CHAPTER 11

NO CONFIDENCE MOTIONS

Unequivocally the Opposition was never so strong as to be able to topple down the Congress Government in Maharashtra. The total number of seats during 1957-67, the Opposition claimed, were not challenging. During the 1957 election the Opposition secured 105 seats out of 262, still they were in a minority. In the next election, the survival of some Opposition parties was endangered by the Congress by registering an overwhelming majority in the Assembly. The Congress won 220 seats in the Assembly and sealed the fate of the Opposition parties. Having this position in the background no damage could be done to the Congress, even by moving No Confidence Motions. In spite of some grave departures from the policy announced on the part of the Government, Opposition failed to give a death blow to the majority party.

The arguments of the Opposition were forceful but not effective. Veterans like Sarvashri S. M. Joshi (PSP, Poona), Datta Deshmukh (LIO, Sangamner), K. N. Dhulup (PWP, Kalyan), T. S. Karkhanis (PWP, Kolhapur), K. S. Dhondge (PWP, Kandhar), R. D. Bhandare (Republican, Worli) and S. G. Patkar (Communist, Sewree) battled with the majority in the Assembly but without any considerable effect.
The government had long back announced its policy in the direction of ameliorating the financial conditions of the backward class people. This object was to be realised by making them available educational facilities and employment opportunities. Government changed its policy abruptly as a section of the Harijan masses embraced Buddhism. Following strictly the letter of the Constitution, they were not entitled to get the facilities they enjoyed before conversion. In fact mere conversion of a creed, sect or religion could not improve upon the financial status of the Harijans. Government was adamant on its fresh stand.

The above issue was raised in the No Confidence Motion in December 1957. Government was accused of taking a vindictive attitude towards the backward class people. Shri A. G. Pawar (Republican, Shirdi) contended that the backward class people were oppressed by the government because they supported the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti.

Though 50 per cent of the Republican party members expressed their affiliation to the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti, the inference derived by Shri Pawar was exaggerated. Shri Pawar’s argument that government rescinded the facilities because of the backward classes’ support to the Samiti was not factual.

However, the decision of the cancellation of facilities and the arguments in support of that decision created an
anomaly in the government policy. Government avowed to snuff out the injustice done to the backward class people. It stated that it was endeavouring to establish a socialist pattern of society. But in the context of the decision of cancelling the facilities, the announcement of the government could be deemed as mere boasting.

The Opposition did not succeed in even making the government circumspective in this behalf. It seemed that government had not taken a serious note of this problem. That was well evidenced by the boycotts of the Nav-Bouddhas in the rural areas and other oppressive acts on them. In the proceedings of the Assembly and of the Council also, it had been revealed that the government failed on this front.

One might be aggrieved to note that no effective measure had been adopted by the government to root out this social evil. The Opposition members made some attempts to motivate the government, but those attempts were not substantial and continuous. Though government expended money on the development of this class it could not remove the inferiority complex from the minds of these people, which could have been done by enforcing the concerned laws strictly and by pursuing deterrent methods.

The relationship between working class and government, it was alleged, was not cordial. Government safeguarded the interests of the millowners. Government played the role of a spectator when thousands of workers were rendered unemployed.
The argument of the Opposition in respect of tours were correct on the score of effecting economy. But the question of tours was not so serious as to warrant a motion of no confidence on it. The outlook of the Opposition at the tours of the ministers seemed to have been prejudiced. Tours were the means through which the minister came in close contact with the people. Expenses incurred on tours were not abortive. They were meagre in comparison with the gains. Though Rs. 90,000 were expended on the tours, the gains from shraddhan had been increased to Rs. 56 lakhs from Rs. 30 lakhs. Apart from these gains ministers could reach the people and this helped revive the prestige of Congress party.

The members of the majority party condemned that this motion was an outcome of the frustration of the Opposition on the failure to create an alternative leadership. During the discussion the Opposition members, instead of producing constructive criticism, resorted to meaningless statements. The false and bitter criticism emerged only from the principle of opposition for the sake of opposition.

