The Peasants and Workers Party, the Lal Nishan Gat, the Praja Socialist Party, the Samyukta Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the Jana Sangh, the Republican Party and the Hindu Mahasabha were the political parties in the Opposition. The following subjects have been analysed in this chapter. They reveal the policies and attitudes of the Opposition towards important administrative issues, (i) Agriculture, (ii) Industry, (iii) Socialism, (iv) Harijans and Nav-Boudhaas, (v) Maintenance of peace and order in the State, (vi) Balanced Growth, (vii) Decentralization, (viii) Education, (ix) Prohibition, and (x) Co-operation.

(1) Agriculture

None of the Opposition Parties underestimated the importance of agriculture in the Indian economy. The small farmer was given a central place in the agricultural programme of each party. It was stated by them that a common peasant was bound to remain, for a long time to come, the backbone of Indian agriculture.¹

On the issue of making the tiller the owner of the land all parties except the Jana Sangh held an identical favourable view. In this regard, the Congress Party, the Praja Socialist
Party, the Samyukta Socialist Party, the Peasants and Workers Party and the Communist Party held similar views. According to the Bharatiya Jana Sangh alone, land to the tiller might be a good vote catching slogan, but in actual practice, it had affected food production adversely because the slogan-inclined Congress rulers never seriously tried to provide the necessary investment needed for making the land profitably productive. The Communist Party, the Lal Nishan Gat and the Peasants and Workers Party looked at this issue from the point of view of revolution. These parties opined that the pattern of agriculture under the Congress Government was basically capitalistic. The Congress and the Peasants and Workers Party were of similar views on the point of the government ownership of land. In the Maharashtra Legislature once Shri K. K. Bhulul placed a demand that land be owned by the government and the government supported the demand. The Praja Socialist Party did not share the view of the Peasants and Workers Party. It proposed that the tiller should be the owner and for realizing the idea of social justice fresh land redistribution be made.

As regards the execution of tenancy legislation, the Jana Sangh and other parties criticised the government. They suspected that pressure was exercised on the government and hence government postponed the agricultural lands partition year laid down in the State Tenancy Act.

All parties emphasized the adoption of new methods of
agricultural production, seeds and manures. The Jana Sangh's was a dissentient voice. It advocated that by the usage of chemical manures the fertility of land diminished. All Opposition parties found a point of agreement in the view that the Government did not succeed in executing the agricultural programme.

The Congress Party, the Praja Socialist Party and the Samyukta Socialist Party had almost an identical programme relating to agriculture. However, the Peasants and Workers Party was the most dominant party in the Assembly and revealed intensive and extensive study of the agricultural problems. The Praja Socialist Party published a detailed programme but it could not press it effectively. The reason for this was clear. The Praja Socialist Party as well as the Samyukta Socialist Party extended the span of their activities. These two parties were engaged in the activities among the industrial, pertaining to workers educational issues, etc. As a result their energies were diffused. But the Peasants and Workers Party concentrated fully on the farmers' problems. The important reason of this fact might be the agricultural background of the leaders and workers of the Peasants and Workers Party. Outside the House, the Peasants and Workers Party undertook a plan to effect change in the attitude of the farmers. The impact of caste, kinship bonds and financial ties was clearly observable on the farmers in Maharashtra. The Peasants and Workers Party was actively engaged in reducing
impact of old elements and to unite them under the banner of the Marxist and Leninist philosophy founded on class-consciousness.

On account of these programmatic involvements the Peasants and Workers Party came in close contacts with the farmers, which was not the case with the other Socialist Parties in Maharashtra. The active engagement of the Peasants and Workers Party among the farmers made the Congress re-formulate its attitude towards the farmers with greater sympathy for them. The Congress Party under the leadership of Shri Y. B. Chavan had a correct diagnosis of the political environment and realised that the links between the party and the rural areas were becoming weak. Thus the Congress Party sought to wean away the farmers from their support to the Peasants and Workers Party particularly after winning over some Peasants and Workers Party leaders to the Congress Party. The Lal Nishan Gat also served as an effective mouthpiece of the farmers.

The Congress Party was not ready to abolish the land revenue unlike the Samyukta Socialist Party. The Samyukta Socialist Party held that after the re-distribution of agricultural lands the land revenue should be abolished and that it should be replaced by a graduated agricultural income tax. The Communist and the Socialist Parties entertained similar views on the foodgrains levy. The Samyukta Socialist Party was to exempt profitless agriculture from the grain levy.
The Communist Party was to impose levy on rich peasants and rice millers. The Jana Sangh was ready to exempt the land revenue for all economic land-holders.

