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OPINION

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TO RECAPITULATE

24 February 1981

Mrs. Gandhi claims that she has reduced prices.
But I now have to pay:

Re. 1.40 for a loaf of bread which some months ago used to cost Re. 1.25;

Re. 1.45 for a bottle of milk which a few weeks ago used to cost Re. 1.30;

Rs. 3.00 a dozen for bananas, the fruit of the poor, which a month ago used to cost Rs. 2.50;

Rs. 4.30 for a tin of Vim which some months ago used to cost Rs. 3.20.

So it would seem Mrs. Gandhi has not reduced prices. That this is so is clear also from the fact that her government has had to give in the last year more than one increase of dearness allowance to government servants, because of increases in the cost-of-living index, and has according to today's papers, another increase under contemplation.

To say what she does then Mrs. Gandhi must be very ignorant or very careless of the truth. Ignorant she is not. But in speaking for effect, she lies stupendously.

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Mrs. Gandhi claims that she has reduced lawlessness and crime.

The daily papers do not bear her out. Never has lawlessness been more on the rampage than during her regime, crime more rampant, even in the cities. Never have citizens of Independent India, rural and urban, felt so insecure as they do today.

Why then does Mrs. Gandhi say what she does? She speaks for effect and so lies stupendously.

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Many more of Mrs. Gandhi and her Government's claims of achievement, including the disastrous failures of her most cherished policies at the recent Non-aligned Conference, come in the same class. She and her myrmidons lie for effect, and lie stupendously.

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People of India, difficult as it may be to accept it, remember that your Prime Minister is an inordinate liar. In your own interest, take nothing she says at its face-value. From Philip drunk, his people appealed to Philip sober. From Indira lying, who can you, less fortunate, appeal to? Why, only to lying Indira.

OPINION, January 12, 1982

31 March 1981

MRS. GANDHI AND CORRUPTION

MRS Gandhi tells us she is greatly concerned at the corruption pervading all spheres of life in this country. She considers this a very serious disease and calls upon the CBI and vigilance authorities to fight it most vigorously. Her auditors were too polite or too much in awe of her to make the correct reply, 'physician, heal thyself'.

Why the present state of degradation? Because, very largely, of Mrs. Gandhi's abstention from integrity. She has been in supreme power with enormous majorities for many, many years. And what has she done? By her exertions she has banished integrity from the Centre, and by her example, from the States. Honest aides and counsellors are anathema to her. She prefers malleable, manageable men and women.

Of us Indians it is generally true that we do not have standards of our own and live up to them. Our tendency is to accept the standards of those above us and live by them. Our elite in every sphere regards those in authority as above it. When therefore it finds the conduct and behaviour of the person at the highest level as low over an extended period as it has been, can it be wondered that it has followed suit, that dishonesty, lying, sharp practise have become the rule?

If therefore you are really concerned, and this is not one more of your hypocritical ploys, the remedy is in your own hands, powerful Mrs. Gandhi. Just turn honest, make the public interest, and not personal and political aggrandisement, the sole motive of your acts and words, and see a reduction of about a quarter in the general corruption by the next elections in 1985. Nor need you be apprehensive about losing those elections if you are honest. The Indian capacity for appreciation of right conduct is remarkable. You have achieved very successfully two steps of the old saying. You have got on and you have got honours; now why shrink at the third, get honest?

22 September 1981

IMPRESSIONS OF THE ANTULAY AFFAIR

1. That Mrs. Gandhi has shown herself to be an even more audacious liar and greater manipulative manoevrer than expected.
2. That Mr. Antulay has appeared as a consummate operator against the public interest.
3. That Mrs. Gandhi had not only agreed to the trust being named after her, but was in touch with the general trend and mode of Mr. Antulay's activities.
4. That the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha made themselves as blind as bats in the sunlight and as unthinking as the Gadarene swine on the slope for reasons best known to themselves, but which it is open to all of us to make a guess at.
5. That the members of the majority party by their subservience and inability to express independent views showed themselves to be lower than the worm that crawls upon its belly, eating earth.

