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## Editorial.

**Rural Uplift and District Economic Councils.** The Madras Government have recently announced the apportionment to the various districts, of the 15 lakhs allotted by the Government of India for the work of rural construction to be executed during the current year. While doing so, they have rightly stipulated that the villages that are to benefit by the improvement schemes are to contribute, either in kind or coin, one third of the amount provided to them by the Government, and also suggested tentatively that these sums are to be devoted for the development of rural sanitation, water supply, loan and sale co-operative societies and communications. They have also called for further proposals regarding the utilisation of the grants and the running of the schemes from the district collectors and district economic councils about whose formation we referred to in our July number.

From a perusal of the proceedings of these councils so far as they have been reported, we note that the general plan of work seems to be to form divisional subcommittees who are to survey the conditions in their area and select suitable centres to serve as model villages where all the improvement schemes are to be concentrated. There is a tendency to divert almost all the amounts on items like construction of godowns, roads and culverts, village halls of latrines, and sinking of wells, which, though highly useful and essential in indirectly augmenting the villagers' residual income and improving their health, are impersonal in nature. It appears to us that no adequate stress has



been laid, except in the case of two districts, on the human and cultural aspect.

It is too well known that if any work of amelioration has to have a lasting effect, it has to be broadly based on a firm foundation of a will to improve. We have to profit by the lessons of experience taught by the working in the villages of the co-operative movement which suffered in the past for want of proper education and training of the members on questions relating to co-operation. If the drive for reconstruction is to be of permanent value, it is necessary to see that not only the curiosity of the villagers is roused, but also their outlook is widened, their aspiration elevated, and their leisure utilised for mutual help and corporate action, such that they may take an abiding interest in the several activities of the economic councils, abandoning their proclivities towards faction and never ending litigation. The Royal Commission on Agriculture in India realising fully the importance of this aspect of improvement, have emphasised on the idea of village guidance along with their recommendations for the material improvement of the agricultural population.

We feel, therefore, that one of the primary tasks of our district economic councils should be the creation, in the minds of the villagers, of a desire to lead a cleaner and better life, and of an interest to work together for the common welfare. It is essential in order to reach this goal early to employ an agency to train and guide them in the right direction. It is also necessary that such an organisation should be constituted from the villages themselves as anything external will have no rural touch and will not outlive long after the protecting hand of Government is removed. We cannot do better than invite the attention of the readers to the measures adopted at Bairampally by the Village Industries Association, South Kanara a purely private body. They have divided the village selected for rural welfare work into ten blocks, each containing 20 to 25 houses, and entrusted each one of them to a member of a volunteer corps called '*grama sevakas*'. The members of this corps are elected from the villages and trained in all aspects of rural improvement work by holding special classes, prior to their being put in charge of blocks. The above system ensures local interest and is therefore worthy of adoption in all model villages.

We would also suggest that along with various proposals formulated by each council, sufficient provision may be made in their budget for the importation and breeding of milk yielding types of goats—in some cases buffaloes too—and for the rearing of fishes in all ponds, wells and tanks, with a view to improve the nutritional side of the village population. Arrangement may be made with the Revenue departments for the planting of trees like *Gliricidia maculata*, *Pongamia glabra*, *Poinciana elatra* (Vadanarayanan) on the bunds of lakes, channels, (Pungam) drainage canals, and enjoyment of their leaves for green



manuring purposes. Adequate attention will also have to be paid for the collection of all decomposable material lying neglected in the village sites, field bunds, poramboke lands, and for their conversion into compost, the incorporation of which will be of immense value to all Indian soils.

**Reduction of Railway Freight on Cattle.** We are gratified to observe that the huge difference in the number of wagons carrying cattle to and from Bombay every year have created a stir in the minds of such an influential body as the Indian Merchants Chamber, Bombay. Its working committee estimates an annual loss of 20,000 calves and 20,000 dry cows in the city of Bombay due to want of sufficient space in the cattlesheds and to prohibitive railway freight which preclude the cattle owners from rebooking the animals that have gone dry back to the country side. We wish to add that the conditions obtaining in the city of Madras are not in any way brighter. Hundreds of valuable cows are being imported every year from Nellore, and these never return home when they no longer serve the purpose for which they were brought. The high cost of fodders, the expensive accommodation at Madras, and the heavy railway freight to the nearest grazing area which is more than 100 miles from the metropolis, compel the milkmen of Madras to part with their erstwhile wage earners at a nominal price mainly to the slaughter houses. We consider that the request of the Committee of the Indian Merchants' Chamber to the Railway Board to lower the freight of cattle booked to and from the big cities and towns is a welcome one, and has come none too soon in the day.\* We feel sure that our agriculturally minded Viceroy will, with his profound interest in the improvement of cattle in India, spare no efforts to maintain the existing good milk breeds from being reduced to small numbers. We rejoice to learn that at the instance of the Viceroy the Railway Board were pleased to show recently considerable concession in railway freight for dry cows exported from Calcutta. This response give us hope that the same concession will be extended by the Railway Board to all other chief cities in India.

#### Announcement.

We are glad to announce that Mr. G. R. Hilson, formerly Director of Agriculture, Madras and one of our oldest members has very kindly offered to become a patron of the Union. We hope that this good example and large heartedness will be emulated by many of our members and subscribers.

\* Since writing the above we are glad to note that the Madras Provincial Marketing Board have made similar recommendation on the reduction of the railway freight on cattle.—*Editor*