

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

### THE FUTURE OF THE SPECIAL TRIBAL BLOCKS

What now of the future ? It is obvious that a fairly large number of the existing Multipurpose Blocks will be unable to spend the 27 lakhs allotted to them within the Five Year period. We suggest that in such cases the life of the Block may be extended by a period up to two years, commensurate with the money unspent, in order to enable its funds to be used wisely. This is, in fact, the normal policy followed for Phase I of the ordinary C. D. Blocks. On no account should the State Governments transfer to other schemes the money unspent at the end of the Five-Year period or surrender it.

We recommend that those Blocks which have spent their 27 lakhs in time should receive 5 lakhs of rupees for Phase II from the Home Ministry in addition to the 5 lakhs they will receive from the C. D. Ministry for this period. Otherwise, the sudden drying up of financial support may create serious problems, for the simple tribal people will not understand the situation. This money should, of course, be used to extend and complete the existing schemes and not be used to start new ones. Those Blocks which cannot spend their allocation in time may receive for Phase II the extra 5 lakhs when they have used up the money given them for Phase I and the period for spending this additional money may be similarly extended.

With regard to the opening of Special Tribal Blocks in the Third Five Year Plan period, we feel that the present experiment, although it suffers from the defects of all pilot projects, has been sufficiently successful to justify its extension. There may, however, be various modifications.

We feel that, in the first place, there has been a little too much money to be used wisely and profitably within five years, at least in the more inaccessible and undeveloped Blocks, which are of course the very areas we most want to help.

We suggest, therefore, that the Home Ministry's contribution to each of the new Special Tribal Blocks to be opened in the Third Five Year Plan period should be reduced from 15 lakhs to 10 lakhs, in addition, of course, to the 12 lakhs which will be contributed by the Ministry of Community Development. We further recommend that in Phase II of these Blocks the Home Ministry should contribute 5 lakhs in addition to the 5 lakhs which we hope will be provided by the Ministry of Community Development. We expect that the Block authorities will be able to spend usefully the reduced sum of 22 lakhs of rupees within the five-year period and that it will not be necessary to extend it as is being done at present. We must recognize, however, that development in the tribal areas is going to take a long time and we earnestly hope that some special assistance will continue to be given for the Special Tribal Block areas for a period of fifteen to twenty years.

We further suggest in view of what we have said in the preceding Chapters that development should be equal throughout the whole of tribal India. The entire area will be covered by C. D. Blocks by 1963 and this scheme will apply not only to the Scheduled and Tribal Areas but to all areas. In the Scheduled and Tribal Areas alone there are still 72.5 lakhs of tribal people who have not been covered by the Multipurpose Tribal

Blocks scheme, but we do not see any reason why it should in future be confined only to the Scheduled and Tribal areas. Even at present nine of the Multipurpose Tribal Blocks are outside these special areas. This will mean that there will be a large number of Blocks with predominantly tribal populations covered in the Third Five Year Plan.

Let us, for the sake of argument, estimate that about 300 Special Tribal Blocks will be required to cover all the predominantly tribal areas. We suggest that if each of these Blocks receives from the Home Ministry ten lakhs of rupees instead of 15 lakhs it will be possible to spread the benefits of intensive development over all of them. Instead of giving 15 lakhs to each of, say, 100 Special Tribal Blocks the Home Ministry might give 10 lakhs to each of 300 new Blocks. This will mean an expenditure (above the C. D. Ministry's contribution) during the Third Five Year Plan of Rs. 30 crores, which is surely not too much to meet a problem of such magnitude.

We recommend that these new Blocks should not be confined to the Scheduled and Tribal Areas but should cover areas, wherever there is a tribal population of 55 per cent of the total, anywhere in India, provided the overall coverage for each Block is not more than 25,000 individuals in an area of 200 square miles.

In view of the fact that the provision of a schematic budget has caused what we have called a sort of psychological paralysis and that expenditure has not always been adjusted to the more urgent requirements of the Block areas, the 22 lakhs available for the new Special Tribal Blocks in the Third Five Year Plan should not be tied down too much. We recommend that there should be no regular schematic budget for the Tribal Blocks in future, but that expenditure should be divided into three sections—

Schemes for economic development	...	60%
Communications	...	25%
Social services	...	15%

This, of course, will be in addition to the provision made in the general budget of the State for the development of communications as well as social services in these areas.

Top priority should be given to Agriculture and the allied subjects of Irrigation, Reclamation and Soil Conservation, and not less than 10 lakhs should be spent under these heads.