6. That even lower than them must be classed the majority—party MLAs and local Council members who took a deputation to the P.M. to plead for Mr. Antulay's retention.
7. That is still doubtful if he will go.
8. That the whole episode augurs very ill for the country. It shows that anything can be done if Mrs. Gandhi approves, that a person's life, liberty, property, profession, all depend on her tolerance and good will, that with the vast subservient majorities at her command in Parliament and State legislatures "what is" can become "what is not" at her word.

3 November 1981

COMMENT

Mr. Antulay is still Chief Minister.

Of Mrs. Gandhi, it may correctly be said: "Past all truth; so past all shame."

PLATO AS CON MAN

BILL AITKEN

(Continued from 5-1-82)

Motilal Nehru is said to have cautioned his friends on this score by inserting an advertisement on "how to get rich quickly without tears." In reply to the eager enquiries he sent the terse message: "Not by answering foolish advertisements like this."

Recently I met a man who introduced himself in public as possessing a high and unique honour from the government for his services to education. The sort of man whose application for a job will underline three times his presence in the Olympic Games Marathon. It doesn't say where he finished though he can honestly say he started. He was one of the officials on duty at the starting post.

When I challenged his methods, much to the annoyance of an impressed audience, he replied with the effrontery common to all confidence tricksters that if Eton charged booking fees why shouldn't he. When I suggested that Eton wasn't run primarily as a profit-making institution the old soldier laughed knowingly and his audience joined in to make it clear that I didn't really know what was going on at Eton. All schools are in the education racket including Plato's Academy.

"Academy" is the in-word with your get-rich-quick educator. Notice boards and letter heads will advertise "All-Asia Academy for Brilliant Boys." The Principal cum Director will be an F.B.A. (Fellow of the Board of the AABB.) In small print (lest it puts off loving mothers) it states the school will be run on military lines (convenient for covering up the austere diet). In large print is given the hefty price of the prospectus. (Like Sanskrit Latin has a beautiful ring, though in this particular instance, somewhat hollow.)

For the racket to work of course there has to be some inkling of education as a philosophy as well as a commodity. First you find a

business partner with an empty pocket and more important a vacant property which the Academy will lease. Next a splash advertisement announcing that "by public demand" the well-known educator (like the well-known sex specialist) has just returned from a world tour (including Bhutan and Bangladesh) with a missionary zeal to open schools for the talented youth only. (He means those who suffer from the stifling side-effects of applied socialism, such as ministers' sons.)

Most parents feel their darling son to be talented so the scheme will have no lack of subscribers. This is the "sting" for you know that the more backward the person the more likely it is that he wants his child to be the next Secretary-General of the U.N. He desperately wants a better lot for his child and if education and cash can do the trick he won't mind the sacrifice.

The old soldier educationist will quote the sacrifice bit and stress what an essential service he is providing to the community. Just because the principle of exploiting a man's credulity stinks, does not make it illegal, so where is the racket?

It seems to me that a man who knowingly solicits funds for a good cause with no intention of honouring to the full the moral obligations implicit in the furthering of that cause (education) deserves to be exposed as a fraud.

How does he operate? Having passed himself off as a Field Marshal Manekshaw, Bijorn Borg and Socrates rolled into one, to exemplify Discipline, Sport and Academic Results, he well knows that most parents only want the latter (the least part of education) and are prepared to pay through the nose for them. This they will have to do for the Prospectus is priced at a hundred rupees.

Assuming 5000 desperate and gullible parents answer the advertisement (and our smooth-talker is not in the business for his health) he will clear a cool five lakhs of rupees. Now he will become indignant and tell you how hard he has to work to pay his partner and the staff their salaries. Also he has to arrange an entrance examination to find a classful of the most brilliant from the merely talented five thousand. These boys results will be quoted in the next advertisement. Having milked the parents of their money (refunds are only made in Plato's ideal world), the children of their brains and the nation of its award for service, our hero gets worship instead of hemlock.

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