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Bahawalpur House
New Delhi, India
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(Written in Miran Shah,
Northwest Frontier Prov.)

Mr. Walter S. Rogers
522 Fifth Avenue
New York 18, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Rogers:

The major influences on me during my first week in India have been: a) Phil Talbot; b) thinking people whom I have met mainly as a result of introductions from Phil; c) quick impressions of the clean spaciousness of New Delhi and the filthy congestion of Old Delhi; d) the foreign correspondents in India with whom I've been dining at the Imperial Hotel; and, e) the experience of preparing a ten-minute talk at the invitation of All-India Radio, to explain why I am in India.

Of these, the first two have had most significance for my immediate plans. As a suggested program, Phil had prepared, before my arrival, a short memo which drew on his own experiences in becoming a regional specialist in Indian affairs. To start with, he proposed, I should make an eight to ten weeks' tour of the whole country, with a week in each major province and state. To make the tour significant, I should choose some subject which would serve as a thread of study, something to focus my attention on which would provide me with a definite topic for questions and discussion during my encounters with people. He suggested two such topics: the impact of the war on industrial labor; and the demobilization of soldiers and their re-settlement in civilian life. Apart from bringing me in contact with as many ordinary people as possible, an investigation of either topic would enable me to meet government officials, trade unionists, social service workers, employers, and political figures. At the end of the period I should prepare a report on the subject studied, but the journey would be primarily impressionistic, serving, in Phil's words, "to develop in Morse a sensitivity for people and their personal problems, a comprehension of the vastness and variety of this country, and particularly a 'feel' for the dynamic as well as the static factors in Indian society." It would also probably provide me with ideas and problems for a study period of at least five years!

The second stage of my training proposed by Phil would consist of an intensive study period of six to eight months, using the tutorial system to work on Indian history, economics, and religion, and to start the study of Urdu (Hindustani). Following that, I would have a more sound footing upon which to evaluate current political tendencies and the personalities exercising leadership in Indian affairs. Subsequently, I could undertake a concentrated and exhaustive investigation of any of numerous key Indian problems, such as changes in the land tenure system, or communal tension studied regionally and in the whole nation - to name only two typical possibilities.

As a whole, an approach of this sort seemed sensible to me. Phil's own arguments for making a preliminary tour were: first, that he himself had had no such wide experience during his first several months in India, to his regret; and, second, that a general picture of India would be valuable to me during my later studies. My own reaction, a personal one, was that my entire previous experience has been academic, and that if I am to succeed in the program of becoming a student of contemporary life it is essential that I acquire the reportorial technique of meeting many people easily and gathering information from them. Therefore, though academic work at first would be easier, the investigational tour would be more challenging and more meaningful. It would also give me a circle of acquaintances and, I hope, friends, throughout India.

So I inclined toward Phil's suggestion. The next step was to choose a topic of study which on the one hand would have some significance yet, on the other, would not be so vital and complex that a serious and exhaustive study must be made. In the course of discussing this point I met a group of Phil's friends who possess the constructive spirit and the feel of contributing to worthwhile progressive activities that I had hoped to find in India.

While briefing myself on the resettlement program for demobilized soldiers, I met three sincere and forward-looking men: Peter Wright, a Britisher who came originally to India as a social service worker in the industrial slum city of Cawnpore, and who later served as an officer in the Indian Army; Captain T. Ramchandra, whose pre-army experience was some twenty years of social service work in south India, especially among the untouchables; and Brigadier Trevor Cotton, at present Regional Director-General of the Resettlement and Employment Directorate for the New Delhi region. It was these men who first thought of the problem of the demobilized soldier in India. Because of their initiative a program along the following lines was started: a) a group of "Advice Officers" (the U.S. Army called them "Information and Education Officers) was trained at the centre and sent to discharge centers to brief the 'demobs' on future governmental assistance for them; b) for the first time in Indian history, a series of regional and sub-regional employment exchanges was set up, with managers trained in New Delhi by experts from the United Kingdom; c) technical and vocational schools have been started throughout the provinces, with enough coordination and standardization of courses at the centre so that, for example, the abilities of a man who qualified as a second-grade welder in Bombay would resemble those of a similar worker in the United Provinces; d) special programs were instituted for aiding disabled veterans; and, e) plans were made for the expansion of industry to absorb the discharged men. The above program looks fine on paper. Unfortunately, because of personal conflicts and poor organizational structure, several of the phases are only now getting under way efficiently. More important, industry is not converting and expanding rapidly enough to absorb the discharges, so that the employment exchanges succeed in finding positions for only some 15% of the applicants. The problem is serious and would be interesting as a subject for country-wide inquiry.

A topic suggested by Mr. Tarlok Singh, however, seemed to me more suitable. Described by Phil Talbot as "one of the few really good thinkers among the

young Indians whom I know," Tarlok Singh has had a distinguished career in the Indian Civil Service, devoting his particular attention to the rural economy and to a program for the development of agricultural cooperatives. At present he is Private Secretary to the Honorable Member for External Affairs in the Interim Government, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. I felt almost guilty, incidentally, of taking Tarlok Singh's time in three short visits. The tremendous pressure of the efforts of these men to build a new government in an old country is evident in the office of Nehru's secretary, who says Nehru "just doesn't know the meaning of relaxation."

Nevertheless, Tarlok Singh has taken a great interest in my project. As an economist, he believes that the way a man makes his living is the most important single factor in his life. He therefore proposed that I visit villages and cities in several important regions making the inquiry, "What do the people do here?"

It may be argued that a census return would give the same information. But I feel that actual investigation of such a fundamental question will give me a more direct personal understanding of Indian life. It will naturally be a preliminary understanding, neither all-inclusive nor final. But it will give me a fairly solid notion of the natural resources and the stage of their development in typical regions. Village life in particular will become clearer to me, and I will get an idea of the changes that are taking place, such as the shift of population from villages to towns and its effects. So next week I will start out in the Punjab, where I plan to spend ten days visiting two or three districts. Then, after a few days' further discussion in New Delhi, I will start the tour of the rest of the country.

At present I am with Phil Talbot and Mr. Andrew Freeman of the New York Post spending a week in the Northwest Frontier Province. I'm learning a good bit about reportorial technique, and as well am joining in their study of the large tribal area between British India and the so-called border of Afghanistan. The immediate reason for their study is Nehru's presence here, but this is a delicate and complex subject, rather a unique introduction to India for me, and I'll certainly devote my next letter to it.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Morse