

# Plan and the People

*By*

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It was Thoreau, the thinker, who said that 'that Government is best which governs least'. That might well have been true at a time when Government meant mainly the exercise of coercive control and authority. The success and stability of democracy depend on the active co-operation of the people and their intelligent participation in public affairs. The report which has recently been released by the Planning Commission is an inspiring invitation to the people to pave the way for progress and prosperity by disciplined and well-directed endeavour, and constructive, co-operative and cumulative effort.

The chief failing of the common run of plans has been that they are far too ambitious, unmindful of realities, floating in the rarefied atmosphere of idealism, with the result that the reaction that follows when they fizzle out, is demoralizing and frustrating. A plan should, therefore, be practical and eminently practicable. It should work out a skilful equation between hopeful idealism and robust realism. This commendable moderation is a worthy feature of the present Planning Commission's report. If it is not spectacular, it is sober and substantial. It is cautious without being conservative. While it has not under-rated the difficulties, it has not failed to take note of the potentialities of manpower and material resources, the intelligent exploitation and planned utilization of which should usher in a new era.

## The Need for a Plan

Independent India is facing a multitude of problems. The hang-overs from the past have to be cleared; the transitional conditions of the present have to be steered through carefully, and the foundation for the future laid firmly. This gigantic task of national reconstruction can be undertaken only through planned effort. Dissipated efforts in diverse directions will only destroy the morale of the nation. Now, more than ever, is a plan needed to present things in their proper perspective, to determine priorities, give sound direction and effect co-ordination. If the nation is to progress, it is essential that there should be all-round development, planned advance and harmonious growth in the various spheres of national activity and no lop-sided expansion in any one branch at the expense of others. A plan should, therefore, have purpose, perspective and poise,—and the present plan possesses all these in ample measure.

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The plan for this State is easily the largest in comparison with those of the other States, envisaging an expenditure of 137 crores of rupees. A noteworthy feature of the plan is that greater emphasis has been laid on the development of irrigation, power and agriculture, the total amount set apart under these three heads coming to more than 90 crores of rupees. This is understandable, as Madras suffers chronically from food deficit, and schemes to step up the production of foodgrains must necessarily take precedence over others. The amount set apart for irrigation and agriculture is however much below the original estimate prepared and submitted by the State to the Planning Commission after taking fully into account the needs of the State, the potentiality for development and the executive capacity for carrying out the same. The responsibility cast on this State for carrying out these schemes within the time-limit set out, is something stupendous, requiring not only executive efficiency and skill but also a high degree of idealism, the essential requisite for bringing to fruition reconstruction measures of such magnitude.

### **The New Outlook**

The traditions and inhibitions that grew out of a century and more of alien rule should give place to a new and healthier mental outlook, in the era of people's rule. In olden days when the coercive role of the State was maintained and stressed without much apology, the people either received the activities of the Government with suspicion or left the same severely alone. To-day that attitude should change. Government's plan to-day is a people's plan. It is only when people take a vital share in the execution of the plan, that it can go forward steadily, surely. If, for example, the surplus man-power available in our villages is utilized for laying village roads, carrying out small irrigation schemes or improving sanitation, tasks which do not call for any high degree of skill, the results can be highly satisfying. Here again it is the mental attitude that counts most. A leadership that takes shape from the voluntary will of the people can alone undertake the tasks that lie ahead of us.

### **Planning Boards and Committees**

The report of the Planning Commission contains suggestions for the establishment of public consultative bodies to enlist the active co-operation of the people. This suggestion has, to a certain extent, been anticipated by us in the scheme for the reorganization of the planning machinery set up by the Madras State, which was approved as early as April 1951. The revised scheme envisages the creation of a District Planning Board and a District Planning Committee for each district. The District Planning Board will have the District Collector as its Chairman, and a whole-time officer as its Secretary. The local M.L.As. and M.L.Cs., the President of the District Board or his nominee, five

non-officials, the President of the District Co-operative Societies, and any other co-operator connected with the co-operative institutions, one municipal chairman, and three representatives of industries and labour, will be among the members of the District Planning Board, besides representatives of Government Departments. The Boards will prepare development plans for their respective areas taking into consideration the local resources and readiness of the local people to contribute by way of labour, other services and money. The District Planning Committee will have the District Collector as its Chairman, a non-official as its Vice-Chairman, and the district representatives of the Government Departments in the District Planning Board as its members. The functions of this Committee will be to prepare material for the formulation of the district plans by the District Planning Board and also to supervise the allocation of specific programmes for execution by the various agencies in accordance with the district plan.

At the State level, there will be a State Planning Board and a State Planning Committee. The State Planning Board, of which the Hon'ble Chief Minister will be the Chairman, will have as its members all Hon'ble Ministers, ten Members of the Legislature from both the Houses, eighteen persons from amongst Economists, Scientists, Engineers, Doctors, Industrialists and financial, agricultural, labour and business interests, and the Chief Secretary to the Government. The Secretary to Government in the Development Department will be the Secretary of the Planning Board. The Board will be the chief consultative body to advise the Government on the broader questions of planning.

The State Planning Committee with the Chief Secretary as its Chairman and other Secretaries to Government among its members, will prepare and check material for the drawing up of a composite plan for the State and lay it before the Planning Board and the Government. It will be seen that this set-up was evolved primarily with a view to invite and enlist the maximum amount of active co-operation of the people at every level.

### Some Precedents

Madras has to her credit some pioneering measures in the sphere of mobilizing public support and co-operation. The essence of the Firka Development Scheme of the Government is to help the people to help themselves. Under this scheme, villagers come forward to build roads, dig wells, and provide other amenities, and themselves contribute towards this money, material and labour, receiving only a portion of the cost of the scheme as grant from Government. The noticeable success of this scheme has marked a great advance in the technique of securing the direct and active participation of the people in public affairs. The Manimuthar Project, towards the execution of which the ryots of

Tirunelveli have voluntarily loaned over a crore of rupees, is another shining example of the new spirit prevailing among the people, who have come to realize that, in a democracy, the degree to which they can participate in running the Government depends mostly on their own will to co-operate. The progress of the co-operative movement in this State has also helped to spread this spirit of co-operation and the zeal for constructive activities. Madras leads the country in the field of co-operation, the working capital of the co-operative movement in this State being more than even the revenues of the whole State. We in Madras have thus the background necessary to approach the task of planning, conscious of our responsibility and confident of success.

## Magnitude of the Plan

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The Magnitude of the National and State Plans is indicated in the statements below

### Government of India Plan (1951-'56)

Items of Revenue	In Crores of Rupees	Items of expenditure	In Crores of Rupees
1. Surplus on Revenue account ...	211	1. Agricultural Development ...	191.70
2. Resources normally set apart in Revenue account ...	393	2. Irrigation and Power ...	450.26
3. Resources available from Capital account for development ...	487	3. Transport and Communication ...	388.20
4. Resources available for railway development out of the ordinary revenues of railway ...	30	4. Industry ...	100.99
		5. Social Services ...	254.08
		6. Rehabilitation ...	79.00
		7. Miscellaneous ...	28.54
<b>Total ...</b>	<b>1,121</b>	<b>Total ...</b>	<b>1,492.77</b>

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