

liminaries, with some action, may also be initiated at 2 other places so that there may not be much time lag. This approach will also give the administration an opportunity of having the benefit of the response of Onges to actual living conditions.

12. The possible direction which should be planned for the economy of Onges was also considered in detail. Plantation economy and fishing can be the basis of their future economy in the long run. However, the immediate problem is that of seeing them through the transitional phase. The Chairman observed that when the displaced persons were settled in the beginning on the Little Andamans, a tendency grew amongst the Onges to go and beg from their house-holds. The offer of gifts to the tribals is in accordance with the long tradition where a visitor offers to the communities something and the community itself, offers something to the visitor. The Chairman informed that he has issued instructions that all gifts to the Onges in future should have the personal clearance of the Chief Commissioner. He further stated that the new need of the Onges for items like tea and tobacco is being met by exchange of coconut from the plantations which have been raised in Little Andamans. The sale proceeds of coconuts are credited to the Onges accounts against which they are given these articles.

13. It was agreed that the offer of gifts by the Government as an alternative to the group being forced to take to begging is unexceptionable. However, one view was that when we are introducing a new demand and exchange economy in an extremely primitive community, a better alternative would be to plan out a work schedule for the group in line with their own traditional skills so that they are enabled to satisfy their new needs in exchange of the fruits of their own labour. The exchange equations for the products of their labour, however, must be defined with reference to the capacity of the tribal to produce and his needs rather than the value of the community in the modern economy. The Chairman informed that in the case of Shompent, he has already taken steps along these lines and has instructed the local administration that the quantity of rice given to the Shompent in exchange for honey and other things which they bring to the depots should not be determined by the quantity of likely produce in the particular season. For example, in the lean season, when honey is scarce, a larger quantity of rice should be given in exchange for the same quantity of honey. Another important point is that the quantity of rice should be sufficient for sustenance of the tribal. It should also be liberal enough to eliminate middlemen. This concept could be further articulated in the case of Onges who are as yet just on the