

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

RM - 34
Pilot Project in Rural
Development.

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Dear Mr. Rogers:

A village carpenter spoke frankly to me the other day. He had never seen me before, but after we had talked awhile he came to know I was American. At that he set down his adze, looked me over more carefully, and asked,

"Kya aap log hamare upar raj karne aenge? Well, are you people going to come to establish Raj over us? Ham ko phir ghulaam banaenge.....? Are you going to make us slaves again, as others did two hundred years ago?"

The Government employee accompanying me interrupted to point out that invaders have been imposing Raj on Hindustan for far longer than two hundred years. Raj - Rule - Government. Around the carpenter's village stretch flat, unbroken river plains, with no natural defenses as far as the eye can see. Much farther: to the Himalayas, to the Central Indian hills, to the great rivers near the Punjab. Invader after invader, once in the plains, has pushed over them. Army destroying army, emperor vanquishing emperor, petty raja replacing another of the same caste, tax-collector giving way to tax-collector. Raj after Raj.

The people of villages - carpenters, sweepers, farmers, cowherds, leather-workers - have passively accepted the changes of Raj. They have never in centuries been mobilized through "universal conscription" to resist invaders. Except for a few traditional martial clans, the people of the Gangetic Valley have never joined any great army to invade other lands. Nor have they ever felt as participating members of a "nation" organized to defend their country. Resignedly, they have plowed and toiled, while armies and Raj - in the past the personal Raj of a king - came and went.

The village carpenter now buys his metal tools from Kanpur or Delhi. His son is employed in a Kanpur textile mill. In these aspects his life reaches outward from the village. But it does not reach out to any control of Raj. Raj is still established by forces external to the carpenter, impinging on him from outside and aloof from influence by him.

The carpenter and his neighbors speak of the present era as "Congress Raj". True, the Congress succeeded to Raj by a novel path, by organization of Indians to drive out the foreigner. But only a relative few in the villages participated in the Congress movement and feel a sense of belonging to it. The carpenter, with

most villagers, is not a Congressman. With approval but with no action he has watched Congress replace the British. That has not given him any feeling that either Congress or the new Raj belong to him. He does not recognize the Government as his own. He, and his fellows, do not feel as nationals of a nation.

And so the carpenter asks, perhaps with an unconscious race memory, "Is another Raj soon going to replace Congress Raj?" He seems half to expect some new outsider to come in, because his plains are so open and unprotected and because change of Raj is such an elementary and normal event in his history. He does not stir to resist an invader. Such events have not been in his hands. Before them, or beneath them, he has been a spectator.

As we talked with the carpenter and his neighbors about their immediate environment, we learned further about the absence of initiative and participation by villagers in Government today. In electing village panchayat members, the carpenter recently had his first chance to vote. He and his friends agreed on their representatives, and he himself was chosen as panch, member of the village executive council. But as yet the panchayat has done nothing, and he has no suggestions as to what it might do. The elected panchayat is waiting for "Government" to tell it what to do.

What is Government itself doing for these villagers?

The nearest dispensary? "It is six miles away. But if we go there, it's a rupee to this man, eight annas to that: bribes."

Water for your crops? "Yes, the British Raj built a canal which commands part of our fields. But the canal authorities do not release water at proper times. Wheat here needs three irrigations in the season. This year we got water only once." It was implied that bribery had persuaded the lower-grade canal officials to favor villages further up-channel.

I asked if the new panchayats of the region could not elect a committee to which Government might assign power of inspection over the dispensary, to eliminate bribery and malpractices. The panch and his friends were pessimistic. "It will take much time before we learn our rights and become able to do such things for ourselves."

My companion explained later that as village menials these spokesmen were particularly lacking in self-confidence. More dominant villagers are hopeful that they can begin influencing Government. Some groups and individuals have long known handles with which Government action can be turned in their favor. But I find prevalent

among the majority, including many tenant farmers, the attitude of this panch and his neighbors. They are humble, small, lacking in techniques of organization. They have not known sympathy from Government and see little reason to repose faith in it.

