

# Progress Not Possible Without Democracy At The Village Level

—E. M. S. NAMBOODIRIPAD

Without democracy going into the villages, no progress is possible—was the trend of the 20-minute speech with which Chief Minister E. M. S. Namboodiripad introduced the Kerala Administrative Reforms Committee's Report for discussion in the Kerala Legislative Assembly on December 1. The Chief Minister explained the basic approach in the report to the question of administrative reforms, an approach which the Government had endorsed.

THE most important point touched by the Committee, he said, was to explain the need for fundamental changes in the administrative set-up.

When the Government formed a Committee to go into the question of administrative reforms, some people had expressed doubts about the need for such an elaborate study. They had argued that the Central Government had already gone into the question and report of Mr. Appleby and others were available. They had said that the Kerala Government need only study those reports and implement whatever reforms were found necessary and suitable.

But the Kerala Government could not accept that view,

said the Chief Minister.

Several big changes have taken place in our country during the last ten years. We have adopted a democratic Constitution. Secondly, we have accepted planning as necessary for our nation's progress and accordingly, the Five-Year Plans were formulated. Thirdly, the Indian Parliament has decided that Socialism should be the goal towards which our nation must progress.

But no serious discussions had yet taken place on what changes were necessary in the administrative set-up in consonance with these changes. The Kerala Government, Chief Minister Namboodiripad said, considered the Kerala Administrative Reforms Committee's

report a beginning in that direction.

He did not consider that anybody could object to the need for such changes in the administration or oppose the basic approach in the report.

What was this basic approach? The Constitution of a Parliament at the Centre and Legislative Assemblies in the States on the basis of adult franchise were not enough for full democracy.

Changes are necessary at the lower rungs, at the district and village levels, if democracy is to be real and its spirit is to be respected. People should have a greater share in the day-to-day administration at all levels and only then can planned economic development and progress towards Socialism be achieved.

There might be differences on how to achieve this reform, continued the Chief Minister. But there can be dispute that more and more power should be transferred to

the people.

There might be risks and pitfalls when the people are given more power at all levels of administration. But these have to be faced, as Prime Minister Nehru himself had said, in the context of a planned development of the country which cannot be achieved unless the people are associated with the formulation and implementation of programmes of national reconstruction.

The Chief Minister said that the advantages from giving more power to the people will far outweigh the risks and dangers. He appealed to critics not to sacrifice the principle of associating the people with reconstruction programmes in the name of these dangers.

The Panchayat Bill, the Chief Minister said, had been framed on the basis of the recommendations of the Committee, and added that some more would be published soon.