

# IS INDIA DIFFERENT?

The Class Struggle in India



Correspondence on the  
Indian Labour Movement  
and Modern Conditions  
by

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*and*  
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2<sup>d</sup>.

*Is India Different?*

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## FOREWORD

### THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN INDIA

**I**NDIA is a very young country as far as capitalism is concerned. Although capitalist industry is now so much developed that India is officially reckoned, by the Labour Office of the League of Nations, as one of the eight chief industrial countries of the world, the development of capitalism in India has taken place so quickly that there is still a big controversy in India as to whether it and its characteristic effects really exist there at all.

Some of the Indian leaders say that India has a special spiritual civilisation, in which the capitalism of the West will never be able to obtain a foothold. Others admit that capitalist industry has come into being in India, but they hold that this is an excrescence and a mistake, and that it ought to be done away with. Especially important is the controversy about the class struggle. It is quite usual for Indian politicians to deny that any such struggle does or need exist. The class struggle between labour and capital, they say, is a lamentable feature of Western civilisation which must not be introduced into India. The occurrence of strikes indicates a tendency to copy Western methods which are unsuitable for India and must be prevented.

All these are signs of the youthful stage of Indian capitalism in which class consciousness, the conscious recognition of the class struggle, is only just beginning to emerge. Those who care to look, of course, cannot help seeing what a miserable, sweated, exploited, slum-ridden existence the Indian industrial worker has to endure. The question is, how is this to be remedied? On the one side we find those, still few in numbers, but rapidly increasing, who advocate the organisation of a working class movement such as we know it in Western Europe; on the other side are to be found those who wish to uplift the masses by classless, humanitarian welfare work. The most important representative of the latter viewpoint is to be found in the great Indian Nationalist leader Gandhi, and thus the exchange of letters between him and Saklatvala reflects and sums up the whole controversy still proceeding in India on the subject of the class struggle.

In essence, this is a controversy that has long ago been raised and disposed of in this country, but it must not be thought that this fact is sufficient to settle the matter in India. It is necessary to take into account the special characteristics of the situation in which capitalism is developing in India, and it is for this reason that the present correspondence is particularly worthy of study in this country, for it throws a vivid light on the results of Indian capitalist development, on the reactions produced in the minds of different sections and classes in India and on the obstacles to be overcome in the furtherance of the working class movement.

Since capitalism has been imposed upon India in a comparatively short space of time, as contrasted with its much slower development, occupying several centuries, in Europe, it is only natural that we should find that in India the influence of pre-capitalist social forms, customs, religious beliefs, and modes of thought is very pronounced. Consequently, it is not to be expected that the class significance of the shattering of pre-capitalist Indian society by the penetration of capitalism should be as apparent to an Indian as it is to a Marxist who knows the history of capitalism in Europe, or that the conflicts and controversies that have resulted from that shattering should be conducted in terms of the class struggle. Just as in the history of Europe the conflict of classes was carried on under the guise of quarrels about religion and so forth, so in India the demands of different classes have been translated into the language of spiritual ideas. Therefore, in order to understand the situation in India, and the circumstances in which the correspondence between Saklatvala and Gandhi came to be written, with its special subjects of discussion, it is necessary to examine the spiritual slogans round which the controversy has grown up in India and to realise the class character of the conflict that they conceal.

Gandhi appears as if he were the leader of a religious movement. He denounces the "Satanic" Western civilisation, i.e., capitalism, on spiritual grounds. He proposes to cure the misery caused by capitalism by propagating the use of the "charka" or hand-spinning wheel, and by the wearing of "khaddar" or hand-woven cloth. He supports Hindu religion and the caste system, though he proclaims himself against "untouchability," i.e., the complete social ostracism of the lowest castes by the higher. He preaches human brotherhood and the moral improvement of individuals. He preaches

against the use of violence, against drink and other vices. He is against class conflict and class organisation.

In all this he represents the outlook of the mass of small property-owning peasants and the rest of the petty bourgeoisie. He obtained his influence and importance as a leader, however, not on account of his religious philosophy, but because he came forward to lead the masses of poor peasants and exploited workers who were rising in revolt in the period after the war. He promised them success if they followed his precept of peaceful non-co-operation or passive resistance. In this way he tried to use them for the movement of the Indian middle class against foreign domination. When, however, the actual moment of struggle of the masses against class exploitation came, Gandhi had to decide on which side he stood; and then the whole edifice of his religious philosophy collapsed and he came out openly as the defender of propertied interests.

In practice Gandhi's teaching has shown itself more and more clearly as socially reactionary, and Gandhi himself is seen to be the ally of class exploitation. This is what was hidden under the web of religious doctrine, but is now becoming understood in India and is so clearly revealed by Saklatvala in his attack. The class struggle exists in India and is intensifying, and there are thousands who feel instinctively that Gandhi's policy will not help the masses of workers and peasants; but these dare not express themselves openly because they are not sure of themselves, and because of the traditional worship of Gandhi as a "Mahatma" or saint. Saklatvala has led the way for them; he has put their feelings into words and has compelled Gandhi to come into the open and say where he stands.

In particular, Gandhi's declarations on the question of labour organisation are a complete exposure of his class standpoint. He declares himself in favour of labour organisation, but only on what he considers his own special lines. These lines exhibit four chief characteristics. Firstly, there must be class harmony and no strikes or hostility to capitalism. Secondly, the object of the organisation is primarily to force the worker from his vices and to make him a better workman. Thirdly, his trade unions must be kept from contact with the independent labour and trade union movement, national or international. Finally, his unions must steer clear of politics.

It is immediately noticeable, that so far from these characteristics being special and peculiar to his philosophy, they

are identical with the most obvious marks of "yellow" unions or company unions organised by employers in capitalist Europe and America. As Saklatvala declared in his letter, "your idea of a policy for labour would in reality put you outside even those who are regarded as 'friends of labour' . . . . I have heard Tory and Liberal capitalists use almost identical words and phrases."

Gandhism as a political force has proved itself bankrupt and impotent. As a social philosophy it is opposed to the needs of the growing working class in India, and in proportion as the latter develops in strength and class-consciousness it is compelled to come out more and more decisively against it. The issue before the working class movement in India now is not whether it shall follow Gandhi or not. The central issue now lies between labour, imperialism and the revolutionary international working class movement. At present, the bulk of the leaders of labour in India do not come from the ranks of the workers and, even when they do reject the open anti-working class policy of Gandhi, they are inclined to take as their model the imperialist leaders of the British Labour movement and endeavour to restrict the objects of labour organisation in India to petty economic demands which do not threaten the imperialist basis of exploitation. They are opposed to the political class struggle of the Indian masses.

Of late, Gandhi, like Mrs. Besant, although condemned for appearance sake by the popular English and Anglo-Indian press, is in reality looked upon quite favourably, if contemptuously, by the imperialists.

An instance of this is shown in the fact that some of the Indian railways have now placed at his disposal a specially constructed, luxurious saloon coach for use when travelling the country for propaganda purposes, a privilege hitherto confined to ruling princes and the Viceroy.