For centuries, Government and the people in India have been largely separate bodies. Rural folk have been accustomed to orders, policing, tax-assessment and collection, social services, wartime controls, all from outside and above. In their turn, Government officials, though largely of rural origin, on entering Government ranks have found themselves on pedestals, benefitting from security, prestige, gratifications. "Naukarshahi", villagers sometimes term Government: "rule by petty officials". Advent of political freedom has not yet changed markedly the composition of the lower-grade Government service. Nor has its tone changed for the better. If anything, villagers charge it with being less responsible, honest and fair.

This heritage faces leaders aspiring to develop a rural civic consciousness in this province. Rural public and Government, separate and mutually suspicious. How to build through the gap? How to transform Government servants' aloofness, and to bring people into activities of Government, so that both may go forward in development of the country not as 'you' and 'they', but as "We" ?

The extension to rural areas of real national consciousness awaits such a change in outlook. And how can a food production drive gain headway with such poor ties between farmer and canal official or Government distributor of seeds?

Toward material and human development

Seven months ago, the United Provinces Government launched in this rural area an experimental development program which has as an essential element the fostering of the "We" outlook, the association of the people with Government in nation-building activities. It was to observe this program in operation that I recently spent two four-day periods in the area. Through conversations and observation in villages of the area I have learned something of the attitudes and methods of the Government development group and the problems they face. These I propose to describe in this letter.

Before visiting the project area, I had had several talks with Albert Mayer, the American whose conception the program largely is. Mayer's introduction and approach to the Indian rural scene determine much of the program's character, and so are worthy of mention.

Albert Mayer is a partner in a New York firm of architects and planners. During the recent war, he served in India as a field-grade officer with the United States Army. A sympathy with much of the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi quickened his natural interest in the future of India. As a builder, he noted the impressive river-valley and hydroelectric development projects which nationalist Indians hoped to undertake on gaining independence. Observation showed him, however, that shortages of capital and technical aid

would severely limit the extent to which such major projects could be undertaken in the early post-war years. He saw also that such river development could only indirectly and gradually affect the vast and fairly uniform geographic regions where tens of millions of rural folk now live. Towards both increased and diversified production and a revived community life, such populous agricultural regions needed intelligent and intense development work.

The United Provinces is such a region. Some 87,600 of its 104,000 villages, containing nearly 50,000,000 people, lie in about 83,130 square miles of alluvial plain falling gently from the Punjab to Bihar. Mayer saw possibilities of great improvement in existing techniques both of physical and human development among this vast population. Shortly after Jawaharlal Nehru's release from jail in 1945, Mayer met him at his Allahabad home, to discuss his ideas. After the Indian Interim Government was formed, Nehru asked Mayer to come back to India.

On Mayer's visits to India in 1946 and 1947, he studied existing rural development activities, both official and private. One of his findings was that excessive departmentalization hampered all the provincial Government's programs. Following his suggestions, the United Provinces Government started an administrative reorganization which brought together the work of the Development, Animal Husbandry and Agriculture, and Cooperative Departments.

Mayer's objective, however, was to make a nearly fresh start, with a new type of personnel, in a chosen area. He intended it, in the American term, as a 'pilot' project in planning and development, which would concentrate all its talents on a compact representative area in an effort to establish techniques and processes applicable to the broader area. On his third visit, last summer, he brought with him American specialists in agricultural extension, agricultural engineering, and town and village planning. These Americans, employed by the United Provinces Government, joined Indian rural specialists and administrative officers. After touring the province, the group finally selected as the 'pilot' development area a ten-by-six mile block containing 64 villages, in Etawah District.

This block was chosen as having agricultural and economic conditions neither too hard nor too easy, and as having serious erosion and waterlogging problems (and further potential erosion areas) which are fairly typical of those in about 12 other districts of the province.

Interviewing of personnel was started, and the development team moved to Etawah to start its work in early October, 1948, just a few weeks before fall plowing and sowing were due to take place.

The staggering scope and variety of innovations which Mayer and his colleagues programmed to introduce into these 64 villages, into the lives and work of 50,000 cautious, self-taught people, can in this letter only be named, without adequate description or analysis. A list of the physical activities mentioned at a two-and-a-half hour meeting of the Development Staff which I attended in early March indicates those already taken in hand, or about to be:

- Improved wheat seed: 939 maunds (maund: 84 lbs.) had been distributed in October, through a newly formed "Cooperative Union", to several hundred peasants, to be repaid in kind plus 25%. Staff discussed transport and payment problems involved in collecting the resulting grain to be stored for more extensive distribution as seed next season.

