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## The Indian Legislative Chambers.

DEMOCRACY, after all, is government by speeches. In the provinces in which the Congress Ministry is functioning, democracy is in full action. This necessarily implies the making of speeches both within the legislative chambers and outside them. It will be remembered that, during the budget session of the assemblies, the Ministers whose administrative activities and intentions are critically reviewed by the Opposition, have an arduous time in defending their policies and achievements. We have the greatest sympathy for the members of the legislative bodies and the ministers, who, assembled with hostile intentions towards each other's view-points and principles underlying the administration of the country, find in the month of May conditions not propitious for the smooth and speedy transaction of the affairs of the State. The agitation of the House, with frequent exhibitions of temper, alien, however, to the pacific and philosophic disposition of Indian legislators, must be due to the temperature variations from the floor to the ceiling of the chambers, whose atmosphere also becomes charged with dust and dirt, and perhaps also due to the presence of odours resulting from big congregations of people. These are annoying factors. We do not understand the

special sanctity attached by the Central and Provincial Governments to the months of March and April, for which, however, popular sentiment, for obvious reasons, does not express any tender solicitude. If the Congress Ministry should order a medical inspection, accompanied by the application of intelligence tests, of all the legislators including the members of the Treasury Bench, before and after the budget session, the results of such investigation will disclose the alarming extent to which the physical and mental efficiency of the legislators has suffered. March and April are not favourable for physical and mental exertion in the tropics, because the thermometer behaves as madly during these months as the winds become capricious. Therefore the ancient Law Givers of India wisely interdicted long travels and arduous mental work, recommending that men should spend these trying months in a kind of semi-æstivation. It is obvious that the efficiency of administration depends upon the health and comfort of the ministers and legislators, and the responsibility of devising the means of keeping them fit devolves naturally upon the electorates.

We know what health is. It is a state of unconsciousness of the body. But human comfort is an illusive thing. Perhaps it is

successfully accomplished if we can dispense with the necessity for any physiological adjustment of our bodies to our external environment. When the human organism reacts violently to the atmospheric conditions, such as capricious fluctuations of temperature, moisture, dust, and offensive odours, then these reactions attract our attention, which in the interests of public service should not be diverted from the transaction of legislative business. Comfort depends upon the heat control mechanisms of the body and upon the digestive apparatus functioning insensibly, and the sensory organs receiving continuous pleasant stimulation. Do the legislative chambers provide such conditions as would promote the health and comfort of the legislators and maintain their efficiency for public service? Suppose all the Houses of Assembly and Council Chambers are air conditioned, and the food and places of residence of the members of legislature are medically controlled and supervised, in a way calculated to promote their health and comfort during the session, can we not reasonably hope for better service to the country? We are definitely of opinion that the progress of the country entirely depends on the healthy digestion of its administrators. Mr. Pecksniff was perfectly correct when he declared that, while regaling on his humble fare and putting in motion the most beautiful machinery of digestion, he really felt at such times as if he was doing a public service.

In promoting the health and efficiency of our statesmen and politicians, it becomes increasingly urgent that the legislative chambers ought to be provided with what may be called comfort air conditioning equipment. The underlying requirements are knowledge concerning the human body and how it reacts to the environment. Most people give no consideration to the atmospheric conditions, and they unquestioningly accept them as the few necessary requirements of life. However, if we examine our intimate relation to the air, we realise its profound significance in our social and political life. Speaking generally, politicians during the Assembly sessions or during their tours in their constituencies may be regarded as imbibing from 40 to 50 pounds of air per day into their respiratory tract, consisting of the most delicate organs of the body. Viewed from this standpoint, the atmospheric surroundings, which we take so

much for granted, become of great importance, and greater attention to factors affecting the purity and satisfactory condition of the air may be expected to result in a profound effect on the comfort, health and longevity of our politicians and statesmen.