Alongside of this attitude towards Labour one finds a growing inclination to translate the term "Swaraj" into meaning merely a form of Dominion Home Rule within the Empire, a point of view which whilst highly popular amongst the ruling princes, who desire, in many instances, British bayonets to uphold their rule, is certainly not considered sufficient by the masses, to whom Saklatvala's message came as a revelation.

The British I.L.P. however, appears to think that the demand for Dominion status is all sufficient, despite the horrible example of the so-called Irish Free State before their

very eyes. It is demanding that the Royal Commission which is to be set up to extend the Montague-Chelmsford "Reforms" should include Gandhi, and grant the demands of the Indians even "should they include Dominion status." Saklatvala and the Communist Party point out that the Royal Commission and the "Reforms" are but a mockery from which nothing tangible can be expected.

This issue between Labour imperialism and the revolutionary workers' movement is growing sharper and sharper. The betrayal by the middle class and petty bourgeois leaders, both in India and in China, of the national struggle against imperialist oppression and exploitation, has shown beyond all doubt that the leadership of the struggle to be successful must be in the hands of the revolutionary workers and peasants. It is of supreme importance that there should be a firm bond of united action between their movement and our working class struggle in Great Britain.

In this correspondence Saklatvala makes it clear that not a superstitious reliance upon the efficacy of "khaddar," "charka," and Royal Commissions will free India from British domination, but only a completely unified national movement, in which Labour must play a greater and ever greater part.

By means of this correspondence, which was published in full throughout the Indian press, Saklatvala has struck a doughty blow at Gandhism, and social pacifism in India, and stirred up young India as it has not been stirred for generations. It should be read by every serious working class student in Britain.

November, 1927.

C.P.D.



# IS INDIA DIFFERENT ?

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## **SAKLATVALA'S FIRST LETTER: HELP US ORGANISE.**

BOMBAY, Mar. 8, 1927.

Dear Comrade Gandhi,

We are both erratic enough to permit each other to be rude in order to freely express oneself correctly, instead of getting lost in artificiality of phraseology.

Several of your enthusiastic supporters have assisted me greatly by criticising me openly in the public press. However these several critics have effectively replied to each other and one has contradicted the other and each one has tried to prove a different case on your behalf. You may not be responsible for creating this confusion. But I consider you are in duty bound now to clear it. Let us understand, openly, whether the Charka movement is or is not an attack upon machinery, upon physical sciences, upon material progress. If it is so, then it is a most damaging disservice to our country and must be stopped. If it is not so, then your ardent followers ought not to be allowed to believe that it is so.

### **The Economic Argument.**

As to the economic argument that khaddar adds to the earning power of the agricultural worker, I consider this to be a feeble case altogether. It is pointed out to me by a newspaper correspondent that if I had seen the great ocean of khaddar in India in 1921 and 1922 and the tremendous enthusiasm of people at that time, I would not have ventured upon the criticisms that I am now doing. That is perfectly true, but this conclusively proves that my criticism now is fully justified, and that all that ocean of khaddar and all that enthusiasm has dwindled if not disappeared on their merit or demerit, long before I came here and offered my criticism.

It is the duty of every sincere public man in India to find out how and why this tremendous enthusiasm was created, how and why it died out and how far the faults or the mistakes of your followers have been responsible for this state. The present condition of affairs demands a criticism and not a condemnation of criticism.

The methods adopted by other countries of organising labour and peasantry and guiding and leading the workers in factories or farms to obtain their rights, have produced far more benevolent and efficient results in human life than the two annas-a-day charka movement will ever do. The Government schemes of canals, scientific manuring and carrying on agricultural work by machinery, will add ten times more to the economic propriety of the peasantry than the charka, but you have already described this Government to be Satanic. Let us have a clear idea as to your position in this matter. Is a person adding to the economic value of the poor peasantry a friend or an enemy of the poor?

I want you to put one question to your own conscience, irrespective of public articles—had you come out in this country after the general failure of your attempts to free Indians in South Africa from political and civic slavery, and after the mess you made with some young Indians in London, in drawing them into some direct or indirect service of war, would India have given you any importance, would India have allowed you to take the political leadership, would India have poured in lakhs of rupees in response to your demands if you had said that you wanted all this only for the purpose of adding As.2 a day to the income of barely three per cent. of the Indian peasantry?

### **Is it a Two Anna Business?**

Were not all these great powers laid at your entire disposal because you made a definite political promise and allowed the people at least to believe that you had some plan or method which would quickly, within a limited period of less than two years, give to India political freedom from the British yoke? Now, where do we stand with regard to the primary object of the charka movement and its position to-day? Are you shifting your limit of two years to four years or to twenty years or to two hundred years? Do you suggest that a rise of As. 2 income say of the whole population is a process which is going to drive the British out of this country or do you suggest that a still higher figure will have to be

reached? Did you believe this Government to be Satanic because it brought poverty upon the people, did you then believe that this poverty could never be cured before the Satanic Government was overthrown? Do you now believe that you can improve the economic condition of the people without removing this Satanic Government or without any reference to politics, or have you suddenly come to the conclusion that the immediate poverty of the people has touched your heart so much that you launch out into that problem of life and have made up your mind to ignore the problem of the existing political slavery of the country?

### **Superstitious Adherence.**

Reverting to the economic value of charka, it is the admitted experience of the whole world that out of all handicrafts in competition against machinery, handspinning is of the least economic value; hand-weaving, embroidery, carpentry, shoe-making or making of any kind of footwear, etc., have a much greater value. If you would look at the Parsee Girls' Industrial Home in Karachi or a still more splendid institution, the Hindu Orphanage at Surat, namely the Hardevram Vakil Hindu Orphanage, you will realise how the earning power of the helpless, poverty-stricken people can be improved by one or two rupees per day.\* I clearly see that such crafts cannot be taken up on a large scale by all villagers, whereas hand-spinning can. But why do you persevere in hand-spinning with superstitious adherence, and why not introduce alongside of it other more profitable handicrafts for a few persons in each village if economic salvation is your present object?

You are not teaching the people to wear more clothes than before, your own example would rather lead them to wear less. At the same time you are teaching more people to produce clothes, and how can you fail to realise that you are robbing Peter to pay Paul, and while you are improving the economic condition of some you are doing it at the expense of others? Sensible economists, Socialists and trade union organisers have within a short period increased the economic earning of their followers by more than a 100 per cent.; they have taught their followers to use more food, more furniture, more clothes; they have thus created a great demand which

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\* A rupee is worth from 1s. 6d. to 2s. An anna is one-sixteenth of a rupee.

has taken away the burden of man from the land, and have left the land workers more prosperous than before.

You are afraid or unwilling to follow this natural and sensible course, which is of course very inconvenient to a few rich manufacturers, merchants and zamindars who grow rich by starving millions of people. You are freely receiving gifts from these selfish rich in order to carry on work in the opposite direction of increasing the economic value of workers in industries or on land. The poverty of the population on the land can easily be remedied, instead of being played about with, by bravely fighting the causes which directly produce such poverty, such as the unnatural and unjustifiable rights of the zamindars over God-created land and low wages of agricultural labourers.

### **Your Political Power**

Thus I say that if you had not put forward political claims you would never have acquired the power and opportunities which you have, and if you had purely economic aims you are standing against the economic interests of the masses and in favour of the interest of the wealthy classes by deliberately "non-co-operating" with and indirectly obstructing the work of those who would bring about an economic regeneration of the people along lines that have proved successful in all parts of the world.

