official was, in most cases, inadequately trained and incapable of providing guidance to the villager. The area covered by him was so vast that a villager hardly felt his presence. The activities of these Departments were also not linked up with those of Revenue Officers which touched village life at many points, or with the Local Bodies which, under the law, were responsible for some of the welfare services in the rural areas like communications and water supplies. The result of all this was that there were no concerted efforts to improve all sides of village life, to change the outlook of the farmer and to mobilise local initiative and resources for the betterment of rural conditions.

Much thought had in the past been given to the kind of organisation required to be set up to meet the manysided needs of the villager. As early as 1926, the Royal Commission on Agriculture commended the system of Village Guides devised by Mr. F. L. Brayne for his Gurgaon experiment.

The Fiscal Commission set up by the Government of India in 1949 had observed :

"In our view the greatest need at present in India is an Extension Service with the object of bridging the gap between research and the practices of producers, similar to those which have been found so valuable in U.K., U.S.A., etc. What we have in mind is an Extension Officer with the necessary staff for a group of 40 or 50 villages working on a demonstration farm. The officer will be the agent of all the Development Departments in the implementation of the schemes of improvement for the villages in the Centre and the guide and friend of the farmers in the area and in close contact with them."

The concept of rural Extension Service briefly referred to in the Fiscal Commission's report was further developed by the Grow More Food Enquiry Committee which reported to the Government in June, 1952. The Committee said that it was necessary to set up an organisation for intensive rural work which would reach every farmer and assist in the co-ordinated development of rural life as a whole similar in

conception to the "extension" or "advisory" services in the U. S. A., U. K., and elsewhere. The functions of such an extension service have been very well summarised in the following extract from the report on extension of the meeting of the FAO held in August, 1949 :—

"Extension or Advisory services and other allied services have the following indispensable functions for instructing farm people in agriculture and domestic science and in agricultural affairs; bring them the latest results of research in these fields, on quality and cost as well as on the quantity of production, and teaching them improved techniques of farming and rural living; calling the attention of research institutions to the agricultural and home problems that require study; and providing opportunities for farm people to meet together for the purpose of learning from each other and developing leadership in agricultural affairs".

The Grow More Food Enquiry Committee recommended that for the Extension Organisation the taluka or tehsil—the lowest administrative unit—consisting of 100 to 120 villages would constitute a convenient development block in charge of a Development Officer or Extension Officer. The Sub-Divisional Officer or Revenue Divisional Officer would have to be relieved of his other duties by a special Assistant appointed for the purpose so that he may perform the functions of the Extension Officer in his area. The Extension Officer at the Block level will have to be assisted by Technical Officers dealing with agriculture, animal husbandry and co-operation. This organisation will function as a team constantly consulting one another and exchanging experience. The organisation will establish the closest contacts with agriculturists and be their friend and guide. Below the Block level there would be—

- (1) a group of villages 5 to 10 in number with a population ranging from 5,000 to 8,000, and
- (2) the village itself.

To sum up, the Grow More Food Enquiry Committee which examined the economic aspects of the village life in great detail observed that all aspects of rural life were inter-related and that no lasting results could be achieved if individual

aspects of it were dealt with in isolation. This however, does not mean that particular problems should not be given prominence but the plans for them should form parts of and be integrated with those for achieving the wider aims. The N.E.S. movement aims at placing this ideal—of bringing about an appreciable improvement in all aspects of rural life and making it fuller and richer—before the country and ensuring that the energies of the entire administrative machinery of the States and the best unofficial leadership are directed to plans for awakening mass enthusiasm and enlisting the active interest and support of the millions of families living in the countryside in the immense task of bettering their own conditions.

The basic principles on which the movement lays stress are:—

- (a) The motive force for improvement should come from the people themselves. Self-help is at the root of all reform, the State assisting with supplies and services and credit. The vast unutilised energy lying dormant in the countryside should be harnessed for constructive work, every family devoting its time not only for carrying out its own programmes but also for the benefit of the community.
- (b) The Co-operative principle should be applied in its infinitely varying forms, for solving all problems of rural life.

These are the basic features of the new pattern of rural society. It is that of millions of families of farm owners organising themselves in co-operatives of different kinds and taking decision as free agents, practising scientific agriculture on the largest scale possible and finding supplementary occupations in a variety of decentralised cottage and small scale industries—while the State assists by organising research, supplies and services and credit. The basic considerations are not merely economic: there are non-material values and social gains which are equally important.