The Opposition could not expose the government's partiality in taking up members on important Committees. Government was thinking positively to pick up Shri S. M. Joshi (PSP, Poona) and Datta Deshmukh (LNG, Sangamner) as directors of the State Farms Boards. This was indicative of the impartial views of the government. Shri Dhulup (PSP,
Kalyan had been appointed as a member of Police Commission. Many P.S.P. members were working on the Defence Fund Commission.

Two other important issues were raised concerning the Krishna-Godawari water dispute. But these issues had been discussed previously. Therefore they could not add any seriousness to the no confidence motion.

On the Krishna-Godawari water dispute the Opposition requested the government not to get involved in assurances. It referred to an interview taken by the Lokmitra reporter. Government became aware of the injustice shown to it in 1959, (even though the pact was signed in 1951). Because of the present entangled situation the State government could not undertake any other irrigation or hydro-electric projects, except on Koyna. This problem was very serious and with regret the Opposition had to state that no due care was taken in the matter. The other States had started the use of water and hence it was misleading to the people that still there was any possibility of tapping water of these rivers.

On the question of the Mysore Border Dispute the members of the majority party asserted that it should be settled by constitutional means. No doubt it would require time but if some unconstitutional measures were used it would do harm to national security.

The no confidence motions were verbal duels between the ruling party and the Opposition. The ruling party members
attempted to give a political colour to the strikes. The ruling party members enjoyed hitting at the Opposition members by criticising them, particularly on the working class front. The ruling party members charged that the strikes were an outburst of political aspirations. Shri K. S. Dheriya (Congress, Kolaba) pointed out that a liberal policy was adopted by the government towards the labourers. It was alleged by the Opposition that the government could not meet the strikes of the BEST workers, taximen and hotel employees objectively.⁴

Along with the Congress members, the ministers joined the retaliation.⁵

Government was very keen on wiping off the charges in connection with the Morarka episode.⁶

During the no confidence motion the problems of workers occupied a considerable place. Government had to clarify its position. But while doing so, it also levelled criticism against the leaders of the workers.⁷

On the foodgrains front government got an opportunity to explain the measures adopted by it to get over the food problem.

The Opposition's arguments in connection with the callous attitude of government towards Opposition were convincing. But such arguments also lost their sharpness because of their frequency. The Opposition condemned the government for arresting many leaders of the Opposition.⁹
The members used the weapon of no confidence motion to criticise the co-operative sector. They gave instances of frauds. The government's explanation was not satisfactory.

The Opposition members' criticism in connection with inefficiency was ineffective. The Opposition members suggested the formation of a Committee to enquire into the matters entrusted to the officials by government.

The members could force the government to explain its policy regarding the famine stricken areas. But these problems were also raised on some other occasions. The reply given by the government was not in any way new.

The agricultural production depended upon the vagaries of the monsoons. On many occasions the people had to undergo an ordeal of famine. The famine conditions undermined the pace of economic and social development. Even the primary needs of the people were not satisfied. In such tough environs the government was beating about the bush in spelling out whether the conditions prevailing were of famine or of scarcity. Government did not exert efforts to find out a permanent solution for the privations due to famines. Replying to the questions of scarcity government took a review of the famine and scarcity affected areas. Government also gave information of the work it started in the scarcity and famine areas.

The Opposition criticised that government showed
favouritism in undertaking scarcity works. Those constituencies were given more attention from where Congress candidates were elected. The Opposition members cited one instance of Amgaon constituency where 181 towns were facing famine conditions and with great difficulties only four to five tanks were constructed but in the constituency of Shri Nancharbhai Patel 17 tanks were constructed even though there was no problem of famine.  

The members refreshed their criticisms regarding the fixation of the prices of the agricultural produce. Shri Dhulup (PWP, Kalyan) disclosed the exploitation of the paddy and cotton producing farmers in the stock and cotton markets. It had led to the loss of confidence in Government. Lower supporting prices fixed by the Central Government were not satisfactory. An increase in these prices fell outside the discretion of the State Government, still attempts were being made by the government in this direction.

In spite of being incapable of providing reasonable rates for foodgrains, the government had given numerous false assurances to the people. In the outline of the Second Five Year Plan, the medium of the co-operative societies was proposed to be utilized as a medium for the distribution of scarce commodities including foodgrains to check their rising prices.