You have raised the objection against western methods of organising labour on your mistaken notion that such a process would introduce class war and that acute oppression of capitalists over Labour does not exist in India. In both these theories you are entirely wrong. Those who organised Labour had not created class war. Modern systems of production, commerce and finance produce class war, the parties in which are the capitalists and the workers. Those who organise labour are doing nothing but the great moral work of helping and strengthening the weaker of the two parties in that class war. Those who organise Labour always do so deliberately with a view to abolishing class distinctions by making capital the common property of all, and by making manual or mental labour the common duty of all. This alone will stop class war, and you who would not assist in organising labour, help in the con-

tinuance of class war, which is going on every day in all industrial countries of the world, among which India to-day occupies the fifth place and not an insignificant place.

### **Life and Death**

The acuteness with which the class war operates upon the wage-earners of India is more than in most of the advanced European countries, where, thanks to the organisers of Labour, several of the cruelties of class war are being removed. Just look at the palatial houses of any millowner of Bombay, Ahmedabad, Nagpur or Calcutta and look at the disgraceful and diabolical one-room tenements of the poor workers, devoid of all furniture, appointments or artistic embellishments. Such acute difference between dwelling conditions of the rich and the poor does not exist in Great Britain, America or any part of Europe where labour is well organised. It is an unjustifiable defence of the rich industrialists of India to describe them to the world as endowed with some special virtues, when all the facts of poor people's life proclaim loudly that these virtues are not existent. The personal obsequiousness of the poor workers towards their masters, the utter helplessness before arbitrary dismissals and the ill-treatment as it actually exists in India everywhere is unthinkable in Europe or America, where labour is organised, and your defence of the Indian master class is an unpardonable mockery of the poor suffering working class. The way in which zamindars, Khotas and Mulguzaries\* claim by force the labour of their tenants at certain seasons for half an anna a day is a diabolical disgrace to humanity and does not exist in countries where modern agricultural trade unions are existing.

That is not all. The class war in India is literally murderous and more cruelly murderous because it is infanticidal. Just analyse the figures of death. The death rate of the adults, and specially of the infants, in large industrial towns is much in excess of the normally bad death rate of India. Now kindly follow me in still closer analysis of these figures obtained from municipal health officers of infantile mortality of the well-to-do Parsee, Hindu and Mahomedan families in Bombay, Ahmedabad, Calcutta or other industrial towns. You will find that the mortality amongst infants under 12 months of age among the rich would be about 80 to 90 per thousand, whereas the infantile mortality in the

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\* Castes of landlords.

municipal wards where the factory workers live would be from 600 to even 800 per thousand. Such a damnable attack upon human life is unknown in those countries where the working classes are organised. To defend such a position is criminal, but for anybody to go even further and to throw dust in the eyes of the world that class war is not operating acutely in India is inhuman and monstrous, and I have always felt that through your misguided sentimentality, you have preferred to be one of them.

Then take the other important elements of life—the dignity, the consciousness and the self-respect of man, and look at our unfortunate clerks, teachers, postmen and railway station staff, etc. The treatment which they are made to suffer, and are almost habituated to, is a disgrace to human society, and the only salvation out of it is efficient labour organisation. Class war is there, will continue to be there till any successful scheme of Communism abolishes it. But in the meantime not to organise the people and not to struggle against its evil effects from day to day is a doctrine which cannot appeal to any genuine humanitarian.

### **Organisation of Labour**

During my conversations with you at certain periods you did not seem to take a definite attitude with regard to the value of organisation of labour and peasants. You emphatically argued that the charka movement was making organisation. I emphatically deny it. There must be conscious and deliberate work of organisation, to be carried out for its own sake in a proper scientific manner and for the purpose of our national object, with a straightforward and unconcealed imparting of political consciousness. The same similarity of operation of the working of charka with some vague idea, religious zeal or economic welfare or a great Gandhi's command, does not and cannot do any effective organising work, and cannot create and has not created any political consciousness. For centuries together millions of men and women in India have been boiling rice, utilising similar quantities of rice and water and conducting cooking operations of a similar nature, doing some industrial work when cooking it and producing food of economic value without buying ready-made food. All these operations surely have not produced any organisation, and the work of spinning can never do so any more than the work of cooking.

## **An Opportunity Missed**

Then we come to the psychological value of the movement. This *was* great. It *began* well, and it almost became wonderful at a certain stage. But why create a psychology if you do not intend to mobilise the spirit so created, and if you do not intend immediately to form men and women into an organisation for a definite material object while they are under a psychological influence and before that influence passes away? That is exactly my complaint, and the bitter disappointment of your world-critics against you. You missed an opportunity and you only opened the eyes of the political opponents of India, and by your inaction, after a certain psychology was aroused, you only brought India under a tighter grip of her opponents and made her enslavement a little worse than before. Not only that, but the position of India worsened that of Egypt and, for a time, of China, and at any rate became harmful in Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan. All these people have a right to complain against us if we bungle our affairs in such a manner as to have an indirectly harmful effect upon them.

## **The Change Universal**

Whatever may be the feelings of some of your ardent admirers, I hope you and I are both agreed that we are both very common and ordinary persons. The political world that lives, works and struggles consciously, can analyse you or me with the same completeness as dissecting an ordinary insect. After the year 1900 the world changed from what it was immediately before the year 1900. Before 1900 leaders who gave expression to submission and to legislative hypocrisy and worked to build up hopes of salvation on such instruments of legislation were popular leaders, as Gladstone was to the British, Bismarck to the Germans, or Parnell to the Irish, or Dadabhai or Pherozeshah and Surendra Nath to the Indians. By the year 1900 the masses of men got tired and sick and their hearts began to burn with fire. The change came on very rapidly and universally, and only such individuals as expressed the burning fire of the heart and the revolt of the suffering human beings were taken as leaders.

## **Three Tasks**

The first task of those leaders was to express boldly and fearlessly the unexpressed voice of the people. The second

task of these leaders was, without waiting for the new, to obstruct the old with such efficiency as to make it absolutely impossible for the old order to continue to function. The third task was to reconstruct and arduously and slowly to build up a new life. Ireland produced a De Valera. He did No. 1 and No. 2, and his people are now bravely carrying on his task No. 3. Russia has produced Lenin. He did No. 1 and No. 2, and though his life was short, he led his people on the right path regarding No. 3. Turkey produced Kemal. He did No. 1 and No. 2, and is fortunate enough to be living and vigorous to carry on his task No. 3. China produced Sun Yat Sen. He completed No. 1 and No. 2, and after his death his well-organised and well-disciplined followers are carrying on task No. 3. In Italy, though in contrary direction, Mussolini plays the same individual part. India at that moment announced to the world her leader to be Gandhi.

You performed No. 1, but you abandoned task No. 2, and so task No. 3 is out of the question, and we are so overwhelmed with the disastrous defeat at the second stage of your struggle that our lot to-day is harder than before to attain success over the conditions of the past. Instead of making the past conditions inoperative, they have become more rigorously operative in India, and now worse still, the hopes of a future struggle are being continually lessened even by the reversal of the psychological advantage that we had. Your own admission and that of your followers, as well as the facts of life, make it clear that the psychology and the enthusiasm of the early days has vanished and the readiness of the people to work for their rightful heritage is turned into hesitancy and fear.