We suggest elsewhere that funds available under the Education programme should be administered by the Education Departments of the States and we hope that sufficient funds will be available from other channels to further schemes for Education in the Block areas. At present the amount allocated under the schematic budget for Education is more a token grant than anything else and we feel that it would be better if a special provision is made outside the Block budget for this subject. It will also be more effective if Education is handled by a single agency.

We consider, however, that if this is to be done and this large sum of money allotted, certain conditions must be fulfilled.

(1) First and foremost, the State Governments should take the whole matter of developing their tribal areas much more seriously. They should ensure that planning is done well in advance and sanctions issued expeditiously. They should insist that all Departments should co-operate generously and enthusiastically with the P.E.Os in implementing the Special Block

plans. They must realize that money is of little use unless it is made usable.

(2) Block officials should be chosen and appointed at least six months before the formal opening of a Block and they should spend their time in surveying the area, learning the language and assessing priorities for development.

(3) State Governments should not transfer any official who has been so appointed and trained, unless he proves a failure, for at least three years. No official, at any level, should be posted to a tribal area as a punishment; in fact, the best officials (including members of the I.A.S. and P.C.S.) should as a matter of routine, be appointed as part of their general training, for at least a year.

(4) The State Governments should follow the suggestions made with regard to both the area and the population of the Blocks to be opened.

(5) There should be a really serious attempt to relate the programmes and the way of doing things to the tribal background.

We suggest that in future the designation of the Special Multipurpose Tribal Blocks might be changed. It is too elaborate and after all every Block in the country is a multipurpose one. These special Blocks only differ in having more money to spend and a small additional staff. They are, in fact, no more multipurpose than any others. We suggest that they should be called in future Special Tribal Blocks, which should be sufficient, for this is exactly what they are.

There is also the problem of the very large tribal population which is not included in the Scheduled or Tribal Areas. Out of 2,25,00,000 persons who come under the classification of Scheduled Tribes, only 98 lakhs live in the Scheduled or Tribal Areas. The others are very widely scattered all over India and fall into two groups. The first and by far the largest consists of the tribals who are mixed up with other people to such an extent that it is not possible to classify the places where they live as Scheduled Areas. The second consists of small pockets of tribals living in the deep interior of a District among the hills or forests, who are not sufficient in numbers to come within the Scheduled Areas scheme or to qualify for a Special Block to themselves.

The first group needs our help perhaps more than any other. In the Tribal Areas of Assam, for example, the people are strong and independent and any one who tries to take advantage of them does so at his peril. In the mixed areas, however, the tribes have been shockingly exploited. They have lost their land on a scale unknown in the more homogeneous areas; They are culturally impoverished; they cannot stand up for themselves. They need drastic measures for their protection, and earnest and intelligent care to teach them how to protect themselves.

The little pockets of tribals scattered in the distant hills and forests are often less developed than any others, for they have in the past largely escaped attention, settled as they are on the remote outskirts of large non-tribal populations, with little or no means of communication with the rest of the country. So far, many of them have had few of the advantages of the main development programmes and while, owing to their isolation, they are not greatly exploited by merchants and money-lenders, they do suffer from the exactions of low-grade police, revenue and forest personnel, and they are usually very poor.

Some scheme, therefore, is needed in the Third Five Year Plan to ensure that something more is done for both these groups of people. At present they are looked after by the Tribal Welfare Departments in the States and we suggest that they should, in the first place, carefully examine the problem and prepare careful reports of where these people live and how they are doing, and then that special grants adjusted to the population should be made for a very few special schemes. All these tribes will be included inside the ordinary C. D. Block scheme by 1963 and it might be possible for the Home Ministry to give special grants to the Blocks where such people live to be used exclusively for them, in addition to the grants that they would in any case receive under the normal Block budgets and the general funds of the State. Such assistance might in one place be entirely confined to Communications, which would immediately solve half the problem. In others it might be confined to Communications and Agriculture. If there are tribal people living in a very unhealthy forest area which the rest of the population avoids, the stress might be entirely on Health. But whatever it may be, we are anxious that what is after all the majority of the tribal people in India, who will not be covered by the Special Tribal Blocks scheme, should in no way be neglected or fall behind their brethren who will receive so many additional benefits.