The Congress members used the opportunity to explain the steps taken by the government.
Impression about the No Confidence Motions

During the debate on the No Confidence Motion in 1957, Shri S. M. Joshi (PSP, Poona) views were proper. But the government did not depart from its fundamental policy. Other evils could have been treated as the drawbacks in the administrative machinery. The parties which supported the motion also failed to attach significance because they failed to have an assent of the minimum of thirty-five members. Recourse to the device of the No Confidence Motion ever and anon might have lowered the democratic value.

As the Praja Socialist Party did not support the motion, the arguments of the Opposition did not gain more weight.

Taking into consideration the strength of the Opposition particularly after 1962, the assumption of power became a summer dream to it. Whenever the No Confidence Motion was brought on the floor of the House, the Opposition should have borne in mind the possibilities: (a) Whether it was in a position to give the final blow to the Government, (b) Whether the majority was unable to withstand the onslaughts of the Opposition, (c) Whether the Opposition had an alternative and better programme for the people, (d) Whether the Opposition could convince the people and the members about the superiority of its programme.

On the basis of all the No Confidence Motions moved in the Maharashtra Legislature, it might be stated that they
were not motivated by any reasons mentioned above. The Opposition even could not dismay the majority party effectively. On the contrary the majority party members got an opportunity to reiterate the progress brought about by the government.

The arguments projected during the Governor's Address and budget sessions sprang up again. The speeches of the ministers were also stereotyped and the discussions were of polemical character. The charges levelled earlier in connection with the fall-in-production were hurled again. The drawbacks in the departments were exposed. Corruption was referred to repeatedly. Unhealthy relationship between the workers' class and the industrialists, the problem of the rising prices and sugar shortage were the issues discussed over and over again.

Conclusion

The No-Confidence Motions brought forth particularly after the Chinese invasion might have some political motivation behind them. After the Chinese invasion, the political prestige of the ruling party received blows throughout the country. At the same time the Opposition observed that government could not handle delicate issues of price-rise, rising corruption and unemployment. In fact the government adopted several measures to overcome the said difficulties. The Opposition misconceived the whole political situation and it used to come with a No Confidence Motion against the
government. It was the fact that it failed to judge the political support the Congress party mustered at the rural level.

The Opposition's arguments rambled round the earlier points of criticism. The discussions on the no-confidence motions gave an impression as if the discussions on the budget, the Governor's Address and the demands for grants had started simultaneously. Naturally the ministers were well prepared. The Opposition members were on the offensive and the ruling party members and the ministers retaliated vigorously.

The discussions on the no-confidence motions persuaded the ministers to furnish more details of the government policies. The measures adopted by the government to remove or alleviate famine conditions were spelt out in greater details. In this behalf, Shri M. G. Mane's (Minister for Labour) arguments were effective.

The no-confidence motions could not bring any change in the contents of the policies or in the execution of the policies. The government postulated that the members of the Opposition had no information of the government measures and therefore it merely reproduced the information which was supplied earlier on other occasions. The later debates also revealed that the No-Confidence Motions had no impact on the government policy.


4. Shri T. P. Pawar (Congress, Koregaon) alleged that through the motion the Opposition was trying to divert the attention of the people absorbed in strengthening the nation's defence front. He charged the Opposition that the strike was a product of political aspirations. It was the exhibition of labour support to the Communist and Socialist parties. Therefore government had paid them in their own coin. Referring to the municipal strike he stated that issuing of notification which was very essential was not done (Vol. X, No. 5, September 10, 1963, p. 263).

Shri Kher (Congress, Banda) revealed that even after signing the Fact Finding Committee's Report Shri Patkar (Communist, Sewree) deviated from it. The decisions taken by the Indian Labour Conference had not been accepted by the labour union formed by Shri Dhulup (PWF, Kalyan). These activities were enfeebling the defensive capacity of the nation. Shri Kher accused the Opposition of treachery against India (Ibid., p.253).

5. Shri D. Khanwilkar, Deputy Minister for Labour Department, stated that the same strikes were mainly meant for the leaders. He criticised Shri Dhulup as being engaged in propaganda against the Labour Department ascribing the administration as very obsolete and disfavouring the workers. As the atmosphere reached climax, the Labour Commissioner called for a compromise. Then the owners lost the hope for a bonafide compromise which was quite natural for them. In the Rayon process production any breakdown could have brought harmful consequences. This led to the declaration of a lockout in the National Rayon Corporation (Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Debates, Vol. X, No. 5, September 10,1963).