- Improved potato sprouts: 280 maunds distributed, together with new plowing methods resulting in more than double the old yield per acre, stimulating large demand among cultivators for these seeds next year. Marketing and transport problems considered by Staff.

- Fertilizers: limited amount distributed with seeds.

- Improved vegetable and fruit plants: distributed, resulting in only partial success, as poorly packed when shipped from Government horticultural gardens to Etawah.

- Roguing of wheat fields sown to improved variety, to eliminate mixture. Staff discussed personnel problem: Will employees of Agricultural Department deign to do the manual field work themselves? Or are they to be permitted, as in the past, only to supervise peasants in the work? (The American Chief of Operations cut this issue short the next afternoon, by going into the wheat field and starting roguing himself. At this example, the Department's employees had no choice but to set their own hands to the chore.)

- Two American-made mowing machines, just arrived to mow wheat fields of a large landowner. Adaptation possible only on particularly smooth field. Training of bullocks to the new machines necessary - and of Departmental personnel also.

- Artificial insemination: program discussed with veterinary from Government stock farm.

- Drive for proper composting of village manures:

underway in selected villages.

- "Stockmen", peasants chosen from each group of villages, had been trained to do vaccination and castration of local animals.

- Machine-pumping of water from Jumna River, for irrigation of riverain lands, had been started.

- Tube wells: surveying nearly completed in areas not adequately irrigated by canal waters.

- Bunding of Jumna-washed ravines, a major operation designed to check soil erosion about to start. Two bulldozers arrived by train today.

- Road building. Short dirt road to one village widened. Large road-grader engaged in building dirt road to Jumna, to give access for ravine work.

- Housing for Staff and offices: under construction at Mahewa, central village of development block. Import of labor for construction necessary from 150 miles away.

- Seed stores: to be constructed in second large village.

- Brick kiln: contemplated for building needs. Necessary land acquired. Contractor engaged, renigged, second engaged. Man sent to Kanpur for coal permit, almost impossible for rural residents to obtain.

- Cotton yarn: four tons obtained on permit in Kanpur, distributed through Cooperative Union to a community of handloom weavers whose work had been interrupted badly by post-war shortage of yarn.

- Tannery : to be built in villages of area already important for their leather-work. With help from Provincial Department of Industries, tannery training to be given to sons of leather-working castes.

- Carpentry instruction: to be given, particularly in construction of wooden oil-presses. Trees being purchased from grove owners for oil-presses.

- Sanitary wells: sunk in two villages for drinking

purposes. One reached water. Other temporarily halted as hard stratum reached and private contractor lost courage.

- Child welfare and maternity worker (female): to be recruited from urban center and housed in key village, to train village midwives.

- Village re-building: planned for one village. Estimated cost: Rs.26,000.

- Exposition, being organized for a central village, to publicize improvements already achieved.

That afternoon the Chief of Operations motored out to find suitable land for experimentation with reclamation of water-logged soil and washing out of injurious salts.

Not considered at the Staff meeting, but also in action in the development block, were:

- 30 Social Service Cadets, college graduates being trained in social service by the provincial Government, assigned for field experience to a key village and its environs. Their work:

- digging of sanitary soakage pits to control sewage and drainage from village houses and thereby clear the village lanes.

- widening of village lanes to enable passage by bullock cart or motor.

- adult literacy classes, using method devised by adult education specialist.

- distribution of medicines, and insecticides for control of scabies, rats, mosquitoes.

Really to appreciate the strenuous efforts demanded of the Development Team by their timetable, one must have awareness of the physical handicaps involved in working in rural India today. Climate, plus woeful shortages of supplies, trained personnel, housing and communications. In their introduction of technical change, the Development Staff is expected to work toward one of Mayer's central principles, namely, that if this experiment is eventually to be duplicated in a far wider area it must succeed by using, insofar as possible, material and equipment of a local or Indian origin. This is made imperative by lack of savings and budgetary resources for such programs and by India's lack of foreign exchange.