It is from this point of view that we, who observe your mistakes and carefully study your further perseverance in them, make bold to demand from you in the name of the suffering humanity of India, as well as of other countries, that you give your services to humanity in consultation and co-operation with others so as to retrieve the lost position. Pray do not misunderstand me as "attacking" you or wishing for your disappearance from public life. The purpose of this letter is to show you the faults and defects of your policy and your acts, and therefore this letter contains only your defects, but it by no means argues that you do not possess qualities that are estimable and that can be yet of great value. These qualities require no enumeration.

The great psychological wave having once died away, the perseverance of yourself and your immediate disciples



in the same direction automatically becomes a degenerate form of the original activities. Here again you must permit me to speak as man to man.

### **What is Your Object?**

You have created an influence over our countrymen in the lowest strata of society wider and deeper than anything else. However, what is your real object? If your object is metaphysical or religious, your policy should be to cultivate a psychology of obedience and reverence towards you and diffidence in themselves as compared to your great self. If your purpose is to give your share in the national and political work, your approach to the people should be on terms of absolute equality and your task must be to inspire confidence into them. From this point of view you must stop allowing people to address you as a Mahatma. I have heard from your many friends that you have never wished this word to be used, and no one really expects you to do otherwise, but that does not mean that you should not or that you cannot suppress it immediately. You can easily refuse to receive letters so addressed, and you can easily refuse to attend functions where you are advertised with this appellation. You have only to declare your wish publicly instead of whispering about it to a few friends and the thing will be done.

### **Let Masses Think**

With some experience of political propaganda and mass mentality, I am speaking to you in earnest that our first approach to the people must be based on the fact that our powers are not greater than that of others. If you go into a bunch of villagers and start out by being called and known as a brother you create a sense of confidence and self-reliance in them. If you go to them with a long story first spread by your friends about 21 days' fasting and then with a discovery of yourself as a Mahatma, even though the villagers may think about your charka with a superstitious awe, they acquire no confidence in themselves, and they will only believe that what you say or do is the task of such superior persons and high souls like yourself and not of ordinary mortals. Such a mentality spread wholesale over the country becomes most injurious in the long run.

You should rigorously stop crowds and processions of human beings, specially poor women and little children, passing you with folded hands and downcast eyes. Once you

create this phase of abject submission of man to man, no wonder that you should yourself despair of obtaining civil disobedience from your own followers. You now complain that the masses are not ready for any such self-assertion, but even if that were so, your whole procedure is certainly not making them more ready for it.

### **More Damnable than Untouchability**

Then there is one thing that I witnessed at Yeotmal which has hurt me greatly, and I had slight evidence of it before. Your work regarding the removal of untouchability is grand in its aspiration, and is not bad in its success as it is generally carried on. However, I strongly object to your permitting my countrymen and countrywomen to touch your feet and put their fingers in their eyes. Such touchability appears to be more damnable than untouchability, and I would sooner wish that two persons did not touch each other than any one human being should be touched by another in the way in which you were touched.

The depressed classes were subject to a sort of general disability, but this new phase of a man of the depressed class worshipping the feet of his deliverer is a more real individual depression and degradation of life, and however much you misunderstand me, I must call upon you to stop this nonsense. It is no use saying that you don't like it; it is a matter of your not stopping it when nothing is easier in the world for you than to stop it. You are ruining the mentality and the psychology of these villagers for another generation or two. You are preparing the country not for mass civil disobedience but for servile obedience and for a belief that there are superior persons on earth and Mahatmas in this life at a time when in this country the white man's prestige is already a dangerous obstacle in our way. Politically this career of yours is ruinous, and from a humanitarian point of view its degenerating influence appears to me to be a moral plague.

As regards the organisation of industrial labour, you are not ready to give your share, when we know that your co-operation would be of a higher value in inviting workers to the fold of the Trade Union Congress. You don't realise that by such co-operation you would actually help in preventing many preventable deaths, especially of poor, innocent babies. Then you go one step further, and you use your influence by frequent declarations which discourage others from taking up this most necessary and urgent work. Then at times you

go still further and you actually and deliberately fraternise and co-operate with the master class, so as to make the task of labour organisers not only difficult but almost unjustifiable in the eyes of poor workers. You may defend this process whichever way you like, but the experienced world can only see there the exploitation of the spirit of superstition and of ignorance amongst the poor workers at the cost of human lives and their families and for the benefit of the bank accounts of the happy minority that rules the roost.

I remember in London we all read the description of your royal reception at Jamshedpur and your acceptance of an address in a steel casket with a purse, as if in that Jamshedpur under-feeding, bad housing, under-clothing does not go on, as if deaths, which are preventable under modern scientific principles, are not daily taking place, as if men were never driven to resort to strike, through unreasonable obstinacy of their employers, and as if even military operations against workers had never taken place. I have confessed above that I have looked at this picture of your performance with disappointment from a long distance. Comrade, you have to take the world as it is, and you have to believe that all the labour world have looked upon that picture with a similar disappointment. Even with all your personal power and success you will not be able to change the great law of worldly life that those who are not with us are against us, and in the name of the working classes I want to call upon you to remember it.

I have put down my candid thoughts in the above paragraphs not with a view to disburden my soul of personal grievance; I fully realise that I am courting great unpopularity in the eyes of my own fellow countrymen whose good wishes and good opinion are as dear to me as to you. What I am really attempting to do is to disburden your mind of a lot of confusion and contradiction and to demand from you in the name of all sufferers not merely that you stop adding to their sufferings but that you come forward and live with us as a brother with brothers, and work with us in a manner and form in which we all consider you to be most fitted and your service to be most valuable. I have already read to you my notes, in which I have mentioned what psychological, political and even revolutionary value can be attached to the khaddar movement. I have no prejudice against it, and I would even preserve and build upon whatever value it may have for a nation's liberty and life. I attach a full copy of

these notes again, which I am now submitting to the Workers' Committee of the Congress for a preliminary consideration.

### **Be a Good Old Gandhi**

What I want of you is that you be a good old Gandhi, put on an ordinary pair of khaddar trousers and coat and come out and work with us in the ordinary way. Come and organise with us (as you alone by yourself have failed) our workers, our peasants, and our youths, not with a metaphysical sentimentality but with a set purpose, a clear-cut and well-defined object and by methods such as by experiment are making success for all human beings.

I am not a believer in slavishly obeying persons, prestige or organisations, but I always believe all past efforts and actions have their elements of good on which we can, if we will, build a stronger future. Instead of developing the vanity of making under-clothing or over-clothing a primary object of administration, and starting some traditions of a sage of Sabarmati, as an ordinary rough-and-tumble man making your food and clothing secondary and unimportant items that should not require any special thought of you, you would still be able to undo great mistakes of the past, to make up for the damage done to India and other Asiatic countries, and be one of the successful workers for India as other successful leaders have actually worked for their own country.

