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New York 18, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Picture a vast tent city in the Rajputana sands, under the silent eye of a lofty 18th century palace fort atop a nearby Aravalli hill. Bring to the tents tens of thousands of visitors and participants from all parts of the Indian Union. Energize these men and women for five days' walking, talking and listening at agricultural and home industries exhibits, political conferences, mass political rallies, recreational dance and artistic programs, sight-seeing tours and pilgrimage to neighboring temples. There you have the Jaipur Session of the Indian National Congress, fifty-fifth in Congress history, first in a free India. A mela, many people termed the phenomenon: a mixing of peoples. No more specific word seems to define it.

A mixing of purposes, methods, and moods, I would add, no one of them clearly dominant. The Congress, a nationalist political organization. Still the confused vehicle of many urges. Still, even after the death of Gandhi, containing self-sacrificing men of principle whose activity in politics springs solely from their sense of citizenship duty, who maintain purity of means to a fine extreme. On the other hand, now more than ever a vehicle for self-seekers lured by the prestige, power and privilege of office in the Raj. Manned in great numbers by persons in between, confused village and ward workers anxious to improve their country but lacking a clear and forward lead. Still, despite the withdrawal of the Socialists early in 1948, a front representing all economic interests, though influenced most heavily by capitalist and business groups. Still leaning on the capitalist-owned nationalist press for publicity support. A body overwhelmingly Hindu in numbers and influence, inclined to favor Hindu wishes, but proclaiming and striving to maintain the ideal of politics and nation-building free from religious conflicts. A mixture, unduly dependent on two men, Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel, and on the revered memory of Mahatma Gandhi, for its continued cohesion and strength. In December of 1948, a party responsible for governing more people than any other political organization in the world.

At Jaipur I stayed among citizen visitors to the Congress Session. Like the farm owner and traders from Lucknow with whom I shared a tent, I made no contact with top leaders. I saw the proceedings as a spectator, discussed them with my neighbors in the audience and with party delegates whom I have known in Lucknow, Delhi and rural areas. From that background, my observations.

The some 3000 party delegates to this Congress session - lawyers, doctors, landowners, newspapermen, college teachers, traders, many of them full time political workers - were the same men who attended the last session, in November, 1946, minus the Socialists and those who still lived in Pakistan, plus new members from States Peoples Parties, now merged in the parent body. Since the 1945-46 enrollment of primary party members and elections by them, there had been no fresh election of delegates. Though the new 1948 Congress Constitution imposes strict character and activity qualifications for delegates, time has been too short to implement these provisions completely. Delegates were accepted to the present session on their own avowal that they fulfilled the qualifications, without scrutiny by party disciplinarians.

These delegates had met in their home provinces and states in June last to re-elect one-eighth of their numbers to the All India Congress Committee, the party's 'legislature'. In October, in the first contested Congress presidential election since 1939 (with no Gandhi to propose a candidate and to insist on unanimity), 1,199 delegates had voted for Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya of Madras, against 1,085 for Purshottamdas Tandon of United Provinces. Dr. Sitaramayya, Congress historian and long President of the State Peoples' Conference, was accordingly in the chair at Jaipur.

I know of no attempt to discern party opinion trends in the turnover in All India Congress Committee membership in the June elections. Individual personal issues tend to cloud general ideological variety. The narrowly decided presidential contest has been considered suggestive of Congress activity in the coming year. Tandon, defeated largely by votes of southern provinces and of the states (though yielding also a heavy bloc of votes in his home province), is a Hindu whom Muslims consider over aggressive. Sitaramayya, unlike Tandon, is a close follower of Gandhi. From the successful conclusion of most state peoples' struggles against their rulers, he carries a certain momentum and decisiveness to his new job.

As expected by all, the Jaipur Session showed that real initiative, strength and influence in the party rests as for many years within the fifteen-man Congress Working Committee appointed by the outgoing president, leading members of which today occupy the top posts in government. The Working Committee had met in New Delhi a week earlier to write the party program, in soberly worded resolutions expounding current policy of the Congress and its governments on a wide range of affairs, including foreign affairs, economic program, labour, rehabilitation of refugees, communal conflicts, and the states. At Jaipur, the All India Congress Committee considered these resolutions for two and a half days without carrying any amendment against the wishes of the Working Committee. With one exception, the procedure was almost machine-like: resolution moved; amendments offered with a short speech by the mover; lengthy explanation and defense of original resolution by Nehru, Patel, Govind Ballabh Pant (United Provinces Premier), Shankarrao Deo (General Secretary of the Congress), or other leaders; vote and defeat of all amendments; vote and acceptance of resolution.