The concentration of physical changes attempted in the program derives from Mayer's belief in the need, both to the individual and the nation, of sharply increased productivity. Improved farming techniques, however, imply a more informed and skilled peasantry. Mayer sees in the application of material improvements the opportunity - as well as the necessity - of educating villagers to new levels of skills, and in some degree to new incentive for better living. Not only that. While Government is introducing improvements, why should it not do so in a friendly manner, with respect to the peasants' sensitivities? In fact, can such fundamental changes be carried through without careful tact on Government's part? If decency characterizes Government's approach, its officials will win the real good will of villagers that their beneficial activities warrant, and so the "We" outlook can take root and grow. Further, while bringing material help to villagers, should not their awakened incentives and their appreciation for Government's efforts be mobilized into a real drive for better health, sanitation, civic activity, in short for an awakened community life?

In his 'pilot' project, Mayer lays much stress on such human development - many of the components of which were already being attempted, separately, by United Provinces Government Departments, but some of which are new. It is necessary to mention here that not all the physical innovations attempted are proving completely suitable, nor are all moving smoothly even from the technical standpoint. But these are lessons - in selection of equipment, in timing - that the Development group is learning by trial. It is to the human emphasis of the project that I now wish to turn.

Careful selection of Development team personnel, at all levels, was naturally a prerequisite. At least the beginnings of a democratic social attitude was an important qualification in the men chosen. The team's closest and most constant contact with village residents is through eight "Village Level Development Organizers", each responsible for eight villages. Their relations with villagers are of fundamental significance for the growth of the "We" outlook. Each organizer is young, has had two years' agricultural schooling, and was selected partly for his adaptiveness. At the outset of the project, these village level organizers were given a two-week orientation course to stimulate their interests in aspects of community life beyond the purely agricultural. In these weeks, the habit of working with the public, rather than directing the public, was emphasized.

Coordinating and activating the work of the village level organizers is a "Village Participation Officer", a man experienced in the old publicity type of public relations. Through visits to villages, lectures, showing of films, discussion with village residents of concrete local problems, this individual tries to enlist public support and stimulate self-help. As an educative move, he has brought villagers into the Development center to see exhibits of anticipated improvements, and has taken small groups of farmers to more distant agricultural colleges and fairs.

Although Albert Mayer suggests that Development personnel and innovations may act as "catalysts" in stirring local residents to activity for self-help, he sees the process not as automatic but as one requiring conscious study of human wishes and responses to physical changes. To conduct such constant study, a "Rural Life Analyst" has been from the start a key member of the Development team. The post is held by a man of village origin who has had considerable teaching experience and recently did two years' studying at Harvard University, in Education and Sociology. His function, in the language of the plan, is to interpret the culture and life of the villagers to the technicians, and to guide the pace of technical innovations to meet their evolving acceptance by villagers. Aided particularly through observations by this "Rural Life Analyst", it is intended that the project will be true "action-research", with regular reporting and evaluation of results to enable adjustment of the program to human reactions, and to meet new needs created by change. To interpret between highly skilled technician and intelligent but unschooled village farmers is the high challenge offered to the Rural Life Analyst.

"With this man, we can go ahead...."

Come out of the language of the plan into dusty village lanes and the stubble of wheat fields. Here you meet Raghubir Singh, Village Level Development Organizer, who has risen before sunrise to cycle to a neighbor's village to work with him in planting sugar cane setts in a better way. "We're here to help people", Raghubir explains. "A few days ago I carried some ammonium sulphate on my cycle in from the road to this farmer, who had no other transport. Services like this gain his confidence in me. So he listens when I suggest a new system of planting."

Raghubir is a friendly, open-faced lad of 22, living with his wife and a bright-eyed nephew in the home of a prominent cattle owner in a village central in his eight-village block. I spent a night with him. As we sat at noon in the warm front room, while his wife prepared our meal, village people stopped for a moment's gossip. Some wanted medical help. First-aid, from a small medicine chest, is a regular service which Raghubir obligingly performs, free, for people six miles from a dispensary.