Yes, when I have cast my eyes on you, I am not going to take any point-blank refusal from you. I know there will be the usual popular cry against me that I ought not to have used such language or such words, etc., etc., but I do believe that in an attempt to use artificial polish in our language we become as unfair to the addressee as to ourselves, and it is much better policy to say things as we think, as we talk among friends. Therefore before I go, I should like you to get up one morning as from a dream and to say, "Yes," and many of us can soon be put together in a good team, and set about putting an end to so many deplorable conditions of life in India, about which none of us has any doubt.

I remain,

Yours fraternally,

SHAPURJI SAKLATVALA.

## GANDHI'S REPLY—AN ARTICLE

*"Bombay Daily Mail," March 17th, 1927.*

AHMEDABAD, March 16th.

"Comrade" Saklatvala is dreadfully in earnest. His sincerity is transparent. His sacrifices are great. His passion for the poor is unquestioned. I have therefore given his fervent, open appeal to me that close attention which that of a sincere patriot and humanitarian must command. But in spite of all my desire to say "Yes" to his appeal, I must say "No" if I am to return sincerity for sincerity, or if I am to act according to my faith. But I can say "Yes" to his appeal after my own fashion. For underneath his intense desire that I should co-operate with him on his terms there is the emphatic implied condition that I must say "Yes" only if his argument satisfies my head and heart. A "No" uttered from deepest conviction is better and greater than a "Yes" merely uttered to please, or what is worse, to avoid trouble.

In spite of all the desire to offer hearty co-operation, I find myself against a blind wall. His facts are fiction and his deductions based upon fiction are necessarily baseless. And where these facts are true my whole energy is concentrated upon nullifying their (to me) poisonous results. I am sorry, but we do stand at opposite poles. There is, however, one great thing in common between us. Both claim to have the good of the country and humanity as our only goal. Though, therefore, we may for the moment seem to be going in opposite directions, I expect we shall meet some day. I promise to make ample amends when I discover my error. Meanwhile, however, my error, since I do not recognise it as such, must be my shield and my solace.

### **Satanic Civilisation**

For unlike "comrade" Saklatvala, I do not believe that multiplication of wants and machinery contrived to supply them is taking the world a single step nearer its goal. "Comrade" Saklatvala swears by the modern rush. I wholeheartedly detest this mad desire to destroy distance and time, to increase animal appetites and go to the ends of the earth in search of their satisfaction. If modern civilisation stands for all this, and I have understood it to do so, I call it satanic, and with it the present system of government, its best ex-

ponent. I distrust its schemes of amelioration of the lot of the poor, I distrust its currency reform, I distrust its army and navy. In the name of civilisation and its own safety this Government has continuously bled the masses, it has enslaved the people, it has bribed the powerful with distinctions and riches and it has sought to crush under the weight of its despotic regulations the liberty-loving patriots who would not be won over either by flattery or riches. I would destroy that system to-day, if I had the power. I would use the most deadly weapons, if I believed that they would destroy it. I refrain only because the use of such weapons would only perpetuate the system though it may destroy its present administrators. Those who seek to destroy men rather than their manners, adopt the latter and become worse than those whom they destroy under the mistaken belief that the manners will die with the men. They do not know the root of the evil.

The movement of 1920 was designed to show that we could not reform the soulless system by violent means, thus becoming soulless ourselves, but we could do so only by not becoming victims of the system, *i.e.*, by non-co-operation, by saying an emphatic "No" to every advance made to entrap us into the nets spread by Satan.

That movement suffered a check, but is not dead. My promise was conditional. The conditions were simple and easy. But they proved too difficult for those who took a leading part in the movement.

### **Bardoli Decision**

What "comrade" Saklatvala believes to be my error and failure I regard to be the expression of my strength and deep conviction. It may be an error, but so long as my conviction that it is truth abides, my very error must, as it does, sustain me. My retracing my steps at Bardoli\* I hold to be an act of wisdom and supreme service to the country. The Government is the weaker for that decision. It would have regained all lost positions if I had persisted after Chauri Chaura in carrying out the terms of what was regarded as an ultimatum to the Viceroy.

My "comrade" is wrong in saying that the South African movement was a failure. If it was, my whole life must be written down as a failure. And his invitation to me to enlist under his colours must be held to be meaningless. South

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\* At Bardoli, Gandhi "called off" his policy of non-violent resistance to the Government, owing to a riot having occurred at Chauri Chaura.

Africa gave the start to my life's mission. Nor do I consider it to be wrong to have offered, during the late war, the services of my companions and myself, under my then convictions, as ambulance men.

### **The Khadi Movement**

This great M.P. is in a hurry. He disdains to study facts. Let me inform him that the Khadi movement is not on the wane. It did last year at least twenty times as much work as during 1920. It is now serving not less than 50,000 spinners in 1,500 villages besides weavers, washermen, printers, dyers and tailors.

Mr. Saklatvala asks what Khaddar stands for. Well, it stands for simplicity, not shoddiness. It sits well on the shoulders of the poor, and it can be made, as it was made in the days of yore, to adorn the bodies of the richest and the most artistic men and women. It is reviving ancient art and crafts. It does not seek to destroy all machinery, but it does regulate its use and check its weedy growth. It uses machinery for the service of the poorest in their own cottages. The wheel is itself an exquisite piece of machinery.

Khaddar delivers the poor from the bonds of the rich and creates a moral and spiritual bond between the classes and the masses. It restores to the poor somewhat of what the rich have taken from them.

Khaddar does not displace a single cottage industry. On the contrary, it is being daily recognised that it is becoming the centre of other village industries. Khaddar brings a ray of hope to the widow's broken-up home.

But it does not prevent her from earning more if she can. It prevents no one from seeking a better occupation. Khaddar offers honourable employment to those in need of some. It utilises the idle hours of the nation. The esteemed comrade quotes with pride the work of those who offer more lucrative employment. Let him know that Khaddar does that automatically. It cannot put annas into the pockets of the poor without putting rupees into the pockets of some. Whereas those who begin their work in the cities, though they are no doubt doing good work, touch but the fringe of the question, Khaddar touches the very centre and therefore necessarily includes the rest.

### **India's Villages**

But the whole of the impatient Communist's letter concentrates itself upon the cities and thus ignores India and

Indian conditions which are to be found only in her 700,000 villages. The half a dozen modern cities are an excrescence, and serve at the present moment the evil purpose of draining the life-blood of the villages. Khaddar is an attempt to revise and reverse the process, and establish a better relationship between the cities and the villages. The cities with their insolent torts are a constant menace to the life and liberty of the villagers.

Khaddar has the greatest organising power in it because it has itself to be organised and because it affects all India. If Khaddar rained from heaven it would be a calamity. But as it can only be manufactured by the willing co-operation of starving millions and thousands of middle class men and women, its success means the best organisation conceivable along peaceful lines. If cooking had to be revived and required the same organisation, I should claim for it the same merit that I claim for Khaddar.

### **Triumph of Non-Violence**

My Communist comrade finds fault with my work among the labourers in Jamshedpur because I accepted an address in Jamshedpur, not from the Tatas but from the employees. His disapprobation is due, I expect, to the fact that the late Mr. Ratan Tata was in the chair. Well, I am not ashamed of the honour. Mr. Tata appeared to me to be a humane and considerate employer. He readily granted, I think, all the prayers of the employees, and I heard later that the agreement was being honourably kept. I do ask and receive donations for my work from the rich as well as the poor. The former gladly give me their donations.