In what directions does the movement seek to bring about a change of outlook? The first direction is increased employment and increased production. This follows from

Techniques
and methods
of work

what is recognised to be the greatest evil in rural life, namely, the enormous volume of unemployment, or what may be called under-employment that grips the countryside. Side by side with this unemployment, there is the fact that we have “subsistence” agriculture i.e., the land does not produce a fraction of what it can produce if existing scientific knowledge is applied. So the two most prominent evils—they are really connected—are under-employment and under-production. The first direction in which we must change the outlook of the rural population is in regard to these two evils. They are due basically to the same reasons and are two aspects of the same problem. Despite much inherited skill and experience, the farmer's productivity is low on account of factors such as, failure to use scientific methods and conserve the available resources, lack of credit, lack of irrigation facilities, etc. Intensive agriculture by bringing modern scientific methods to the door of the agriculturists would bring about greater production and fuller employment and with it wider opportunities for subsidiary and cottage industries.

(i) improved
agriculture etc.

The second main direction of the programme is the need for organising the community for co-operative endeavour. It is only as a result of the community helping itself that improvement on the scale required can be brought about. It is in the application of co-operative principles that solutions can be found for all the problems facing the countryside. The aim should be to see that there is at least one multi-purpose society in every village or group of villages on which practically every agriculturist family is represented. The scope for the application of the co-operative principle is unlimited. To take an example, good seeds, fertilizers etc., are to be supplied for increased production. The question immediately arises of short term credit. Without such credit the ideal of every family having a scheme of improvement for which it works cannot be realised. Though co-operative societies have been functioning in India for nearly 50 years, it has been found that after all these years even in areas where co-operation is best developed, only 30 per cent of the families engaged in agriculture are eligible for obtaining credit on terms on which co-operative societies can offer it to them. In other words only 30 per cent of the people are “credit worthy.” The problem, therefore, is

(ii) Co-operation

one of making the remaining 70 per cent "credit worthy". This can only be done by joint efforts to improve production and other conditions in the villages through co-operative endeavour. In the initial stages the aim should be to provide credit under proper supervision to cultivators who could be relied upon to make efforts towards increased production. In other words the emphasis will have to be on the credit worthy uses rather than credit worthy persons.

The Grow More Food Enquiry Committee gave a number of examples in which the co-operative principles can be applied. They are as follows :

"Firstly, in regard to schemes of permanent improvements where there is a major irrigation project, the canal system in villages can be taken up for execution by the villagers on a co-operative basis. This will eliminate middle-man's profits and bring into the co-operative movement large amounts of money which can be utilised for agricultural improvement. The same remarks apply to schemes of reclamation-contour-bunding etc., and minor irrigation projects. Also a system of voluntary labour for works useful to the community—village irrigation tanks, common drinking water wells, roads, village plantations, etc., can be usefully organised.

Secondly, for raising standards of cultivation, local efforts should be promoted in seed production, green manures, compost making, etc. This will ease supply problems besides ensuring purity of seeds etc.

Thirdly, there are the numerous ways in which the co-operative movement can be developed to advantage—for providing short-term finance, for joint ownership of agricultural machinery and pumps, for lifting water etc. ; joint ownership of storage accommodation ; joint farming ; co-operative marketing etc.

Fourthly, provision again can be made by co-operative methods for subsidiary occupations and cottage and small scale industries.

Fifthly, it is specially important to organise work among

women as their co-operation in raising levels of life can most valuable."

The third direction is the need for community effort for works of common benefit to the community. The village needs roads, tanks, and so on. It is necessary that the villagers should feel that all these needs can be satisfied by their joint efforts. The Government can assist with grants and loans to a certain extent and also with technical advice and guidance, but the main effort would be theirs.

(iii) Community effort

This applies also to the more permanent improvements that are needed for the community, schools, health centres and so on. Here again the need for utilising a portion of the vast unutilised energy in the countryside for the benefit of the community should be inculcated. These activities pertain to creation of social amenities in the villages. In addition to creating these social amenities in the village there is a permanent aspect of the problem and that is the need for continued maintenance of these works. In the past silt clearance in a village pond was considered obligatory as a matter of custom. It is no longer considered as an important aspect of the village life today. The villagers should feel it to be their duty to maintain all works of permanent utility by community effort.