When the sun lowered, toward evening, Raghubir and I walked out to talk to men driving their bullocks over grain-laden straw on the threshing floors. We learned their opinion on the yield of improved wheat seed which they had obtained through "Development". "One thing", the farmers invariably told us, "the new wheat doesn't fall as quickly as our country wheat does. But we didn't get enough water this winter. So it is light." And they showed

us the slightly shriveled kernels.

Then the farmers talked helpfully with Raghubir about collecting the best grain of improved fields to be stored for next year's seeding. They are just beginning to feel responsibility themselves for the success of Raghubir's work and for the extension of improved seeding.

Raghubir Singh is on the go. He spots villagers' needs and helps them. He has their respect and good will. They have faith in him as an individual. Their faith in "Development", the Government organization for which Raghubir works, is not yet as firm. "How long will this scheme last for our help? That is our doubt", said some tenant farmers to me. "We can not come wholly into Development work until we know the program has some permanence." They are careful on commitments. Not sure whether Raghubir's successor will be as honest and understanding as he. Not fully confident yet of "Development's" motives. Not feeling control or influence over Government.

But a start has certainly been made here.

"This is a Government order"

Elsewhere, I witnessed in crude form the old type of Government versus public clash, which this project seeks to eliminate. The Government servant involved had just arrived in the pilot area. No one had yet told him that in the new India, and at least in this project, a new spirit toward villagers was to be shown. He did not yet know that as a Government representative he was to consider himself a servant of the people.

Walking in from the bank of the Jumna, I had come on the two bulldozers in action for the first day, widening the present road and cutting a new road. Among men, women and children of the nearby village, great commotion, as they saw for the first time such monster machines in their fields. Suddenly a gnarled, gaunt peasant came before me, alternately leaning on and brandishing a heavy staff. "They will ruin my field!" he exclaimed. That was apparent. A few rods away the bulldozers were passing a red flag. Threateningly, they came to his field's edge, paused. Strode into the field the foreman of the bulldozer crew, a tall man in western clothes. "Why did you pull out the flags?" he charged in urban Hindustani. "Our line through this field was marked and measured. Now that you've taken out the flags we'll have to go through by eye." He sighted on a tree, signalled to the driver to come on into the field.

The peasants spoke right back, with the excuse that children had pulled out the flags by mistake. "Your line by eye is taking too much of our land", they shouted. Even as the bulldozer tore up the land they protested vigorously! And I saw why. This field had already been sown to sugarcane, a laboriously expensive task in field preparation and planting.

Excited children rushed to retrieve sugar setts unearthed by the heavy machines, setts not yet sprouted. Now they were of value only to children.

The irate peasants continued to argue with the foreman. Then he closed it, with a decisive last word: "This is Government work. It is ordered by Government. It must go on, without delay."

The gnarled old farmer had a surprisingly apt reply: "We are all Government now." But he said it without confidence, tentatively, as though the phrase had been passed on to him from some political leader's speech but had yet to be demonstrated to him in practice. His tone, resentful, sounded more like, "Aren't we all Government now?" Apparently not very directly, for the machine had plowed ahead without making sure of the route and with no prior arrangement for compensation for damage done.

In this incident, "interpretation" between technician and villager was totally lacking. The clash could hardly have been more blunt. It showed Government at its former worst, driving peasants resentfully inward into the isolation of self-protection.

As soon as the Chief of Operations of the Development project heard my account, he motored into the fields to catch up with this uninitiated foreman and to try to make amends to the farmers for what had been done. Thus the new spirit overtook and replaced the old.

An educational morning

Another morning, spent with the Rural Life Analyst, showed me in action the intended process of "interpretation". Wherever possible, it is the policy of the pilot project to meet first the "felt needs" of village people, to adjust the program to meet problems which for the villager have importance, even if of secondary nature in the eyes of the planners. By meeting felt needs, not only is the villager's confidence enlisted but also his participation may be gained. On this morning, in village Mukadpur, I saw a fine performance by Rudra Dutt Singh, the Rural Life Analyst, in making a felt need articulate and harnessing it to action.