This is no personal triumph. It is the triumph of non-violence, which I endeavour to represent, be it ever so inadequately. It is to me a matter of perennial satisfaction that I retain generally the affection and the trust of those whose principles and policies I oppose. The South Africans gave me personally their confidence and extended their friendship. In spite of my denunciation of British policy and system I enjoy the affection of thousands of English men and women, and in spite of unqualified condemnation of modern materialistic civilisation, the circle of European and American friends is ever widening. It is again a triumph of non-violence.



## Economics of Khaddar

Lastly about labour in the cities. Let there be no misunderstanding. I am not opposed to organisation of labour, but as in everything else, I want its organisation along Indian lines, or if you will, my lines. I am doing it. The Indian labourer knows it instinctively. I do not regard capital as the enemy of labour. I hold their co-ordination to be perfectly possible. The organisation of labour that I undertook in South Africa, Champaran or Ahmedabad was in no spirit of hostility to the capitalists. The resistance in each case and to the extent it was thought necessary was wholly successful. My ideal is equal distribution, but so far as I can see it is not to be realised. I therefore work for equitable distribution. This I seek to attain through Khaddar. And since its attainment must sterilise British exploitation at its centre, it is calculated to purify the British connection. Hence in that sense Khaddar leads to Swaraj.

The Mahatma I must leave to his fate. Though a non-co-operator I shall gladly subscribe to a Bill to make it criminal for anybody to call me Mahatma and to touch my feet. Where I can impose the law myself, *i.e.*, at the Ashram, the practice is criminal.

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## GANDHI ON TRADE UNION ORGANISATION

[*This letter from Gandhi arises out of several letters by Saklatvala about labour conditions in Ahmedabad, where Gandhi leads the local Labour movement and is keeping it outside the Indian T.U.C.*]

NANDI HILLS, May 10th.

Dear Friend,

Shrimati Anasuyabai has sent me your letter to herself and your joint letter to her, Gulzarilal and Desai. I have read them both carefully. I had your own letter also. I could not reply to you earlier for want of your address.

As soon as I heard from Anasuyabai I put myself in communication with Motilalji. I am daily expecting his reply. You shall know it as soon as I receive it. I thank you for the confidence you repose in me, and it will be a joy to me if I can render any personal service to you; but I am afraid my longing and ability to render service have to stop there.

So far as our ideals are concerned we stand apart. Whilst

Anasuyabai and Shankerlal Banker, as also Gulzarilal and Desai, are absolutely free agents, they have exercised their choice of accepting my guidance in framing their labour policy and administration. I must therefore shoulder my share of the responsibility for what is happening about labour in Ahmedabad. I have certainly advised them to keep Ahmedabad labour aloof from the other labour movements in India so long as Ahmedabad labour chooses to remain under their guidance.

### **Workers Have no Minds**

My reason is exceedingly simple. Labour in India is still extremely unorganised. The labourers have no mind of their own when it comes to national policy or even the general welfare of labour itself. Labourers in various parts of India have no social contact and no other mutual ties. It is provincial, and even in the same city it is highly communal. It is not everywhere wisely guided. In many places it is under selfish and highly unscrupulous guidance.

There is no absolute cohesion amongst provincial labour leaders, and there is little discipline among sub-leaders. The latter do not uniformly tender obedience to their provincial chiefs. Leaders in different provinces have no single policy to follow. In these circumstances an all-India union can only exist on paper. I hold it to be suicidal therefore for Ahmedabad to think of belonging to it.

My own conviction is that Ahmedabad is rendering a service to labour all over India by its abstention, or, as I call it, self-restraint. If it can succeed in perfecting its own organisation it is bound to serve as a model to the rest of India, and its success is bound to prove highly infectious.

But I am free to confess that there is as yet no assurance of success in the near future. The energy of the workers is sorely tried in combating disruptive forces that ever continue to crop up. There is the Hindu-Muslim tension. There is the question of touchables and untouchables in Hinduism, etc.

### **For Sake of Labour Movement**

Add to this extreme ignorance and selfishness among the labourers themselves. It is a marvel to me that labour in Ahmedabad has made the progress it has during the last 12 years of its corporate existence. If, then, Ahmedabad remains isolated it does so not selfishly, but for the sake of labour as a whole.

One word as to the policy. It is not anti-capitalistic.

The idea is to take from capital labour's due share and no more, and this not by paralysing capital, but by reform among labourers from within and by their own self-consciousness; not, again through the cleverness and manœuvring of non-labour leaders, but by educating labour to evolve its own leadership and its own self-reliant, self-existing organisation. Its direct aim is not in the least degree political. Its direct aim is internal reform and evolution of internal strength. The indirect result of this evolution when, if ever it becomes complete, will naturally be tremendously political.

### **Not a Pawn on Political Chess-Board**

I have not, therefore, the remotest idea of exploiting labour or organising it for any direct political power of first class importance when it becomes a self-existing unit. Labour, in my opinion, must not become a pawn in the hands of the politician on the political chess-board. It must, by its sheer strength, dominate the chess-board. And that can only happen if I can retain the intelligent and voluntary co-operation of the workers in Ahmedabad, and if our joint effort ultimately succeeds.

This is my dream. I hug it because it gives me all the consolation I need, and the policy I have outlined, you will recognise, is a direct outcome of my implicit belief in and acceptance of non-violence. It may be all a delusion; but it is as much a reality with me as life itself so long as I do not see it as delusion, but see it as the only life-giving force.

You will now see why I cannot, even if I had the power, respond to your appeal for dividing the funds collected by me in accordance with your suggestion. But I may tell you that I have not even the power. The funds have been collected purely for Khadi work, and it would be criminal misappropriation on my part to divert them to any other use.

This letter may not please you. I shall be sorry if it does not. But I regard you as a fellow-seeker after truth, and if my reading of you is correct, there is no reason why my having told you the whole truth and nothing but the truth, should not please you immensely. It is not given to all of us to agree with one another in all our opinions; but it is given to every one of us to tender the same respect for the opinions and actions of our fellows as we expect for our own.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. GANDHI.

## SAKLATVALA'S BLUNT REPLY

July 1st, 1927.

Dear Comrade Gandhi,

I am in receipt of your letter of 10th May, and I see that you have written it from the Nandi Hills; where, I presume, you are recuperating from your illness. I trust you will be restored to health by the time this letter reaches you.

Let me say in my usual blunt way that "I am returning to my attack upon you." Of course, you understand the meaning and nature of my "attacks" upon you, namely, that recognising in you a man of indomitable spirit, with a real propagandist's heart and qualities, I want you to deal with the various Indian movements in the way in which success is made for such movements in other parts of the world.

### **In the Midst of Reverses**

I am not coming to you in the midst of your success, in the midst of great victories for our poor people, in the midst of great defeats and setbacks to our imperialist oppressors, with merely a fanciful appeal to you to adopt some new method. I come to you rather in the time of great reverses for our country, when on every front—political, economic and social, we are suffering reverse upon reverse, are being pushed back everywhere, are disorganised, disunited and dispirited in all departments of public life, and our insolent antagonists are launching attack after attack upon us.

