

India, Land of Famine

SIRS: Observing social conditions throughout 8,000 miles of India, one year prior to World War II, the problems of Asia and the rest of the world became a challenge to me. An example of India's poverty is a woman I saw on the streets of Calcutta. She sat beside a piece of burning charcoal, attempting to keep warm and to cook a meager bowl of rice for her year old child. One after another of these people plead for a coin as they looked desperately at a mere speck of food.

Sirdar J. J. Singh, President of the India League of America, said at the Free World Conference in New York, October 29-31:

"An acute food shortage has been developing in India since April 1942. Today the shortage has become a famine spreading over all of India.

"In the Province of Bengal (population 60 million—population of India 390 million) approximately 100,000 persons are dying of starvation each week.

"The Government should have transferred cultivable land, lying

fallow, to the farmers. It is reported that there are about 105 million acres of land described as 'cultivable waste'.

"Such an action was demanded from the Government by Kisan Sabha; (the all-India peasants' organization) in a resolution, as far back as August 1942. In this resolution the Kisan Sabha asked the Government to make it 'feasible for the poverty-stricken peasantry to undertake the cultivation of more food crops'.

"Today rice, upon which hundreds of millions of poor Indians live, has gone up in price 370 per cent. In the black market the rise is from \$1.85 per 80 pounds to \$64.89. Milk, which has always been an item of luxury for more than 90 per cent of the population of India, has gone up 400 per cent.

"That so important a province as Bengal, lying conspicuously within the zone of hostilities, should have been allowed to slide into the present economic mess is a disgrace not only to Indian public life but to the traditions of British rule."

It was because of deplorable conditions in parts of America that I looked around the world for a logical solution to unemployment, poverty and wars. In India these problems were more striking, for India's poor are not hidden away in hovels, protected by welfare agencies. The Henry George School has helped me to find an answer to these crying millions. Their faces will haunt me until we have seen Henry George's principles successfully put into effect.

JEAN LACKEY.

New York.