Rudra and I walked into Mukadpur past a village tank (pond), now approaching its lowest dry-weather level. At the chabutra of a

vegetable-grower (chabutra: low mud verandah fronting the mud house), we paused. Looking at the tank and gazing over the surrounding landscape, Rudra casually asked the vegetable-grower, "How far does the water rise during the rainy season?"

At once, a rush to answer. "The water fills the lane. It covers my steps to here" - he pointed to a dark line on the mud steps. "Water flows through the whole lane. On some houses, beyond there, it comes above the chabutra. To get to the fields the owner has to wade nearly to his waist. Children are always in danger of going under." He warmed to his recitation, turning to me to finish: "It is like living in Death, during the rains."

We had struck a felt need, as was the intention of Rudra Dutt Singh.

We proceeded from the vegetable-growers' quarter to that of the untouchables, leather-workers and sweepers. Again a simple question: "Where does the water reach on your chabutra?" Again each individual poured out the difficulties experienced by him personally. So on we went, into the higher caste section of the village, to cowherds, Thakurs, Brahmins at last. We were followed by a growing group of people, two or three from each village quarter. Passing two more tanks, we learned the rainy season history of each.

Then, as we listened to the story of how the villagers had deepened one tank, after two houses had been washed away in August some years ago, a blaze of controversy suddenly flamed forth from those around us. "He is lying to you, lying", a man interrupted hoarsely. "It is not true", shouted another, pushing himself to the fore. And so we found that tank-deepening and earth-laying accomplished by one section of the village had worsened the condition of others. Discussion flared very hot among four or five men, each asserting the needs of his own house. By merely listening, we had brought to the surface a source of serious strife, which sets members of this community to quarrelling each rainy season.

Rudra Dutt Singh heard all the shouting impassively, commenting not at all on the controversial issues, but keeping discussion going with simple fact-finding questions as we walked finally toward the home of the village landlord. This elderly and influential individual had recently been elected as panchayat sirpanch. In his presence, a man of each village group now summarized the flood position as seen from his own quarter. By inquiring about the recent past, we found that the original cause of this hardship for the entire village was the construction, about 20 years

back, of the metalled road and the canal, which blocked the natural drainage to the Jumna and forced the heavy monsoon waters to lie on fields and flow into the village.

Thus the village, a community of about 750 people, had been a victim of major operations of the Public Works and Canal Departments, Government bodies with all the resources of Government at their command. The village, with no skills and limited resources, had not been strong enough to correct the new drainage situation.

As our discussion continued, three young Social Service Cadets joined our group. In neat, short sleeved shirts and pants, keenly interested in our problem, they represented a new India, an India willing to go to the villages, learn village ways and outlook, help where possible. Here they were learning through the "case" method, a case in intra-community conflict and need, as conducted by Rudra Dutt Singh. Certainly these young cadets were benefitting from his judicious handling of the heated moments of the discussion and the example of his patient, impartial attention to each man's statement.

This was a relatively easy conflict in which to progress. As Rudra pointed out, the poor drainage caused many years ago handicapped all quarters of the village, and demanded joint action. By this time, he had heard from all sides and had thus made all present interested participants in whatever solution seemed to appear. He then offered his suggestion, to the sirpanch and the group.

"The first need", Rudra said, "is accurate measurement of land to find the slope and the best drainage outlet. We can have a surveyor come in for that work. Then ditches will have to be dug. With earth from the ditches, village lanes can be filled up to a higher level. If done as a whole, everyone in the village will gain." That was clear to all, and they expressed agreement. He repeated this again, adding, "Development will survey the land, if your panchayat will agree to do the digging. Then each individual can fill in the lane in front of his own house."

The word digging raised mild protests. "Can't you bring in Development's machines to do our digging?"

Rudra's answer was excellent. "Look at our problems", he said. "Our country has a bad food shortage. Government has had to spend crores of rupees to buy grain from America and other countries. We needed that very money to buy machines. Government has now decided that we must try first of all to grow more food. We

are using the machines some of you have seen at Mahewa to build bunds, to open more land for growing food. For the present, our machines and petrol must go to the production of more food. When we can produce all the food needed in Hindustan, we will be able to cut our purchases from abroad. With this saving, we will be able to buy the new machines and equipment which we need to build our country." This was in clearcut terms, logical to all hearers, who were soberly listening and considering these problems of their nation. A basic problem confronting India, the nation, was made real for these twenty or twenty-five men, real in terms of food, real in terms of machines which must not be used for secondary purposes, the draining of their village, until primary purposes had been fulfilled.