I still want you to recognise that the forces within a nation do not depend merely on relative numbers. Now one small section of a nation and now another becomes an important factor, occupying a key position at some critical moment in the affairs of the country, and counting as a national force even though in itself a minority. The peasants and the villagers may become at times the most successful factor in defying the tax gatherer; the soldiers and the fighters may become at times an important factor to reckon with, when in their own mind and consciousness they are unwilling to launch out upon an unholy campaign such as the one carried out by the Government of India in China. And at times the industrial workers, however small in numbers, may become for a country the all-important factor of life, and may bring about a paralysis of the most powerful activities of the imperial exploiter or of a dominating class.

Because our country is largely agricultural, it does not

at all follow that in the economy of modern life our organised workers shall be of less value or shall become a less important section of the community than in any other country which is more industrialised and less agricultural, under similar circumstances. If a large country has to depend upon a small number of industrial workers as compared to agriculturalists, the power of the industrial workers does not become any the less on that account.

### **Country-wide T.U. Movement**

It is with the above observations that I have been constantly attempting to direct your mind to the necessity and importance of an organised industrial labour movement within our national activity. Such a movement, in the first place, must be national and embrace the whole country. It is not for you and me to-day to devise new and fantastic organisations when we see the value of the existing trade union movements in all the advancing and powerful countries of the world. We must have an All-India Trade Union movement.

I am not at the present moment arguing about your methods or about your ideals. I am only denouncing your idea that the organisation of labour should be sectional, should be communal and should be limited to a little spot like Ahmedabad. Did you ever try to have an Indian National Congress for Ahmedabad alone? Did you ever try to confine the Khaddar movement to Ahmedabad alone? Did you ever try to have the National Education movement confined to Ahmedabad? Why, then, should you try to restrict your ideal labour movement to Ahmedabad?

You are not weakening the political movement, the Khaddar movement, or the National Education movement by encouraging Ahmedabad or any one important district to fall away and stand aloof from the whole national movement; then why should you do so in the case of the large national labour movement by asking and encouraging an important industrial centre like Ahmedabad to stand aloof and alone? Let me examine your reasoning at some length.

You say labour in India is extremely unorganised. Do you not say, therefore, that I am right in appealing to you to employ your great power in organising labour on an adequate national basis? You cannot argue that our numbers are unwieldy, for many Western countries have larger numbers of workers to deal with; nor can you find fault with the

vastness of the area of our country, for both Russia and China have overcome their greater difficulties in this respect.

You complain that Indian labourers have no mind of their own on matters of general policy or even of labour policy. That is exactly where the value and need of propaganda comes in. Had our workers their conscious policy I would not have been driven to urge you to help them and to preach to them in order to organise them.

For Khaddar and for non-co-operation you fearlessly carry out a whirlwind campaign all over the country amongst villagers and workers who had no conception of your ideal before your propaganda reached them. You, with your colleagues, confessed to carrying out a labour propaganda in Ahmedabad; all that I ask is that Ahmedabad should be merely a part of a whole and that your services should be unreservedly given to the whole movement.

### **You Can't Stop Industrialism**

You say in your letter "Labourers in various parts of India have no social contact and no other mutual ties." That is where you ignore and overlook the most powerful common factor of life that has unfailingly united men and women in other countries despite their hundred and one, and sometimes very bitter, differences on religious, social or clan questions. No man has succeeded nor shall one now succeed in stopping modern industrialism, and the economic factor is the one common factor that applies to, and that unites, men and women of various social, national, religious and communal textures. Hours, wages, standards of life, political and legislative needs of the workers, are on the whole so uniform that when organised to battle around those wants they have invariably forgotten and drowned their internal dissensions. The absence of labour unity and trade union discipline is a more serious loss to the India of to-day than we have yet learned to observe.

On the one hand, you blame Indian labour for being sectarian and communal, and on the other hand, when the All-Indian Trade Union Congress is struggling to build up national and international labour unity, you feel tempted to induce Ahmedabad to stand separate and apart. You say: "It is not everywhere wisely guided." Does that not rather support my argument that you and other popular Congress and Swaraj leaders must take up the work? Then you describe various factors making for dissension and disunity amongst

labour organisers. All that merely strengthens my appeal that all sane and truly selfless persons in public life should devote themselves to the task of organising the industrial and agricultural workers.

### **That is not Trade Unionism**

The persons who have the organising of labour in Ahmedabad may be doing well owing to the fortuitous circumstances that they possess more means than most other Indian groups could possibly have. There is a mild form of welfare work carried on and conciliation is established between individual complainants and their bosses. That is all. *That* is not modern trade unionism struggling for justice and the right of the workers to possess in common what they produce for the common good, and to control and regularise their own destiny.

What has Ahmedabad labour done? What can Ahmedabad labour do if it is torn away from the All-India Trade Union movement? It can certainly never aspire to be either a pattern or a model. Can Ahmedabad labour secure better hours, better wages, better education, a better franchise and the right of the workers to compensation in industrial accidents, unemployment allowances, old age pensions, etc., unless and until labour in the whole Bombay Presidency and in all India, obtain the same? Ahmedabad district by itself, as a district, even of well-organised labour, cannot possibly do anything for itself, whereas by holding aloof it can weaken the Labour movement in the rest of India and can strengthen the power and opportunities of the master class to oppress the working class.

### **More than Criminal**

Ambalal Seth from Ahmedabad showed me a commendable welfare scheme of his own, but I soon discovered him to be the exception and not the rule. I say unhesitatingly that 90 per cent. of the labourers in Ahmedabad are living under conditions much worse than the conditions prevailing amongst the employees of some European firms that I observed in Cawnpore and Calcutta. I put it to you unhesitatingly and without exaggeration, that 90 per cent. of the children of Ahmedabad workers are made to live by their masters, whom you consider so virtuous and patriotic, under conditions which would be condemned and punished as criminal if dogs, horses or other domestic animals were kept

under them in most parts of Europe or America. The standard of wages in Ahmedabad is, on the average, lower than that prevailing in Bombay.

Despite all this nothing will hinder Ahmedabad labour from carrying on its own experiments, merely because it affiliates to the All-India Trade Union Congress. All over the world the Trade Union Congresses of various countries contain within them labour federations and trade unions of different trade and provinces pursuing different policies, and yet united together for national demands and general standards. That neither the All-India Trade Union Congress nor any federation of textile workers can afford to remain for ever without its branches in an important industrial city like Ahmedabad is quite obvious, and your policy is only forcing a division in Ahmedabad itself.

We had in Britain a very unfortunate example of a miners' organisation in Fifeshire, attempting such aloofness to the detriment of both sides, but they have at last seen the wisdom of working for unity. I do not see that any of your reasons prove that the circumstances in Ahmedabad are peculiar and necessitate its holding aloof to such an extent as to justify a damaging breach in the All-India Trade Union movement. The best that Ahmedabad can do is to agree to the affiliation to the T.U.C. The question of Ahmedabad policy being a model of help and assistance to other unions can arise and be of practical value only after such affiliation. Your personal decision as to whether you should confine your interest in labour to Ahmedabad alone, or should extend it to the larger national movement, can remain the same even if the Ahmedabad Labour Union becomes affiliated to Congress.