To sum up, the three main directions in which the change in outlook is needed and is to be worked for are :

Firstly, increased employment and increased production by the application of scientific methods of agriculture, including horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries, etc., and the establishment of subsidiary and cottage industries ;

Secondly, self-help and self-reliance and the largest possible extension of the principle of co-operation ; and,

Thirdly, the need for devoting a portion of the vast unutilised time and energy in the countryside for the benefit of the community.

Recommendations regarding the organisational pattern for the implementation of the programme were made in Chapter VI of the G.M.F. Enquiry Committee Report and by the Planning Commission in Chapter VII of the First Five Year Plan. In every State, under this pattern, there is a State Development Committee consisting of the Chief Minister and the Ministers in charge of Development Departments for laying down general principles of policy regarding the implementation of the National Extension Service programme. The Development Commissioner in the State is the Secretary of this Committee. At the official level, the Development Commissioner is, for purposes of co-ordination, the leader of the team consisting of the Heads of Departments or Secretaries to Government in the various Development Departments. He is to act as the Co-ordinating Officer for all these Departments in order to ensure that the work in the different Development Departments proceeds along the lines indicated in the overall plan of the State. He is not the head of an independent Development Department of his own but is to regard himself, for the purpose of ensuring co-ordination, as the Head of a team consisting of Heads of all the Development Departments. In view of the difficult nature of the work with which the Development Commissioner is entrusted, it has been found necessary for him to be a very senior officer in the State. In some States, the Chief Secretary himself exercises these functions. In other States, these activities have been entrusted to a very senior official of the rank of Additional Chief Secretary. To achieve co-ordination at the District, Sub-Divisional and Block levels, functions similar to those of the Development Commissioners have been entrusted to the Collector, Sub-Divisional Officer and the Block Development Officer, respectively. The Technical officials belonging to different Development Departments are subject to the supervision for purposes of co-ordination of the General Administrative Officer of the appropriate level, namely, a Block Development Officer at the Block level, the Sub-Divisional Officer at the Sub-Division and the District Officer at the District level. The multipurpose Village Level Worker or Gram Sevak who is the last link in this administrative chain is treated as a part of the District Administration. He is, however, to receive instructions and guidance in technical

matters from the Technical Officers at the various levels.

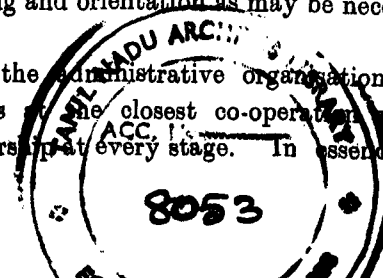
The significant thing about the administrative arrangements indicated above is that it aims at the transformation of the existing general administrative cadres of Government into Welfare Cadres rather than the establishment of a separate Welfare Cadre distinct from the normal machinery of the Government. This implies that the machinery which was at one time devised to look after the functions of revenue collection and maintenance of law and order is being changed into a Welfare Administration and the resources of all the Development Departments of Government are being utilised to the maximum advantage for a concerted attack on the problem of rural development.

The programme aims at the provision of the minimum staff needed for all round development in our rural areas. There is financial provision for a small works programme serving as the nucleus around which the staff would be engaged in their various activities. The financial provision made in the programme itself is small and it is intended that this should be supplemented by additional resources made available from the development programme financed by the State Government singly or by the State and the Central Government jointly. The State Governments have been told that all development programmes should be concentrated in these areas in a liberal measure. There is also a provision for loans in the scheme itself—medium term for minor irrigation schemes and short term for providing credit facilities to the villager. The estimated expenditure of a Development Block is of the order of 7.5 lakhs for a period of 3 years. The staff consists of one Block Development Officer, three Extension Officers (for agriculture, animal husbandry, co-operatives and panchayats), two Social Education Organisers (one man and one woman), one Overseer and 10 Village Level Workers. This staff is inclusive of the existing staff of the various Development Departments in the area which would be absorbed in the N. E. S. organisation with such training and orientation as may be necessary.

Alongside the administrative organisation, the N. E. S. programme aims at the closest co-operation with the best non-official leaders at every stage. In essence the N. E. S.

