

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECOND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BEHAR & ORISSA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, HELD AT THE PREMISES OF THE BANK OF BEHAR, PATNA, ON SUNDAY, THE 18TH MARCH 1928, AT 4. 30 P. M.**

*Present :*

1. Rai Bahadur Bansidhar Dhandhanian, M.L.C.
2. Rai Bahadur Ram Ranavijaya Singha.
3. Rai Bahadur Radha Krishna.
4. Mr. A. L. Ojha, M.L.C.
5. Mr. R. C. Pandit.
6. Babu Bhagwat Prasad Jayaswal.

Rai Bahadur Bansidhar Dhandhanian, M.L.C. occupied the chair.

The President asked the Honorary Secretary Mr. R. C. Pandit to read out the Annual Report of the Committee for the year ending in 31st December, 1927.

The Honorary Secretary read the report.

The President then delivered the following speech:—

Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I propose the adoption of our second annual report for the year 1927.

This year had been one of steady work and of gradually increasing membership. I earnestly request all members to make their friends join the Chamber, so that it may become a strong body soon, representing every sphere of activity in trade and commerce. I would also appeal to the very large body of our merchants, manufacturers, and tradesmen to join this Chamber, so that all of us can have the benefit of a strong organised body.

Many important events have happened since we met last year. The finances of the country unfortunately appear to be in for a cycle of depression. The budget



of our Province is a deficit budget, as also of the neighbouring Provinces of Bengal and U. P. The same is the doleful tale everywhere else. The Railway Budget shows a surplus ; and as a consequence the fare for long distance travel, has been reduced, and some other reductions, are promised to be made in other directions. Quarters where they were most needed, that is third class passengers, who travel for short distance, have not received any relief. The Government of India Budget shows a surplus, and the Finance Member has been able to remit the provincial contributions. We must be thankful to Sir Basil Blackett for this, but the country needs a substantial reduction in taxation, both direct and indirect. It is not very difficult to have a balanced or surplus budget in India, where a strong Government can easily achieve this, by continuing high taxation, and imposing fresh taxation. The success of the financial administration of a country, is judged by its prosperous industries, and the condition of its people. The misfortunes and troubles of the coal industry, which is the greatest industry in our province, has been reiterated, times without number, so far with no practical results. There is no reduction in the postage rates. There is no reduction in the high incometax rates, the salt tax remains as it was.

The Army Budget, swallows up the largest part of the revenues of the country. Then come the various Civil Services. I would earnestly impress on the Government, to cut down the expenses on these heads, so that some relief, may be given to the people, and works of development and utility may be taken up.

Trade conditions in our Province, have not been very bright in the year, neither is there any signs of betterment, in the immediate future. Unseasonal weather, and untimely rains have damaged the paddy and rabi crops, in large tracts of the country.

Transportation is the greatest problem, of every merchant in our province, specially of those living in North Behar, as the Bengal and North Western Railway are the greatest sinners in this respect. Every now and



then there are stoppages of booking in this line ; when people want to send their goods to Bengal or Assam, the bookings are open for Gorakhpur, sometimes when coal is wanted to run factories, Mokameh Ghat is closed and is unable to handle, the traffic offered. These are some of the troubles, and I would invite earnest attention of the management to it.

As you all know, important recommendations of the Tariff Board, which were calculated to give a new lease of life, to some of the struggling industries of the country, and to revive others, have been rejected by the Government of India. So far as this Province is concerned, the recommendations of the Tariff Board, would have given some relief, to those of our brethren who are engaged in Coal Industry, but as it is, we are left—where we were, before this Tariff Board was constituted, and Mine owners have been working under a disadvantage. However, it is gratifying to learn, that in the Railway Budget of this year, some provision has been made to reduce the freight of soft coal, and other such articles which will go to some extent, to lighten the burdens of the coal industry.

The Reserve Bank Bill, after passing through a chequered career, has been finally rejected by the Legislative Assembly. There were some potentialities for good in this bill, but it was marred to some extent, by the insertion of some of the provisions, which made it unacceptable to the Indian Legislature. However, we hope the last word, has not yet been said upon this bill, and I trust, that out of the ashes of the old bill, a new bill will arise, with immense possibilities of advancing the Industrial cause of the country.

I am glad to say, that His Excellency the Governor of our Province, was gracious enough to accept an address on behalf of our Chamber, and to offer us words of advice and encouragement, and we trust that the interest which His Excellency has evinced towards this Chamber, will be maintained by him, throughout his career, as Governor of our Province.



• In our address to His Excellency, we protested against the recommendations of the Vernacular Development Committee, and I am assured, that several representations, on behalf of certain accredited associations of the Province, have been submitted to His Excellency. We can only trust, that His Excellency will refuse to give effect, to those recommendations.

The Provincial Legislative Council, by a narrow majority, has passed a resolution, to make Urdu Script, in three Divisions of this Province, as optional court script. We can only repeat our protest, against the introduction of any other script, as the court script in this Province. Apart from any other consideration, the introduction of this new script, will entail an untold hardship upon the majority of the public, and dislocate the smooth working of the Judicial machinery.

It is with the deepest regret, that I have to announce before you, the sad and untimely death of Lord Sinha, on the 5th instant. He was for some time, the Governor of our Province, and during his short career, he left the impress of his mighty mind, in every department of his administration. He was well known to some of us, as our personal friend and hence our loss is all the more greater. We sincerely offer our heartfelt condolence, to Lady Sinha and other members, of the bereaved family, in their sad bereavement.

Before I sit down, I must thank our energetic Secretary, Mr. R. C. Pandit, for the zeal and earnestness, which he has displayed in the discharge of his onerous duties, during the period under review, and I hope that he will continue to evince, the same interest in the affairs of this Chamber as hithertofore. I must not also forget our worthy friend, Rai Bahadur Radha Krishna Jalan, the first President of this body, whom I am sorry to miss, due to an unfortunate accident he met with. I hope he will regain his health soon, and work with double vigour, to further the interest of the Chamber.