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50 YEARS OF DEMOCRACY IN INDIA

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{E. Balanandan M.P. and President, CITU raised a discussion on the working of our Parliamentary Democracy in the last 50 years in Rajya Sabha on 29-8-97 Here is an extract from his speech (Editor)}

Today, while we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Independence, we are engaged in a debate about the working of the Parliamentary system in the country. This opportunity provided through this Special Session is utilised to make an objective analysis of the gains that we have made and the drawbacks that have to be overcome to enable us to work out a correct perspective.

This is a solemn occasion to remember the immense sacrifices made by countless people belonging to different streams of national movement in the cause of freedom. Valiant fighters have laid down their lives and we also record the sufferings that thousands of people had to undergo to liberate our motherland from foreign yoke. Braving brutal violence and military bullets thousands upon thousands went to jail and made tremendous sacrifices. It is through this struggle and sacrifices that the country attained freedom.

While various streams combined together to make the national movement a success, the role played by Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, in our national movement, needs a special mention. It is Mahatma Gandhi who mobilised millions of people throughout the country and rallied them in the struggle for freedom.

Though there are several limitations, the Constitution framed by the elder statesmen of our country, has

stood the test of time. This is not to deny the fact that it has at times been subjected to severe strain. The working of the constitution or amendments made during the period need no mention. However, the important among these are, the 42nd Amendment on socialism, secularism and unity and integrity of the nation and the 44th Amendment omitting the right to property from the Fundamental Rights.

A note prepared by the Lok Sabha Secretariat gives a short description of the working of the democratic polity. It has made a reference to the dark days of Emergency. It has also mentioned the assassination of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi and the assassination of the Father of the Nation on 30th January, 1948. He fell victim to the bullets of a religious fanatic for trying to quell the flames that were lighted in the aftermath of partition. These black spots, in our post-independence history, nobody can forget.

Glaring Inequality

The Constitution, basically, is a people's covenant where there is the charter of freedom and the blue print for their future. Our constitution is envisaged to be an instrument for economic growth and social change. The achievement of social and economic democracy as much as political democracy has been one of the cardinal concerns of our constitution. Details of the efforts made to achieve the above goals need not be gone into. The point is about its total impact on the people of the country. This is a point which needs some explanation.

Today, 40% of the population is living below the poverty-line, only 10% of the people are among the

affluent sections and the rest are somehow pulling on. Among the affluent sections, there are big capitalists who have amassed huge wealth. To be precise, take the example of big business houses. The captain of industries, Tata, had assets of 62.42 crores in 1939, but now, in 1997, it is Rs. 37,510 crores; Birla had assets worth of Rs.85 crores in 1939; now this group of companies is having assets of more than Rs.27,000 crores. There are 100 monopoly houses whose accumulated assets more than Rs.1,00,000 crores. So, the working of our parliamentary system developed economic inequality and large areas are even today suffering from wants and miseries. This is one part of the working of our Constitution. There is the other part. From nothing rather, from next to nothing we have built an economic infrastructure which is supposed to be one of the first ranking infrastructure in the comity of nations, built within a short span of time.

We have also made very important advances in the field of science. Dr. Raja Ramanna, who is here as Rajya Sabha member is an expert. Like him there are experts in their own field. They have made a tremendous contribution in the scientific field.

Global Economy Today

Of late, a new situation has come. it is said that there is no other way than globalising our economy. Globalise or perish. This is the kind of argument advanced by certain people. I have no objection to globalisation. But before going in for that, we should understand the exact position of the global economy today. This is a vast subject in itself. The 1996 World Development Report has given a figure. This is very important. The total national income of the world for 1993 was 23 trillion dollars. Out of this 18 trillion dollars went to the developed countries where only 15 per cent of the people live. Only 5 trillion came to us. This means, 85 per cent of the world's population got only 5 trillion dollars. This is the position of world economy today. It presents a very disturbing picture. The increasing unemployment, misery etc., which are the resultant effects of the capitalist system are there for everyone to see.