If these desirable and necessary ends in the interests of public service have to be procured, it becomes imperative that the legislative chambers will have to be reconstructed according to the plan devised by the air conditioning engineer and the psychological architect. Air conditioning is really air sanitation and air hygiene in crowded rooms, and its purpose is directly to ensure comfort, by making the surrounding healthful, cheerful and pleasant. It is well known that politicians generally produce more heat than non-politicians, and their life depends upon the proper maintenance of the balance between heat production and heat dissipation. The air conditioning engineer therefore has to devote his energies to the factors on the heat loss side of the equation, while the nutrition expert will have to deal with heat production side, by prescribing suitable diet to the ministers and legislators. The responsibilities of the psychological architect are equally great. The shape and size of the building, the correct combination of colours both outside and inside, the surrounding gardens and illuminated fountains, and the prospect which the building commands are extremely important factors exercising profound influence in stimulating mental alertness, softening emotions and promoting cordiality of relationship, so essential for establishing co-operation between the Opposition and Treasury Benches. It has been ascertained that an average sized man 5 feet 9 inches in height and weighing 160 pounds might require 400 B.t.u. of heat per hour for a moderate temperature of 90°F. with moderate relative humidity and under moderate dialectical provocation. It is also known that an average adult person requires nearly 30 cubic feet of outside air per minute in the assembly chambers in order to keep the atmosphere free from odours. But the engineer and architect must have to make due allowance for provincial and individual variations.

Modern researches in psychology seem to establish the fact that the colour combinations of buildings, the colour and cut of clothes, the illumination of the rooms, the shape, size and material of furniture, apart

from the atmospheric conditions, exercise a profound influence on the temper and fitness of the legislators. It must be remembered that during prolonged discussions, they have to sit for hours together, and unless the seats are soft and adjustable to accommodate various physical postures, discomfort and proportionate inattention to discussion must inevitably result. In devising the construction of the building it is absolutely necessary to use materials for the construction of the walls, capable of absorbing all external noises, while preserving the acoustic conditions within unimpaired.

The electoral constituencies must recognise that the theory of human comfort and efficiency is based on regarding the human body as a heat engine, and that human life can exist through only a small range of body temperature centred round 98.6 degrees. If this physiological principle is firmly grasped, it may not be difficult for the electoral bodies to realise the fact that their representatives while discussing controversial measures like the Sarda Act and the Debts Relief Bill, are apt to generate heat equivalent to 2500 B.t.u. per hour and to perceive that, unless provision is made for

its production and for its removal at the same rate for each degree of activity on the part of ministers and other legislators, the normal functions of the human organism are bound to become inefficient, and to that extent the interests of the country are bound to suffer. Both in self-interest and also for altruistic reasons, it is worth while for the country to recognise that the comfort and fitness of its administrators depend upon providing them with the highest and most artistic pleasures in human life. These pleasures, it must be pointed out, are due to causes which are essentially rhythmic. Coloured lights, painted and decorated walls, pleasing gardens, fountains, orchestra, optimum temperature, sweet odours and social teas must have a softening effect on frayed tempers, contributing towards mutual understanding and co-operation in the speedy despatch of State affairs. The electorates must consider the practicability and necessity of providing their representatives with these amenities which would make their life and work in the legislatures efficient, and which would establish communal peace and harmony, resulting in the welfare and prosperity of the country.

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### Planned Rural Reconstruction.\*

THE Report of the Intergovernmental Conference of Far-Eastern Countries on Rural Hygiene is an impressive record. The agenda of the Conference embraced for consideration important problems such as health and medical services, rural reconstruction and collaboration of the population, sanitation and sanitary engineering, nutrition and measures for combating certain diseases in rural districts.

Governments have recently been realising in an increasing measure their obligations to the rural population and programmes working towards the improving of the social, economic, health and cultural conditions of the villagers are becoming more general and more comprehensive. This present Confer-

ence has brought together governmental representatives from the important countries of the East, who are in charge of a great variety of public services for rural uplift. Important decisions have been taken by the delegates and if they are implemented a great step will have been taken towards ameliorating the distressing conditions of the villagers. The discussions were particularly designed to show that the rural problems are of such a character that they demand the concerted planning and action of groups of technical persons, whose fields of activity have in the past been too frequently considered as separate and distinct. The opening of the public health work in rural areas can be used as the driving wedge for the development of a more comprehensive programme embracing education, economics, sociology, engineering and agriculture.

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\* Report of the Intergovernmental Conference of Far-Eastern Countries on Rural Hygiene, held at Bandoeng (Java), August 3rd to 13th, 1937, League of Nations, Health Organization, Geneva, 1937.