6. Shri S. K. Wankhede, Minister for Industries and Electricity, clarified that he was not going to defend Shri Morarka, and earlier even outside the House he had expressed resentment regarding the attitude and the way in which the affairs of both these companies had been carried on (Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Debates, Vol. X, No. 5, September 9, 1963).
7. Shri M. C. Mane, Minister of Labour, stated that the establishment of the Industrial Relations Committee consisted of the representatives of the mill owners and the leaders of the Trade Unions in Maharashtra. In 250 cases put before this Committee, disagreement never prevailed. Strikes led to diminution in the national production and dissatisfaction among workers. Every year the Indian Labour Conference was held and policy matters were discussed in it. But it was painful that the workers' leaders forgot the compromise and took resort to strikes. In a tripartite conference, decision was taken for the creation of a machinery for the settlement of the labour disputes. (Conciliation, arbitration, adjudication and tripartite conference were the successive stages in the process of the settlement of labour disputes.) (Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Debates, Vol. X, No.5, September 10, 1963, p.303).

8. Owing to the fall in the production of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra could get one lakh tons. Government of India gave Maharashtra 2,20 lakh tons. Maharashtra secured another 10,000 tons on trade account from Andhra Pradesh. Cheaper variety of rice to the tune of 5,000 tons was also received. 9,000 tons of American rice were also in its possession.

Average consumer price index increased from 100 in November 1962 to Rs.101.78 towards the end of August 1963. Under fair price cloth shops had been started and several others were to be started in rural areas as co-operatives (Ibid., p. 303).

9. The Opposition alleged that the government which could not have a hold on administration was incompatible and therefore should not be continued. Well-wishers of the country were not treated well. On the demand of land for the landless people, Jambuwentrao Dhole was arrested. Shri George Fernandes, a member of the Defence Committee, was also arrested. As Shri S. P. Joshi requested to convene a meeting of the Defence Committee on this subject, government did not take troubles even to give any reply. It was criticised that hardly there was any relation between the government and democracy. Confidence in the minds of the common people was not created, on the contrary resentment and doubts arose among the people (Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Debates, Vol. X, No. 5, September 9, 1963, p. 238).

10. Opposition had given certain instances of frauds in co-operative societies which partially supplied sugar.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Society</th>
<th>Amount of Rs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aurangabad Society</td>
<td>90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sillod Taluka Co-operative Marketing Society</td>
<td>27,059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dellur Co-operative Sale Purchase</td>
<td>19,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmedpur Co-operative Marketing Society</td>
<td>15,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osmanabad Agricultural Co-operative Sale Purchase</td>
<td>20,762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osmanabad Agricultural Co-operative Sale Purchase</td>
<td>15,443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osmanabad Agricultural Co-operative Sale Purchase</td>
<td>26,387</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kher also observed political rivalry. There were other numerous societies misusing the public money. The majority of such societies were administered by the party in power (Ibid., p. 243).

11. To remove famines, the government adopted the following policy guidelines:

- Revenue recoveries were suspended,
- Collectors were ordered to provide work so that the pressure of unemployment might be mitigated,
- Schemes of supplying water and deepening of wells were started,
- Many Fair Price Shops were opened,
- Tagai advances were made,
- In semi-scarcity areas, 50% recoveries were suspended and
- Collectors had been authorised to carry out more works (Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Debates, Vol. X, No. 5, September 9, 1963, p. 12).


13. Shri Kher (Congress, Bandra) stated that the government had followed the policy of encouraging the co-operative societies. Farmers were aided through the sale and purchase societies as well as the marketing societies. Warehousing facilities were also made available. To eliminate the grievances caused by middlemen, 18 wholesale Central Co-operative stores were established. The object of these stores was to relieve the consumers and producers of the obstructive mediation of the middlemen.
Shri Kher further stated that 25 per cent of the wholesale trade in the State would be brought under the control of the government gradually, and would prove helpful in holding the price-line. Such deliberative steps were being taken by the government. A number of fair price shops were opened.