So they acknowledged, though somewhat tentatively at first, that the digging and moving of earth must be done by their own labor. Rudra promised that a surveyor would soon be sent, to accomplish the preliminaries.

It seemed to me that a good morning's work had been done. A concrete civic problem had been laid bare, representative citizens participating, and a course of common action generally accepted. Besides, they had felt, perhaps for the first time, the overall problems of India as their problems, as acutely affecting their own lives and work.

And then, in my judgment, some of the gain was forfeited, some of the confidence broken, the purposes muddled, by a few more sentences from Rudra Dutt Singh. "Your village will get a big name", he was saying, "if you get this done rapidly. People will come to see it from other villages.. We will have Mukadpur written about in the press."

His listeners said nothing. But I felt faces grow less generous, more questioning. The action's purpose, after all, was village comfort and safety. Beside this, what value had a "big name"? I felt minds uneasily retreating.

Rudra continued, as men watched him closely. "Perhaps you know we are holding an exhibition next month in the village beyond yours. Important people will come: our Development Commissioner, and perhaps the Minister for Development himself, Malaviyaji. They will see your village. Try to get ahead with the work to show them what you can do."

Though still nothing was said, to me the heavy silence spoke: "What's your motive, mister? Are you really trying to help us? Or do you just want to have something to show your superior, the Minister?"

Motive is of vital importance to a villager. If his visitor seems genuinely selfless, the villager accepts him as friend and confidant. If a hidden motive seems possible, the villager at once throws up a mask of reserve and caution. Unless my senses are all wrong, that mask of caution, that instinct to test thoroughly all Government schemes and personnel, came back to the village group as Rudra talked about "a big name" and big political leaders.

Still, the morning had seen a positive advance. If Rudra's last words awakened doubts, his earlier ones had awakened the vision of real easing of a village hardship. The men will carry through the drainage project, and perhaps in doing so will gain added faith in Government and in each other.

Persuasion or Force?

In seven months, only a start can be made in changing ingrained mental and emotional attitudes and relationships. It is a good sign that incidents such as I have described above showed me a democratic social spirit in members of the Development team. They do not look on villagers with condescension, or speak of their work as "village uplift", as some social workers used to do. Instead, they take time to understand village problems and work patiently together with peasants toward realistic betterment.

Nor do they believe that change of village mores can or should be rudely forced. Rudra stated to me his principle of action: "If we have as our end a democratic citizenry accustomed to effect change through educative and persuasive means, then clearly our project must not use other means, following the false lure of quick results."

Adoption of this principle does win villagers' response, as has been shown, for example, by the introduction of sanitation pits and clean lanes by the Social Service Cadets. As they dug in a central village, the cadets carefully explained to householders the spread of disease through filth and flies. "These pits and clean lanes are the first and best preventive you have against common village illnesses", they urged. The germ theory is of course not known by most villagers, and not accepted at once on faith. But in this village, householders did believe the cadets' guidance. Gradually, they themselves took up mattocks and joined the digging. When they understood the reason for the work, they participated, and it is a safe bet that many of them will maintain these sanitary improvements because they understand their value.

This village's example spread. After a few weeks, men of a nearby village wrote a petition to the cadets. "We know that cleanliness prevents disease. Will you please come to our village and show us how to dig sanitation pits?"

The value of educative means was apparent.

Unfortunately, the times are somewhat impatient of persuasion. The pilot project is under some pressure to get things done rapidly. The Minister for Development is naturally part of that pressure, which comes upon him in turn from the political need that Government schemes show results, and derives from the general economic and social stresses India is undergoing. Under this pressure, the Development team has not always found itself able to hold to the principle of meeting felt needs and effecting change through persuasion. Force has come into some of its operations.

This I saw in a group where Rudra Dutt Singh himself played a role.

