

EDITORIAL.

The Ministerial Policy :—It is well that at the very outset the present Ministry has found it desirable to enunciate their policy and outline their programme for the constituents and the public to know and assess their work when they lay down their office. The public would certainly welcome this feature as some experience of the necessity for the forming of policies by the various parties who are intent on capturing the electorate and clamouring for power and opportunities to show their talents, sincerity and organising ability has sadly shown during the past six years. The present programme aims at the initiation, if not completion, of several schemes, primarily for rural construction and therefore should meet with the approval of the whole province. No one need, on this account, be oblivious of the fact that a mere enumeration of policies will go a long way towards the realisation of their aims but should whole-heartedly work to whatever party one may belong, towards the advancement of the basic ideas on which improvement of this province rests. In our opinion Rebuilding of the Rural edifice is the prime desideratum at present. Political strife may rage in urban areas but that this should poison or dry up the springs of activity in rural parts should be and we feel sanguine is, far beyond the dreams of even the worst partisan who may lay any claim for work as a public man.

Revision of Gazetteers :—The earlier decades in the British administration of Madras witnessed the compilation and production of admirable works on economic, social and other conditions of the districts which enthusiastic and brilliant civilians found themselves thrown in. The work done, however, found its acme in the publication of the Madras Manual of Administration in three volumes in the eighties of the last century and concomitantly with this the publication as times and funds permitted and talents were available of what were known as District Manuals. In the last decade owing to a fairly settled character of the province during the previous 50 years, subjects which were of special import or of local importance became increasingly limited in number and it was considered sufficient if supplementary information alone in regard to details to show the economic changes was given and this was published in the form of Gazetteers. Nearly 10 years have elapsed since this work also saw its completion and Government have now come back to this work and appointed Mr. J. J. Cotton, a senior Civilian and an officer of great literary abilities as Editor of the projected

Gazetteers. At the time that the manuals and the series of Gazetteers were written, the Agricultural department in its present form and size was not in existence. The then officers really seem to have taken what care they could in collecting information on seasons, crops, and other agricultural conditions, but in our opinion the present times, in view of recent developments, do need that an agricultural officer should be attached to the General Editor for this part of his work. It may be that information under this head is collected through various circle officers but the final touch and shape besides coordinating the information so obtained can only be satisfactorily given by one who has specialized in the line. Despite this defect, however, we hope that the general editor will be put in possession of all aspects of rural conditions by the district staff and the public may eagerly look forward to the early issue of these Gazetteers.

The Unemployment Problem :—Work for idle hands, more work for the industrious, enough work to give food for all is the Slogan at present. The problem of unemployment has only recently been forced to the forefront by the educated classes. The Local Government, acting on a resolution moved by our townsman Mr. C. V. Venkataramana Ayyangar—appointed an Unemployment Committee with Sir George Paddison as the Chairman. Owing to his more pressing duties elsewhere this work could not be completed early. Witnesses representing all shades of opinion were called in. We believe the report is being got ready and we hope the recommendations would indicate the source which may be successfully tapped to reduce this tension of unemployment. We are glad to note in this connexion, that the Travancore Durbar are tackling this problem and have taken it up seriously. We find that the questionnaire issued by the Travancore Government follows the same lines as that issued by Sir George Paddison, probably due to not much dissimilarity in conditions between Travancore and Madras. With immense natural resources in land, forests and the sea, Travancore enjoys advantages and for a territory of the size of Travancore and the percentage of literacy in population this question seems easier of solution. We hope that as an all round awakening is taking place in this country the Government of India will have to turn their attention to this question which with the out put of 15 universities every year is bound to assume an All-India character in a few years.

Exchange Ratio. This country is peculiarly circumstanced in that the token of exchange has changed both in value and material during the past several decades. Even in countries where bimetallism is the rule and the permissibility of minting of two different metals and of sending sufficient quantities in circulation is not in doubt, the exchange question is not non-existent. In India, therefore, this question is more complicated where the absorption of gold is reported to be assuming alarming proportions. One school of thought is of opinion that the absence of gold coins for circulation is the cause of hoarding of gold by fewer individuals to the detriment of the public while the opposite school advances the same argument against the introduction of a gold standard. History tells us that the presence of any commodity in large and available quantities has always tended to break down monopoly. It is therefore pertinent to ask whether the introduction of gold coins into the country will not familiarise the people to the use of this metal and the novelty and the necessity for hoarding may not wear away in time. Assuming for the sake of argument that the gold exchange standard is an accomplished fact, one may deeply plunge oneself into the burning question of exchange ratio. The Government of the day with one of the most capable of financiers Sir. Basil Blackett as their spokesman is introducing a Bill to fix the exchange ratio at 1sh. 6d. a Rupee and thus to stabilise the currency. Bombay capitalists and financiers backed by leading public men with a leaning towards industry and commerce have set up a currency league with the Right Honorable V. S. Srinivasa Sastry, P. C. as Chairman to combat this opinion and gather all forces available in the country against this move of the Government. It is really very difficult to oppose such a solid phalanx of patriots as Sri P. Thakurdas and a substantial portion of the Indian Press, but we feel it our duty to bring to more prominent gaze one aspect of Indian life and that the least vocal viz. the rural population. Agricultural produce is largely exported to foreign countries and the agriculturists live by the export of such produce. Any exchange ratio which will give him an advantage is therefore welcome to him because the nature of imported articles he uses is such and their volume and value are so small that an exchange ratio of 1sh. 4d. to the Rupee is not advantageous to him. Further it is his painful experience to note that however high the prices may range in countries outside or even in his own, the value he gets for his

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produce does not materially rise as the middlemen snatch away the margin of profit for themselves. It is common knowledge that when the last war was raging and the prices of the Calcutta gunny cloths were three to four hundred per cent in the world market, the jute cultivator did not get much more than his prewar price. Such conditions are similar all over the country. Unless therefore the knowledge of the cultivator increases and he is in a position to assert himself, the 1 sh. 4 d. ratio will not attract his attention. In his own simple way he would still hanker after 1 sh. 6 d. ratio which may seem plausible in the eyes of the capitalist magnates but would certainly lead him to think that for one hundred rupees worth of produce he sells not 1600d. but 1800d. he gets.

Cattle Fairs:—A perusal of the Madras Villagers, Calendar of the past few years discloses a lamentable fact that in this province where over 40 millions of people inhabit and 9 million cattle are reported to live, fairs and markets for purchase and sale of these useful animals should not number more than fifty-five. This shows, in our opinion, the paucity of knowledge on the part of the ryot to better economic conditions through cattle which are now his sole mainstay. These fairs are scattered over the whole Presidency and for an area of 92 million acres look ridiculously small. Some of them last only for a day and are held in connexion with local festivals and do not seem to assume the character of cattle marts in recognised agricultural countries. It is no wonder that even with the prodigious exertions of the live-stock section of the agricultural department, the results of improvements of the few existing breeds will not be felt for several decades to come. The question of reasons apart, it behoves the public to turn their attention to remedy this defect in rural economy. We are aware mere opening of more cattle fairs and markets alone will not solve the problem but the increase in the number of such fairs and markets will certainly improve the tone of such breeds. The failure of a few agricultural and cattle fairs in the past is no indication of the apathy of the ryot towards this aspect of his life but the time was not yet and the improvement through shows was forced on him when he had not enough general knowledge, as he now possesses of the agricultural conditions. Important markets and fairs should be opened and held not in district centres or junctions where railways meet but in places where large concourse of people assemble in off seasons bent on religious or other pursuits.