

CHAPTER VII

SMALLER *vs.* LARGER STATES

211. It would be relevant also to discuss at this stage the question whether the reorganised units should be big or small.

212. Both points of view have been placed before the Commission. Briefly summarised, the arguments in favour of small States are that in such States the administration will be more accessible to the people; and that there will be a livelier sense of local needs and appreciation of local problems on the part of the Government. Further, in such matters as public co-operation in community project areas, availability of voluntary labour for public purposes and the attitude of the people to economic development generally, the small State has an advantage. A closer link between the electorate and its representatives may help to bring about a real unity of outlook and community of interest between the people and those charged with their governance. A small State, it is claimed, may be able to administer its area intensively and to promote social welfare measures much more effectively than a large State.

213. It is undoubtedly an advantage to have compact and manageable administrative units. The merits and demerits of small States, however, have to be examined from the point of view of the progress of the plan as well as our basic conception of the status of the constituent units of the Indian Union.

214. It may be doubted in the first place whether except in the Swiss Cantons, it has been possible to realise the ideal of direct democracy anywhere. As regards the appreciation of local needs, the machinery of planning is intended to serve this purpose; and it is extremely unlikely that a small State will be able to finance on its own projects which, as matters stand at present, have no chance of being considered at the national level.

215. The question of public co-operation, assuming that it can be organised on a big scale for the purposes of the plan, would no doubt be important. But even here, there is no evidence that only a small State can succeed in enlisting such co-operation or that a large State will necessarily fail to do so. Recent experience in such areas as the Manimuthar and Tapti valleys seems to indicate that the amount of public co-operation that may be forthcoming is not governed by factors such as the size of the State but by the merits

of the projects themselves and the vigour and enterprise of the administration at the local level.

216. When it is remembered that too many small States necessarily add to the burden of unproductive expenditure, and that the view can be held that expenditure on social services cannot be regarded as more important than basic productive investment like river valley and power development schemes, which a large State will be in a much better position to undertake, the case for small states cannot be regarded as impressive.

217. The case for sizeable administrative units is based partly on a rebuttal of the claim in favour of small States and partly on other independent grounds. A sizeable State should normally be financially more stable and more able to conform to the broad requirements of financial and economic policies, as they may be formulated from time to time for the country as a whole. A further point in favour of larger units is that only the creation of relatively larger States will lead to appreciable economy in the unproductive expenditure on administration, which the country so clearly needs at the present stage.

218. Experience of the working of different administrations in this country does not lend support to the view that, in large States, standards of administration deteriorate. In actual practice, some of the larger States in India have proved to be the best-administered. In fact, efficiency of administration is seldom determined by the size of the unit. There are other factors such as economic and social conditions within the different areas; political consciousness, tempers and traditions of the people; and the political acumen and the sense of public service of the leaders in different areas, which set the pace of progress and administrative efficiency.

219. The world has travelled a great distance from the days of the Greek city states and the idea of direct democracy which they embodied. With the expansion of the requirements of organised social communities, modern States inevitably tend to grow bigger and it is difficult to reverse the process. In the existing conditions in this country as determined by territory and population, the ideal of self-government for very small units can, therefore, possibly be realised only at the level of local institutions.

220. In a matter like this, it would be unwise to be dogmatic or to rule out exceptions. When it is suggested that the weight of argument is in favour of large rather than small States the objective

is that every State should have adequate resources to assume the responsibility devolving on a full-fledged constituent unit of the Union. This, however, does not mean that units should be so unwieldy as to be without any intrinsic life of their own or to defeat the very purpose for which larger units are suggested, *i.e.*, administrative efficiency and co-ordination of economic development and welfare activity.