Street-widening was the operation. In neighboring villages, Social Service Cadets had persuasively obtained permission of individual householders to cut away parts of the chabutra to provide clearance for bullock carts, in an effort to improve transport facilities in the interior regions. Verandah versus lane. Space in the village is so crowded that one of the two must suffer. Individual (verandah - a place of sleeping, chatting, work) versus society (lane). Individual recognizes that he gains as a member of the community. But in many cases one can literally see him weighing the issue: to be social, or hold to my verandah. In the earlier villages, recalcitrant individuals usually yielded before the example of their more social neighbors, and eventually joined the Social Service Cadets in their labors.

But in a village I visited with Rudra, many householders were individualistic and stubborn. They were faced, however, with a formidable group of visitors: Rural Life Analyst, Village Participation Officer, adult literacy director, three Social Service Cadets, and an influential local Congress leader from whom Development has drawn support in winning villager cooperation. I was such a passive onlooker that I don't believe I, the only white man, added much weight to our numbers, but even without me the visiting group was rather overwhelming in its numbers and status. Adding to its power, the Congressman was of an abrupt and aggressive nature.

The group examined village lanes, decided key areas should be widened, with each householder to yield his due share of verandah space. Lanes were measured, lines drawn. But no householder was

willing to yield. They stood by their doorways unenthusiastically.

How to break the impasse? The Congressman, bustling from threshold to threshold, finally stopped at the house of a washerman, a man of low caste and low prestige. By cajoling, and then by chopping a bit himself with a mattock, the Congressman finally got the washerman to cut away about eight inches of his verandah. One by one, a few other low caste men followed suit. For the more stubborn higher castes, more direct action was necessary. With hardly a word of permission, the Congressman chopped, directed Social Service Cadets to chop, dragged one householder to the line and persisted until the man made a token cut of earth with his own hands.

A few householders of their own initiative cut away their porchs, and perhaps 40% of those we saw acquiesced fairly willingly in the process. But a majority were definitely sullen, as action went ahead disregarding them. Far more force and pressure was used than persuasion. As we left, half-cut verandahs and blocked lanes remained to be cleared up by the village itself.

Here the villagers felt no real need for wider lanes. They were forced to accept them because the Development plan required it, and because in this instance the Rural Life Analyst and others were unwilling to wait until the village itself wished the change. But how resentfully they must have grumbled as they cleared up the debris and finished the half-left job. I am sure that Development alienated them, rather than befriending. Not only did the "We" atmosphere seem lacking; there was also no attempt to inform villagers of the beneficial results to be expected of wider lanes. As these results can only be indirect and gradual, it seems likely that the village will let the lanes quickly fall into disrepair, and if left to themselves individuals will rebuild their verandahs by the end of the next rainy season.

So the value of force is questionable in this instance. Rudra himself recognizes the schism between what he thinks should be done and by what he feels pressed to do. "In Staff meetings, I usually counsel against use of force. But sometimes we have to get things done faster than we should."

It struck me that this mixed approach would hold work back, in the real sense, because it would retard village cooperation and participation. The rural areas here are populous, and are capable of swallowing outside efforts alien to their nature. (Not through violence, but by ignoring them in the endless passage of

time.) By similar measure, what could not be accomplished with the willing participation of these great numbers?

A new day?

I could go on to mention further details which I believe need correction in the pilot project. But on the whole my impression is optimistic. On the underlying principle of intelligent and friendly villager participation, most of the Development team base their work. And they are hard-working, some of them almost dedicated to the success of this mission and method. No villager will fail to recognize and respect this quality, and as the team demonstrate and explain to him the more novel innovations, he will be increasingly willing to give them a try.

Far-reaching transport, marketing, consumption and labor changes must follow the significant production increase eventually anticipated by the Development plan. Those conducting it seem to have an eye forward for such transitional dislocations and fresh demands on the economic system. In preparing for these too, they plan toward increased village resourcefulness, partly through cooperatives, so that villagers will grow in capacity relative to Government, rather than weaken.

The independence of India has not yet had material effects in the rural zone. Both toward such physical improvement and toward a dramatically new consciousness among villagers of their responsibilities and privileges as nationals of a new nation, this United Provinces 'pilot' undertaking offers refreshingly concrete possibilities.

Sincerely yours,

Richard Morse

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