

tion as managing agents will not deprive them either of family control, exercised through pyramid holding of voting power, or of group management which exists elsewhere and even in India to a limited extent without the intervention of an archaic, irrational and expensive system of family management. The common overheads and services available within groups will continue to be on tap and their costs will, as at present, be debited to managed companies. The case for abolition of the managing agency system does not rest upon its much-repeated abuses (many of which could be found under all forms of corporate management) or its tendency to concentrate economic power (which can exist independently of it) but upon its inability to professionalise management and to delegate managerial powers and responsibilities. The remuneration of managing agents is high, not in absolute terms, but in relation to the managerial, financial and technical services (or the lack of them) which they provide.

Backward Classes

ONE does not ordinarily expect spectacular results from Government agencies and in any case to take to task the Department of Social Security would be less than fair since it was set up less than a year ago. The objective of creating this new department was to co-ordinate and integrate the various schemes of social welfare and social security till then distributed under various ministries. The quarrel is not with the performance of the Department but with the manner of presentation of its Annual Report.

Apart from a bland recital of a few figures of so many rupees spent, the report is severely non-committal. Even on a pressing social problem like the uplift of backward classes, all the larger issues and the glaring inadequacies are scrupulously ignored. Where do the backward classes stand with regard to employment, educational attainments, income levels, and social status? One looks in vain in the Report for information on these points.

The backward classes which constituted some 21 per cent of our population in 1961, lived almost entirely in the rural areas, on less than Rs 15 a month. Their educational attainments, after years of liberal concessions, scholarships and reservation of seats, were still very poor. While the literacy rate for the entire

population was 22.4 per cent in 1961, it was just 9.95 per cent for the scheduled castes and 8.84 per cent for the scheduled tribes. Their employment in non-rural occupations had made little headway. Only 40 per cent of the reserved vacancies in jobs listed by the Employment Exchanges were filled. In the Government, out of 17.75 per cent seats reserved for them as many as 16 per cent were filled, but the sad truth is that 78.6 per cent of the vacancies filled were for sweepers and 20 per cent were class IV jobs and the share of the backward classes in class I jobs was a mere 1 per cent. In the technical and professional jobs 30 to 40 per cent of the vacancies reserved for the backward classes go unfilled due to non-availability of suitable personnel.

It is time that it is recognised that the backwardness of certain sections of the people cannot be overcome by legal action or "concessions" and reservations. More than anything else, the lack of enthusiasm shown by the backward classes themselves for measures intended to benefit them must be investigated. The backward classes, sociologists have argued, suffer from and perpetuate their "culture of inferiority" — practising untouchability among themselves (the Government has found it necessary in some places, at the insistence of the rural untouchables, to provide separate wells for the various sub-castes among them) and reluctant to utilise scholarship facilities for technical education, preferring instead general, liberal education.

But on all these complex issues the Annual Report of the Department of Social Security has nothing to say.

A Corporation Is Elected

A Correspondent writes:

PRE-ELECTION Calcutta looked "* calmer than usual and many took the mood as a bad omen. They said Kerala looked just the same before the recent election. This was the first Corporation election under adult franchise and so candidates tried to get people interested in a better future. But the voters have learned things the hard way—they are short of water, victims of adulterated food, sufferers in continuous epidemics. Craters gape at you on the face of streets while the public dustbins turn your stomach. During the monsoon one can actually get drenched inside the Corporation Building due to waterlogging on its terrace. The only time you hear and see the city fathers is when they claw and

flay one another in noisy meetings and, of course, at election time.

There were three kinds of voters who started to stand in queues on Monday, March 29. The first kind were the legitimate voters, the second the 'false-voters', and the third the paid voters. A hundred seats were at stake. There was the Congress, the United Citizens' Committee (comprising seven Leftist parties, including the two wings of the CPI), the Progressive Peoples' Bloc (consisting of the SSP and the Forward Bloc), and the perennial Independents. According to official figures, only 60 per cent of the voters turned up (how many 'false-voters' made up that figure no one knows). The Congress lost its absolute majority and got 49 seats (the figure is a joke in itself), the UCC 35, the PCB 6 and the Independents 10. To add pep to the whole thing, the voters elected six detenus.

Great rejoicing there was in the city when voters learned of the defeat of some of the old bible-bangers. And the six detenus became the symbol of protest. It would be hard to hold meetings with elected candidates under continuous detention. And the less meetings our Corporation has the better.

Atulya Ghosh, who is Chairman of the Congress Municipal Association in addition to his other posts, has assured the public that the Congress would get the seats it needs for an absolute majority—one of the Independent members had already pledged to join the Congress bloc, he claimed. The new Corporation consists of 100 elected Councillors, five Aldermen (to be elected by the elected Councillors) and one ex-officio member, the Chairman of the Calcutta Improvement Trust. Atulya Babu hopes to get yet another supporter from the Independent bloc, and with 51 Councillors he is dreaming of bagging all the five Aldermen!

In spite of adult franchise and the Congress defeat, the Corporation Councillors are going to get paid as ever for conducting and adjourning endless meetings. The election farce was well played and the people enjoyed it while it lasted. But it is all over and the election queues have given place to the more permanent fish queues.

Bankers Differ

IF chairmen of companies were to adhere strictly to purpose, their addresses at annual general meetings would be no more than bald statements about the financial position of