If this is to be achieved we feel that the Blocks should be the units not only of development but also of administration. As far as the Scheduled Tribes residing in the ordinary areas are concerned, it will be beneficial to channelise all development activity through the Block administrations. In order to co-ordinate such a programme for the benefit of the Scheduled Tribes, the additional funds earmarked by the Ministry of Home Affairs to supplement normal development activity for the benefit of the Scheduled Tribes should be placed at the disposal of the Block authorities. The normal C. D. Blocks should be able to implement additional programmes out of grants made available by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

During the Second Plan period, out of a total provision of Rs. 47.65 crores for Scheduled Tribes, the Home Ministry's contribution for the Special Multipurpose Blocks was only 6.32 crores, while the remaining Rs. 41.32 crores was spent for the benefit of the Scheduled Tribes through 'non-Block' programmes. Only a few State Governments such as Orissa and Bihar have implemented such 'non-Block' programmes for Scheduled Tribes through the Block Development Officers. We are of the view that the balance of advantage would lie if schemes were channelised through the Block Development Officers.

We have observed that in almost all the Blocks the most progressive and prosperous tribal people are, perhaps naturally, receiving the majority of the benefits of our development schemes. Although this is understandable, since it is obviously easier to give help to people who are willing to receive it and to assist those who are more readily accessible, it is undesirable that in any Block that section of the population which most needs development should not be getting it. Indeed, it is the poorest people living in the remoter areas who should receive the chief attention of the Block officials.

There are three ways in which this difficulty may be met. The first is that the headquarters of the Blocks should, on no account, be located in small towns or in the centre of a non-tribal population. They should be

pushed into the interior as far as is practicable. It is obvious that so long as a Block headquarters is not located in the midst of the most undeveloped and characteristic part of a Block those people who really need help will be largely deprived of it. One reason why there has been a tendency to place these headquarters in more accessible areas has been the need to import a large quantity of building materials. If our suggestion of putting up houses for the staff in a more simple style, using for the most part locally available materials, is accepted, this difficulty need not arise.

Secondly, in order to reach the more inaccessible areas it is necessary to make the conditions of touring easier. At present in many places an official on tour receives either no allowance or a totally inadequate allowance for moving his goods. In order really to effect progress in the remoter parts of a Block it may be necessary for an official to go out on tour for two or three weeks at a time. Since it is often impossible to obtain supplies locally he will have to carry enough stores to maintain himself; he may have to take audio-visual equipment or medicines; and he will have to take his bedding and in some places a tent. He cannot possibly pay for this out of his T. A.

If any official wants to know his people and succeed in his mission to them he will have to *walk*. Most officials are prepared to do this, but it is generally difficult to obtain porters, quite apart from paying for them. The very old custom of taking porters by force and often without payment has created a strong reaction against the practice among many tribes. At some times of the years the people, even if they are willing to carry loads, cannot afford to do so: they are too busy in their fields. Among other tribes it is considered below their dignity, as indeed it is, to carry loads for officials.

We feel that a Project Officer ought to spend at least twenty days a month outside his headquarters and that he should not confine himself to visiting villages which can be reached by road. There is a tendency for the officials at headquarters to dash out into the villages in the early morning and to return the same night. They will not really come to know their people or have any real impact upon them unless they live with them, sit with them in the evenings and share their life to some extent. It is specially necessary for officials to meet the people in the evenings for they are often so busy during the day that they either do not come to meet officials at all or, if they do, they have a sense of grievance that their work has been interrupted.

We suggest, therefore, that arrangements should be made to equip every Block with a number of good bullock-carts with tyre-wheels, ball-bearings and so on and provide also a number of small tents. Such bullock-carts will be able to reach many places inaccessible to ordinary motor transport. Where this is impracticable we suggest that ponies should be provided and for shorter visits there should be a number of bicycles available. Payment for these things should be suitably provided.

There is far too general a tendency to rely on motor transport. Splendid cities were established and great civilizations developed a thousand years before the invention of the jeep, and it is most important to encourage officials to use other and more practicable forms of transport so that they can reach the people who need them most.

We are not in favour of establishing any kind of means test to determine which of the people most deserve economic benefit. In the first place,

any kind of survey of this kind will take a long time and it is unlikely that the investigators will discover the truth. In the second place, such enquiries may discourage the people from developing their fields or from building better houses. In some areas we have found that through fear of increased taxation the tribals are unwilling to improve their fields, for there is a deep and almost ineradicable objection among them to paying out money. They prefer to have a poor crop on which they will not have to pay anything to getting a better one which may involve payment of some sort of additional tax. Even a well-to-do person feels a certain nervous tremor when he is presented with a Wealth Tax form, and the simple tribal people are deeply suspicious of any attempt to assess their economic condition.

It should be perfectly easy for any P.E.O. who knows his area to point out, without too many enquiries, what are the most undeveloped and poorest villages in his charge. On them we should concentrate with special sympathy and care.