The food problem was a matter of concern to all parties. They assumed that the increase in the agricultural production was the first step to tackle this problem. Secondly, they suggested distributional patterns. The Communist Party suggested nationalization of the food trade. The Communist Party was to use the co-operative societies for the food-distribution. The Socialist Parties could not go to that extent and were to use the device of socialization. The Jana Sangh's suggestions were milder. This was owing to the fact that the socialization and nationalization could not befit its ideology. It attacked the monopoly procurement scheme of the government and suggested that government should enter the market as a competitor. The Jana Sangh suggested that the banks should not advance loans to the traders for grain trade.

Regarding the provision of irrigation facilities by the State the Jana Sangh found that small irrigation schemes would be more helpful in the State. It criticised government's policy of undertaking big irrigation schemes. The Socialist Parties opined that the irrigation water charges should be reduced.

The Republican Party's views were divided and fluctuated between those held by the Socialist Party and the Communist
Party, while the Hindu Mahasabha could not propose any independent programme on agriculture.

(ii) **Industry**

The first and the foremost question in the industrial sphere before all parties was determination of the scope of the public sector. The Congress Party was to increase the sphere of the public sector gradually. The Communist Party concurred on this view. It was a pet theme of the Communist Party. The Communist Party refuted the criticism that the public sector was inefficient and that the industries in the public sector ran in losses. The Communist Party rebutted the criticism of both reactionaries and progressives regarding the glaring failures of the public sector enterprises in industry, finance and trade.\(^\text{12}\)

The Peasants and Workers Party and the Lal Nishan Ghat also dwelt on the importance of the public sector in the State’s economy. But the Jana Sangh and the Socialist Party differed on this issue. The Socialist Parties treated 'Socialization' as the real remedy for industrial progress. The Jana Sangh did not have a clear idea in this matter. It criticised the government on the score that it adopted capitalist policy and abhorred nationalisation. It did not even propose socialization of the key industries.

On the issue of building well organized trade unions the Jana Sangh insisted that these unions should not become
the satellites of the political parties. But later on, the Jana Sangh itself formed its own satellite trade union, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh. On the contrary, the Socialist Parties, the Peasants and Workers Party and the Lal Nishan Gat concurred on the point of consolidating their hold on the industrial working class through their own trade unions.

Shri S. M. Joshi made a plea to the trade unionists to come together and start only one union in a particular industry and to avoid rivalry among the leftist forces. The Lal Nishan Organization leader Shri D. A. Deshmukh responded favourably to the plea of Shri S. M. Joshi. All leftist unions after 1957 elections came together in the cotton textile industry but no substantial steps were taken in the unification of the trade unions among the landless agricultural labour which was completely disorganized. The concentration on the workers in organized industries might have resulted in negligence towards the landless labour in agriculture.

The Jana Sangh was annoyed with the Communist programme of nationalization and suggested the establishment of 'Industries Foundations' and a permanent Wage Board. It proposed to orient the system of compiling the price index numbers.

All Opposition Parties, including the Jana Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha, criticised the basic capitalist nature of the Congress Party. The Communist Party and the Socialist Parties were keen to spell out the details of the workers' problems.
The Opposition Parties thought over the unemployment problem very seriously. The Communist, Samyukta Socialist, Praja Socialist, and Peasants and Workers Parties went deep into this problem and agreed upon the point that the policy of the closure of factories and industries of the industrialists was responsible for throwing thousands of workers out of employment. The Samyukta Socialist Party assured security of employment and protection from arbitrary suspensions and terminations of service. All other important political parties gave weightage to this problem.

The Jana Sangh was very critical of the Communists on the issue of strikes and bandhs. The Jana Sangh never conceived strikes and bandhs as measures of total revolution. The Communist Party criticised the attitude of the Jana Sangh. The Communist Party, calling the Jana Sangh communal, declined to join hands with it in building up an alternative to the Congress Government.

(iii) Socialism

The Congress Party announced to march towards the goal of socialism. However, the socialist parties were doubtful about the sincerity of the Congress in connection with the realisation of this goal. The Communist Party proposed a drastic programme of the expansion of the public sector. The Peasants and Workers Party had faith in the Marxist-Leninist principles. As regards the Lal Nishan Organization, at one
time it intended to merge with the Communist Party. It endorsed the programme of the Communist Party but as far the Communist Party's dependence on the Soviet Union was concerned it disagreed with it.

The Jana Sangh opposed the socialistic principles and the sources from which the socialists derived strength. It criticised the tenancy policy and argued that the trade unions should remain aloof from the day-to-day politics. It pointed out the inefficiency, corruption and carelessness in the public sector, and on these grounds opposed the nationalization and socialization of industry, trade and finance. It believed firmly that strikes or bandhs were not a true answer to government's indifference towards workers' problems.