The strength of Nehru and Patel stood out in this process. The Prime Minister, explaining his foreign policy with reference to his long personal acquaintance with world events. The Deputy Prime Minister, analyzing his states' policy in terms of power, in tough, effective Hindustani phrases lightened by flashes of dry humor at his opponents' expense. One saw the two bolstering and correcting each other, in perhaps unconscious teamplay. At one time, Nehru in sensitive, upset temper ruffled the members' feelings; Patel's controlled and calming counsel brought temperatures to normal. Later, when Patel had handled an India-Pakistan issue in blunt and somewhat challenging terms, Nehru opened the subject again and set it forth in careful, tactful, statesmanlike and constructive analysis.

Premier Pant, after Nehru and Patel the most impressive and effective speaker, gave strong tribute to their importance: "But for Jawaharlal and Sardar Patel, it would be impossible for us to look with hope to our country's future."

Such dominance does not promote growth of responsible initiative on the part of lesser political leaders. And the session's procedure, while allowing presentation of amendments - many of which reflected public feelings - did not permit their sustained discussion on their full merits, or organized support. Further, the sole amendment passed (in the absence of Nehru and Patel from the session) was later reconsidered and rejected at Nehru's personal insistence.

When a political worker arrives at a conclusion on a social or economic issue facing his constituency, he wants his stand to have influence on party policy. There was therefore dissatisfaction in the All India Congress Committee, and criticism from the public, at this refusal of top leaders to accept amendments and criticism from the floor. The atmosphere, I felt, seemed to choke the development of grass roots representation and secondary leadership.

But enough of the session's procedure. The substance of three key resolutions also had to do with the future of the Congress organization.

First, a re-statement of objective. "Political freedom having been attained through non-violent action under the leadership of Gandhiji, the National Congress has now to labour for the attainment of social and economic freedom so that progress and equal opportunity may come to all..." In the light of Gandhi's message, Congress should continue "working for a classless democratic society in a peaceful manner."

Next, the torch of criticism turned inwards. "Unfortunately, contact with power has affected many Congressmen...The spirit of disinterested service and constructive work for the public cause gradually ceases to be the motive power which moves large numbers of people." Patel, in heavy tones: "We have proved unworthy of our master. Our spirit is deadened." Acharya Kripalani, former President, in sober arraignment: "We have not understood his message...The people are ready to give (to the Gandhi National Memorial Fund). It is a strange and sad

fact that Congressmen now do not go to the people." Abuse of government power, bribery and evasion of controls were condemned. "Congressmen must always beware of getting any special facilities, financial or other, for themselves or for their friends and relatives." Moving the resolution, Shankarrao Deo warned, "I have no doubt that our standards of conduct are now a matter of life or death for the Congress." Internal reforms, he emphasized, were essential.

The audience welcomed this self-examination by the Congress, which reflected much current public disillusionment and dissatisfaction at self-aggrandizing Congressmen.

Finally, re-statement and demonstration of the ideal means of political progress: constructive public service. In "Exhibit for the Commonwealth", five hundred Gandhian constructive workers had built an impressive demonstration of what has already been done to revive village life. Several acres of pleasantly designed thatch buildings housed improved tools and products of village industries, agricultural aids, a basic education school, health and sanitation techniques, and so on. Here, for the Congressman or visitor ready to search, were many things of value for national development. Shankarrao Deo's resolution called on Congressmen to renew their service through some phase of this constructive program, and thus "to renew and revitalize the Congress itself".

Some visitors dismissed the exhibit as only propaganda for the Congress and its governments. (Accomplishments of provincial governments were included in the exhibit. The Lucknow National Herald later criticized this display of government activities at a party function. India is not a one-party state, but a tendency exists to identify party with state. Some Congress acts abet the tendency rather than educating the public toward clear concepts of democracy.) But beyond mere propaganda, party leaders hoped the exhibit would teach and inspire. It could not fail to do so, to some extent.

In their words, and in directives from the Working Committee and President Sitaramayya since the session, one finds the concept - now more forcefully pushed than in recent years - of Congress as a body holding its mandate by virtue of concrete individual service by its workers. Nationalist parties usually weaken sooner or later under the stress of different economic interests. Congress leaders are apparently trying to add to nationalism a core of service by party workers toward Gandhi's ideals, thus to tie together representatives of different economic and social groups and 'evolve' rather than fight toward economic freedom for all.

Recent directives of the new president foreshadow a stricter discipline of Congressmen's conduct and a closer checkup on their activities toward public service than the past few years have seen. If vigorously followed through, it is not too late for such reform to cleanse the present soiled reputation and give fresh luster to the

organization. This in itself, I believe, will not suffice for real renewal of party morale. Various types of increased encouragement to local and young workers, plus increased attention by policy-makers to the representations of local workers, seem to me needed if Congress grass roots activity is to gain robustness, which in many areas it does not now have.

Yours sincerely,

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