Now with regard to your labour policy, which you explain so clearly, do let me submit at once that whatever your individual views may be on policy and whatever may be acceptable to, or not acceptable to, the workers of Ahmedabad, all that has no bearing on Ahmedabad's affiliation to the T.U.C. of India, and all that provides no justification for Ahmedabad's aloofness from and splitting of a large national movement.

Your idea of a policy for labour, as you explained, would in reality put you outside even those who are regarded as the "friends of the workers," never mind the champions of their cause. However, you confess that you are still in a dream, and even that it may all be a delusion, you show the ordinary confusion of thought of all apologists for capitalism by not



sharply distinguishing between capital, capitalism and the control of capital, and you do not clearly see that in order to avoid any clash between labour and capital the ultimate stage must be one of the control of capital by labour, which produces the entire 100 per cent. of capital, and that society itself must be composed entirely of labourers by hand or brain serving one another as a common duty and not for the sake of making something out of it for individuals who would not labour, but who would exercise their legal rights of confiscating the fruits of other people's labour.

The one great thing to me is that you so readily and frankly admit that labour should be so organised as to remain self-conscious, self-reliant and self-existing, evolving its own leadership and aim, and that such evolution, when developed, would be tremendously political and would dominate the chess-board of national policy. This outlook of yours satisfactorily defines the confusion, the timidity and the limitations of labour's rights that you seem inclined to impose upon the earlier stages of labour development.

Whilst Indian labour is illiterate, underpaid, underfed, mercilessly exploited and legislatively outplayed, it needs the help and assistance of outside people like yourself and those who are valiantly struggling to build up a Trades Union Congress and also a Workers' and Peasants' Party for all India. Black sheep there always will be, especially when society is fired with an evil zeal to make economic, political and social progress along the lines of an individualist competitive system, but I have really met and seen in India some fine men and women working in the cause of labour, who would be equal in trustworthiness to any European organisers, although perhaps less experienced. Hence my second request to you personally, which I still press for, viz., that besides securing the affiliation of Ahmedabad to the All-India Trades Union Congress you personally give your valuable assistance to that body, especially in the matter of organising industrial workers and peasants on a large scale all over India.

Despite your failing health you are an active and truly All-Indian propagandist capable of covering enormous areas in a short time. Your popularity and charm enable you to capture the mass psychology and would render easier the otherwise stupendous task of organising an illiterate, overawed and semi-starved population of many millions; your inspiring co-operation would give zest to the other voluntary workers in labour's cause; and I may even frankly say that

your own new activity would give a suitable opening for practical work to the thousands of our youth who once enlisted in your movement and then cooled down in the absence of a practical and convincing programme.

I do not consider it necessary to discuss the various reactionary sentences that you use against the full economic and political rights of labour. During the past month, during the debate in the House of Commons on the diabolical Trade Union Bill, we have heard Tory and Liberal capitalists use almost identical sentences and arguments, but all the intelligent working class world realises such sentiments to be but a cloak for the unholy desire of a rapacious and murderous employing class. In your case you merely lay it down as your speculative idea of what the early stages of labour organisation would be, and it is not worth while quarrelling over so long as I can see that in the ultimate outcome of labour organisation you are not drawing any close line of unnatural limitations.

### **Let us Join Hands**

You may think it must be twenty years hence before this final stage can be reached, and I may think it can be reached within two years, but it is not a question to be decided by you and me. It can only be decided by events. Our immediate task and duty is to unite together and to start vigorously on this great work.

I also do not share your views regarding the use of public funds entrusted to you. By calling it a Khaddar Fund you are warping your own vision and limiting it in terms of yarn and cloth, but I feel sure that the public, who subscribe funds to you are doing so with the idea of working out the emancipation and liberation of their country, and are not sending you instalments as shareholders in a primitive company with circumscribed duties in their articles of association. Every national movement must fail, and will fail if, under modern conditions of industrial life and capitalist power, the labourers and the peasantry are not organised. As much of my future programme depends upon your present decision I shall be grateful for early reconsideration of the matter by you.

Yours fraternally,

SHAPURJI SAKLATVALA.

## GANDHI'S REFUSAL TO SHIFT

As at the Ashram,  
Sabarmati,

July 27th, 1927.

Dear Friend,

I have your letter. I should love to respond, as I know you would like me to, to your earnest call, but I see that we look at things differently. Pray do not think that my labour work, unlike Khaddar work, is merely confined to Ahmedabad. If labour elsewhere will accept my guidance I would certainly organise it all over. But I am content with guiding Ahmedabad, and hope that if Ahmedabad proves successful it will be copied by the whole of India.

There is no analogy between the Khaddar movement and the labour movement. If Khaddar, like labour, were conducted by several distinct organisations probably I would be compelled to restrict my activities to those organisations only that would listen to me. I have no magical power for bringing about organisation out of disorganisation. The organic touch with labour all over India I have, because wherever I go labour flocks around me. But that touch is not strong enough to enable me to organise it after my own fashion. I give you my assurance that the moment I feel that I can usefully come in I shall not hesitate to offer my services to the All-India organisation.

About the Khaddar fund, I can only say you have written without knowledge. Even law will prevent me from using the Khaddar fund for any other than the advertised purpose, even if my conscience becomes elastic enough to permit me to use it otherwise.

I read the other day in the papers that you had a slight operation performed on you, and that you were already on the road to recovery. I hope that you have now fully recovered. I wrote to you only the other day about your own personal affairs which will not escape my attention.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. GANDHI.

## SAKLATVALA'S FINAL APPEAL

September 14th, 1927.

Dear Comrade Gandhi,

I am in Dublin, but my thoughts are still with you. British imperialism now declares point-blank that the world cannot disarm, for Britain has to keep in chains India, Africa, China, Arabia and the rest, and if her navy becomes a danger to others, other Powers may keep equally large forces. Those who in Egypt, India, Ireland and China are carrying on an imperialist or a pro-imperialist policy, directly or indirectly, are therefore standing in the way of world peace, and are—perhaps unconsciously—guilty of a policy of periodical universal bloodshed.

### Happy Family and Militarist Tyranny

My thoughts again turn to you to lead our country on the right path to break with imperialism for the sake of prosperity and happiness of millions of British workers, and in the cause of world humanitarianism. Great Britain, Australia and Canada can and may become one united, happy family, but enslaved Ireland, India, China and Africa make that happy family union an imperialist and militarist tyranny. Only a few rich and unscrupulous British families want such an Empire, and not the man-in-the-street.

I was just walking down the main street of Dublin last night. I saw around me a new Ireland with a new Irish soul arising out of the ashes of their 1916 rebellion for independence. I can send you no better message from the Irish heart than the one that I saw in this street, carved on the Parnell monument, and once uttered by Parnell himself: "No man has a right to fix the boundary to the march of a nation. No man has a right to say to his country, 'Thus far shalt thou go and no further.'" We have never attempted to fix the *ne plus ultra* to the process of Ireland's nationhood, and we never shall."

Comrade Gandhi, let me appeal to you to do your duty in a practical manner and as quickly as possible before the last lingering vestige of opportunity wafts away.

Yours fraternally,

SHAPURJI SAKLATVALA.

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