The taxation policy was really a powerful weapon for bridging the gap between the poor and the rich. The Congress Government claimed that the tax-structure was to serve the purpose of reducing economic inequality. But all Opposition parties agreed that the tax structure was very defective from the point of view of fiscal principles and did not fulfil the underlying principle of effecting equality. Right from the Hindu Mahasabha to the Communist Party all Opposition parties denounced the taxation policy of the Congress government.

(iv) Harijans and Nav-Bouddhas

The Opposition parties, instead of erecting their programme on some practical basis, were contented with criticising the government policy concerning Harijans and Nav-Bouddhas.
They sought to win the support of these downtrodden sections. The government invited the opposition parties to extend cooperation in solving their problems.

The Jana Sangh criticised that Congress, having an eye on the votes, provided financial assistance to the Harijans. It referred to the appointment of a Commission to find out the progress of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The Jana Sangh further argued that the findings of the Commission were very disappointing.\textsuperscript{14}

According to the Samyukta Socialist Party the notion of backwardness was to be defined. The Samyukta Socialist Party gave a broad base to this particular programme. To the Samyukta Socialist Party the backward sections included the Harijans, the Adivasis, the other backward sections of the Hindu Community, women, as also the unprivileged sector of minority communities.\textsuperscript{15} It stated that one of the main reasons of the failure of people's movement was the concentration of leadership in the hands of the upper castes.

The Communist Party stated that the scheduled castes continued to suffer humiliation in all spheres of life, whether in services, trade, education, political status or social and personal equality.\textsuperscript{16} The Republican Party was not satisfied with the government programme. It pleaded that the seats reserved for the backward class people in administrative services were not actually given to them.
(v) **Maintenance of Peace and Order in the State**

All Opposition parties levelled one-sided criticism against the government. The firings, lathi-charges, use of tear gas etc., were abhorred by the opposition. The Police Department was taken to task and was termed 'inefficient'.

The Jana Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha held Congress, Communists and Muslims responsible for disturbing peace in this State. They accused Communists of being involved in anti-social and anti-national activities and further charged that the Congress government watched these activities as a spectator. The Jana Sangh did not find any favourable change in the attitudes of the Muslims. According to the Jana Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha, the Muslims fomented disturbances due to their aggressive nature.

All parties realised that social tension caused by several factors was responsible for firings and lathi-charges. The Communist Party emphasized the Hindu-Muslim unity and protection of minority. This problem had links with other problems such as tension between the industrial workers and the millowners, conflict between the Sawarna Hindus and the Nav-Bouddhas, food shortages and certain emotional issues.

(vi) **Balanced Growth**

The Opposition parties were unanimous on the question of balanced growth. They did not oppose this programme but criticised its implementation.
(vii) Decentralization

It was another programme which was initiated by the Congress and supported by almost all Opposition parties. However, the execution of this programme at the hands of the Congress government roused many doubts about the real intention of the programme. The Jana Sangh was highly critical of this experiment. It called P.P. as Zero Progress. It argued that the Panchayat Raj was based on the selfish interests of the Congressmen. The Jana Sangh further criticised that the decentralization programme bred corruption, wastage of money and gundalism. But the Jana Sangh failed to propose a concrete alternative or suggest means to improve the situation. It did not show a faith or a lack of faith in this programme.

(viii) Education

The education policy covered several problems viz., priority to primary education, training of the teachers, opening-up new schools, upgrading of salaries and pensions of the teachers and levelling up general standard of education. The Jana Sangh gave top priority to the improvement in the system of primary education. It was to provide opportunities for higher education. It gave more importance to technical and professional education. It stressed such education as might tone up the moral and national spirit among the students. It favoured compulsory military training and Ayurveda. The Peasants and Workers Party, the Samyukta Socialist Part...
the Praja Socialist Party did not spell out their education programme. The Communist Party was keen on introducing drastic change in the education pattern. It criticised the government's pro-Western attitude. The Communist Party argued that emphasis on religion as the indispensable source of moral and cultural values accentuated the consciousness of belonging to separate social categories at an impressionable age, which in turn became the breeding ground of a separatist, communal and casteist outlook among the young.\(^{19}\)

(ix) **Prohibition**

All Opposition parties opposed the prohibition policy of the Congress government on the ground that the State had to forgo a huge amount on account of it. They were unanimous on the point that administrative expenditure went up due to prohibition policy. The Opposition contended that prohibition policy gave rise to corruption on a wide-scale.

(x) **Co-operation**

The Peasants and Workers Party along with the Samyukta Socialist Party accepted the principle of co-operation as a remedial measure for the poverty of the farmers. But the Jan Sangh opposed the co-operation programme. The Peasants and Workers Party and the Socialist Party were not satisfied with the execution of this programme. The Republican Party was keen on starting some co-operative societies for the backward class people.
8. Ibid., p. 35.
12. Ibid., p. 47.