Contents
of the
National
Extension
Service
Programme

People's
Participa-
tion in the
Programme



organisation is both official and non-official; both have to work together. Development programmes are drawn up after the fullest discussion with the people and their representatives at various levels. At the village level, the legally constituted Panchayat is always utilised in the planning as well as the implementation of the programme. In areas where such Panchayats do not exist or are ineffective, efforts are being made to encourage the growth of *ad hoc* non-statutory village development councils called variously as the Gram Vikas Mandals, Gram Mangal Samitis, Gram Sevak Sanghams, etc. Through these bodies effective participation of the people in the planning and the implementation of the Plan is secured. Plans drawn up by these village institutions are considered by Advisory Committees at the Block level consisting of representatives of Village Committees, the members of the local Legislature and the Parliament, representatives of co-operative societies, progressive farmers etc. The Development programmes of the Block drawn up by the Block Advisory Committees are then integrated into the District Plan by a District Development Committee consisting of the prominent non-officials as well as the heads of various technical departments at the District level. Thus, at every stage the official and the non-official organisations are working side by side for evolving and implementing the programme. The whole movement is based on self-help. The active interest and support of the people has, therefore, to be enlisted in the task of bettering their own condition. To facilitate the introduction of the new order of things the Central Government is assisting the State Governments with grants of half the additional cost of setting up Extension staffs and also to make every effort to find by the end of the Plan period short term credit of Rs. 100 crores a year, medium term credit of Rs. 25 crores a year and long term credit of Rs. 5 crores a year through the co-operative movement and other agencies.

Training
of extension
staff

As stated earlier, Extension is a continuous process designed to make the rural people aware of their problems and indicating to them ways and means by which they can solve them. It involves not only education of the rural people in determining their problems and methods of solving them but also inspiring them towards positive action in doing so. It is,

therefore, of the highest importance that for this task personnel of the right type are obtained who will take to their work with zeal and enthusiasm. The qualities required are not only ability to acquire knowledge but also dedication to the task of serving the rural people and the development of a will to find solution for their problems. The crux of the programme which is more a human problem than anything else, is the method of approach to the villager. The Planning Commission in its report laid great emphasis on the training of extension workers. There are at present 34 centres all over the country for the training of Village Level Workers. Persons who are to be the Village Level Workers are selected with great care. The primary qualification is experience of rural life and interest in it. They are to have training for at least one year in basic agriculture after Matriculation. At these Extension Training Centres they receive further training in extension methods over a period of six months in the various facets of rural life namely, agriculture, animal husbandry, rural health, sanitation, social education, cottage industries, etc.

Training courses have also been arranged for extension and orientation training for the various subject matter specialists and the administrative officers. As far as possible nobody is commissioned to the extension work unless he has had an adequate orientation to the subject.

It cannot be stressed too strongly that rural development is essentially a human problem. The success of the programme is to be judged by the extent to which it succeeds in producing the change in outlook in these directions. The basis which should be applied in evaluating the work are : Has every family got a plan of improvement for which it puts forth its best effort and utilises improved techniques, seeds and manures and fertilizers etc. and has it also got subsidiary occupations for the period for which it is not engaged in agriculture ? Has every family in the area become credit worthy and is every family represented on its own qualifications, in at least one co-operative society ? Has every family made its own contribution to works of common benefit to the community in the form of money and/or labour ? How far has the interest of women and the youth in villages been enlisted in this campaign ? Have all these become part of

A human
problem

the permanent life of the village and not a mere temporary phase ?

I have attempted to indicate, in broad outline, the National Extension Service programme as embodied in the Plan. It is based on the dignity and the worth of the individual. Its basic idea is to bring about a change in the outlook of the millions of families in the countryside and to assist them in their efforts to build up a new life. The foundations are being laid for a National Extension Service Organisation—the Welfare State in action—which will cover the whole country by 1961. A pattern of social and economic life has thus been placed before the country which it will be the aim of the Welfare State to bring into existence. There are instances of communities organising themselves on this pattern but nowhere has the experiment been tried for a vast rural population like ours and in an under-developed economy with so many intractable problems. The results so far obtained have been on the whole encouraging and as the administration and leaders of the village and other associations gain more and more experience, there are grounds for the hope that the movement will gather momentum. What is essential is that the movement, basing itself on the application of the co-operative principles in its infinitely varying forms, should always retain its vigour and dynamism as a genuine people's movement, ever adapting itself speedily to the new demands and new situations that will arise.

