

Enough Is Enough

The Karbi Anglong District Council's resolution adopted at its meeting on December 29 last urging the Centre to create a separate State comprising Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills—the two Hill districts remaining in Assam after creation of Meghalaya—cannot but be a matter of concern to the people of the State. The ground advanced in support of the resolution is that a separate State would promote development of the two districts. However, the resolution was not unanimous, for the Opposition in the District Council did not subscribe to the views expressed by Sri Biren Singh Ingti and other members of the Council belonging to the ruling party. According to the Opposition creation of a separate Hill State out of truncated Assam was not the pancea for the backwardness of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills. They averred that while the two districts certainly deserved sustained efforts for development, to seek a short cut to that objective through a separate State was not a correct solution to the problems of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills. Happily, the advocates for a new separate State have not accused the plains people of exploitation of the tribal people. Indeed, it was the leadership in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar who in its wisdom opposed the move of the APHLC in the sixties for a separate Hill State. Though Meghalaya was brought into being comprising the two districts of the then United Khasi-Jayantia Hills and the Garo Hills, the people of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills—formerly known as the United Mikir and North Cachar Hill District—did not throw in their lot with Meghalaya. Why suddenly the Karbi Anglong District Council has decided to demand a separate Hill State is not really understandable to the rest of Assam's population.

It is common knowledge that the creation of separate tiny States and Union Territories in the north-eastern region has brought neither peace nor promoted development. On the contrary, a host of problems have been ailing the region. The agitation on the foreign nationals issue concerns not only Assam but also other parts of north-east India. The Government of Meghalaya has expressed in no uncertain terms its worries on account of influx of Bangladeshis. Nagaland too has taken some measures to get rid of aliens, mostly from Bangladesh. Reportedly, these aliens have managed to settle themselves in Sukanjan, Bhilai, Khatkhati, Maukhuti and several places as a result of which the tribal people of Karbi Anglong have apprehended that their socio-cultural identity might be adversely affected. The leaders of all political parties in the two Hill districts of Assam are not unaware that the immediate need before the entire people of N E region is to get rid of the foreign nationals. If at this critical time, attention is diverted from the main problem to a demand for creating a separate State the principal objective of the movement in which the Karbi Anglong youths and students are also involved will be seriously impaired.

Perhaps the sponsors of a separate State comprising the two Hill districts are not unaware that the Centre has already burnt its fingers by balkanising composite Assam and is definitely not in favour of any more small States which New Delhi must have realized are neither financially viable nor politically advisable. But the Centre can give serious thoughts as to how the District Councils formed under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution may be given effective powers to carry on the developmental works. The proposition for autonomous status under Article 241 (A) of the Constitution is also not quite sound if note is taken of the abortive experiment with such status conferred on Meghalaya prior

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to the creation of a separate State in the later part of the sixties. It would be entirely in the interests of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills to abandon the pursuit of a separate Hill State. North Cachar Hills leaders have, rightly, not joined the demand put forward by Karbi Anglong, and it is sincerely hoped that Diphu will give second thoughts to any divisive scheme that would serve nobody's interests. The N E region has already enough of truncation.