We were told that new economic tigers were rising in the Asian region. It is a fact that these economies had developed speedily. But today they are facing a serious crisis. A number of economies in South-East

Asia which have been held up as a model for the entire world and which could, indeed, experience a remarkably high growth rate for the last several years are now in the mist of a crisis. A crisis in relation to capital flight, reluctance of fresh capital to flow into the region, and weakening of their currencies. This is true not only of Thailand, Malaysia and Philippines; but it is also true in the case of South Korea which is supposed to be a big tiger in this region. Therefore, we should have an understanding of what is happening around us, before globalising. Today, the world has developed a great potential. The computer networking and the information technology have dramatically improved the intellectual productivity of mankind and are revolutionising the production process itself. It is an accepted fact. But what has been the consequence? Giant multinational corporations which control 25 per cent of the world's economy, of the world economic activity, are producing a surplus of industrial goods and financial assets. They are now hunting for markets for their goods and safe areas where they can invest their capital. They choose under developed countries where the emoluments are exceptionally low, for amassing huge profits.

They want to de-industrialise these countries in order to relocate their industries for which the slogans of globalisation, free-market etc. are being made as a cover. They are doing this under the hegemony of the United States. We should not forget this part.

Second Freedom Struggle?

Inaugurating this Special Session of the parliament the Speaker of the Lok Sabha reminded that we should start a second freedom struggle. In a way, this is an apt statement. One point has to be included in the second freedom struggle. Investment of foreign capital into our country, in effect, compromises our economic activity and goes against our freedom itself. Therefore, when we say "Freedom first and freedom last," we will not allow any country in the world to touch our freedom. So, intervention of imperialism in our economic sphere is to be resisted by one and all. Today our trade unions are quite vocal against privatisation. They are forced to say that this company or that company should not be privatised; the core sector should not be privatised; electricity should not be privatised, banking industry should not be

privatised etc. Somebody will give the argument that they are saying so because of their concern for wages. Of course, without wages no one can exist. Therefore, the workers are forced to say that. But the main contention of the working class is that the new policy which we propose to follow goes against the national interest. We are trying to protect the national interest. This kind of action has to be supported by all. Workers, who are demanding this belong to various trade unions affiliated to different political parties. They have come together in making this demand. This is a national demand and everyone it is hoped will fully agree with their demand.

Challenge of Corruption

We are saying new challenges are coming up. One of the greatest challenges is the challenge to fight corruption.

A statement published in the *Investment Week* says that the total black money in circulation in the country is Rs.5,77,383 crores. This, has given rise to a parallel economy. If at all we are serious in fighting corruption, where from should we begin? Are we to begin from NGOs taking Rs.2/- as bribe or from the black money of five lakh and odd crores of rupees.

To fight corruption, does not mean we only create a legal mechanism. It will not be sufficient. A consciousness has to be developed amongst the citizens, especially the political leaders of the country that corruption of any type will not be pardoned by the people.

New World Economic Disorder

We are having a parliamentary system. Here is a

system of plural democracy in which capitalism is there. But we have said it under the Constitution, our goal is socialism. The capitalist system the world over has proved beyond doubt that it cannot give a justifiable society. So, they claim that they are going to build a new world economic order. But, they are building a new world economic disorder by which a large part of society, 95 per cent, is living in poverty and in pecuniary conditions and want.

Only 2-5 per cent of people amass a lot of wealth. This is the disease of the capitalist system. Many friends here want capitalism. The system itself is afflicted with this kind of a disease. We should ponder over whether the capitalist system can give the answer to our difficulties. No. It is not possible. The only salvation for the country is socialism with democracy, with liberty. People might say, "Immediately stop this or that". That is an old theory. We do not want that. We are only saying that our people, our nation, are to be protected. We want a better life for them. It cannot be provided within the framework of capitalism.

We should come together to see that India is made the biggest country, the strongest country, of the world. We are not pigmies. We are a country next only to China in size. We are a country having 95 crores of people. We are a country having the biggest scientific personnel in the world, perhaps next only to one or two countries. This way, our country is a big country. The talent, history and culture which we have inherited are not small. They are big. Therefore, we should make a collective effort to build a new and prosperous India.

(-Labour cont. from page 5)

Most of the 60 tripartite committees formed in the Ministry of Labour have become defunct. Some of them have not met for the last 3 years or more. It was, therefore, demanded by both the workers' and employers' representatives that the Government should not allow a decline in tripartite machinery in India. They also criticised the non-implementation of the decisions of these meetings whenever they are taken.

On behalf of CITU, M.K.Pandhe, General Secretary and Suryanarayana Rao, Vice President, attended the meeting.

Mother Teresa

The entire world and the humanity felt orphaned at the demise of Mother Teresa, a great humanitarian who dedicated her entire life to serve the poor and needy across the world. The Missionaries of Charity founded by the Mother with its headquarters at Calcutta had been rendering yeomen service to the suffering humanity. The CITU and The Working Class deeply condole the death of Mother Teresa.