

Ancient Spinning Wheel Behind Economy, Politics Of India

Government Plans to Make Madras Self-Sufficient By Subsidizing Home-Spun Cloth

By PHILLIPS TALBOT
Times Foreign Correspondent

NEW DELHI, India, Oct. 24.—When you spin by hand in India, you don't merely twist cotton fiber into yarn.

You land yourself smack in the middle of national economics and politics and a creed of truth and nonviolence.

Astute, ascetic great soul Gandhi has made it so.

For 20 years his curiously effective experiments in non-violent revolution have turned about the simple, ancient spinning wheel.

In this 20th century his followers wear homespun as a sign of patriotism. Thousands of them loyally spin yarn daily for self-discipline and a few cents of extra income.

Now Gandhi's spinning disciples,

organized in the All-India Spinners' association, are looking forward.

At a conference in a Delhi colony for outcaste Harijans they have been considering how postwar inflation and the approach of independence will affect their creed.

Goal Fruitful

Their goal is the most fruitful use of the vast Indian manpower. The spinning wheel is Gandhi's rebuttal to mechanized capitalism.

Future prospects are mixed, according to Sri Krishnasdas Jaju, the general secretary of the Spinners' association.

On the bright side, the Gandhian spinning program has just won substantial governmental support in Madras province.

The Congress party Premier T. Prakasam, in a hotly debated anti-capitalist move, has announced a drastic program designed to make most of Madras self-sufficient in cloth with homespun "Khadi."

Prevent New Mills

The provincial government, he states, will prevent the construction of new textile plants or the expansion of existing mills.

Instead, it will grant about \$3,000,000 initially for a project to make seven experimental areas self-sufficient in homespun within 18 months.

This policy is opposed by most business interests. It has threatened to split even the provincial Congress party which is pledged to support the Khadi movement.

But as Khadi costs two and one half times as much as mill-made cloth, supporters of homespun see no other way to enforce their program.

The dark side of the spinning movement's prospects, Jaju says, is that Khadi production is much less than it was before the war.

Weavers Make More Money

Part of the reason is that weavers can make more money in today's inflated market by using mill-made yarn than by using handspun yarn.

In the national shortage of cloth, moreover, spinners, too, find higher profits by selling to merchants who mix homespun and machined yarn.

Jaju regrets this development as a breach of creed.

But when prices are higher outside the Khadi movement, he asks, "How can you expect ignorant village women to grasp the non-economic idea that the spinning wheel is a symbol of truth and non-violence?"

The spinners' association is a compact organization, full of the faith which it propagates through some 600 major centers in India.

Near Recovery

It has almost recovered, Jaju says, from a war-time eclipse suffered when its leaders were in jail along with other congress workers.

Again it is working with spinning groups in about 12,000 villages. In each one families are taught that it is wrong to mortgage crops in order to buy cloth from distant markets.

They are told to spin for at least one or two hours a day to make enough yarn for their own cloth requirements. By giving the yarn to local weavers to be made up, a further village industry is encouraged.

Some spinners work for pay as well as to meet their own needs. The wage-scale is now 12 cents for an eight-hour day, or twice the pre-war scale.

Jaju estimates that about 400,000 spinners are affiliated with the association.

But only about 25,000, he believes,

work earnestly enough to meet all their family cloth needs.

Seek to Raise Sales

Before the war Khadi sales ran to \$3,000,000 a year. The association's immediate goal is to raise them to an equivalent level at today's prices.

On principal the spinning movement stands distinct from Indian politics.

Such a distinction has little meaning, however, because this movement took the Gandhian creed into many thousands of villages at a time when most Indian political activity was centered in lawyers' anterooms, newspaper offices, and college grounds.

The ground swell of village support, which the congress party has received in its nationalist campaigns, it materially due to the effect of the spinning movement.

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UTILITY BATTLES TO BE RESUMED

City, State Prepare for New Offensives.

By RICHARD LEWIS

The Indianapolis public utility front was quiet today on the Indianapolis Railways, Inc., and Indianapolis Power & Light Co. sectors, but preparations for a new offensive by city and state authorities were under way.

The state prepared to present experts in the railways rate case next week while the city laid plans to present questionnaires to the Indiana Bell Telephone Co. and the Indianapolis Water Co. on present rate schedules.

Indiana public service commission

hearings were recessed again until Monday, after a brief resumption of the railways rate case yesterday to permit the introduction of evidence by the state.

Study Reply

This explained the state's contention that the railways has overvalued its property to the extent of \$5,000,000—a claim which the railways will argue further.

City councilmen, who are investigating all Indianapolis utilities, studied the Light company's reply to its initial questionnaire and waited for the Citizens Gas & Coke utility to answer another set of formal questions put forward in the probe.

Some councilmen doubted that the gas utility would reply to the interrogatory, but at the utility it was indicated that an answer would be forthcoming shortly.

Council's assertions that the light

company is charging the city a penalty rate for electric power and that the utility has made a 125 per cent write-up in its property valuation were denied in a memorandum to the council by Harry T. Pritchard, company president, to Councilman Herman E. Bowers.

Mr. Pritchard stated that the book value of the company's property, amounting to \$55,594,615 as of Dec. 31, 1945, is based on original cost. Any increase in book value of the company properties represents the addition of physical property, he said.

No securities have been issued on the basis of any write-up, the memo said. All bonds and stocks have been issued in accordance with Indiana law.

The rate for electric power applied to the city is specifically designed to cover a wide variety of service on a single, simplified rate, the memo said.

7 DIE IN MICHIGAN AS AUTO HITS TRUCK

BAY CITY, Mich., Oct. 24. (U. P.)—Seven persons were dead today in one of the worst traffic accidents in Michigan history.

State police listed victims as Carl Anderson, 58, and Leslie S. Snodgrass, 19, Mt. Morris, Mich.; Clarence Powell, 37, his brother Cecil, 35, and Carl, 14, and Joanna, 4, children of Clarence, all of Flint; and Mrs. Florence Powell, 61, West Branch, Mich., mother of Clarence and Cecil.

Officers said Mr. Snodgrass, driving Mr. Anderson's car, apparently fell asleep and sideswiped a truck loaded with building materials. The car caromed off the truck and collided head-on with the Powell machine, which was following the truck.

Four of the victims were killed outright. Cecil and Carl Powell and Mr. Snodgrass died several hours later at Mercy hospital here.

ASK NAVY DAY FLAG DISPLAY SATURDAY

Business places were asked today by the Navy League to display their

sidewalk flags Saturday for the Navy day celebration and welcome for Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz.

Committee chairman for the celebration met at noon at the Indianapolis Athletic club to complete last-minute arrangement for the admiral's arrival by plane at 4 p. m. tomorrow. Wives of the reception committee members will greet Mrs. Nimitz also at the municipal airport.

In the event of rain Saturday the Circle ceremony for the public to greet Adm. Nimitz will be moved into the English theater.

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