

Shuffle, reshuffle and a shake-up

By MANOHAR SINGH GILL

FALLING administrative standards continue to cause concern among the public. Efforts have been made from time to time, particularly with the help of foreign experts, to improve matters. An American, Paul Appleby, came to India in the fifties, and submitted a report. Sir Malcolm Darling, a famous retired I.C.S. man, came in the sixties. Many others from the Ford Foundation, the United Nations and other world agencies have tried their hand at improving things in India. But all have failed.

Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that we keep looking for guidance to the West and ignore our own genius and the knowledge of our ancient civilisation. Few know the valuable work that is being done by our learned men on our hoary past. Fewer still care to apply the knowledge derived from such research.

One such institution called the "Bharatiya Pracheen Shasan Khoj Sansthan" is situated on the banks of the Beas, deep in the Kangra valley. Led by Acharya Ghasita Ram, a band of dedicated men have for the last 30 years been carrying on research into the ills that beset our administration. They have come up with some useful solutions which are worth applying to our rapidly disintegrating administrative system.

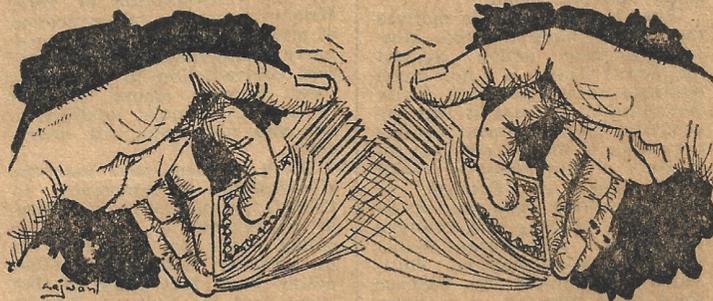
ASTROLOGER

The Acharya, who is an astrologer of considerable renown, has found that if, like the planets public servants too are kept in constant motion, this would have an all-round beneficial effect. He has, therefore, suggested a continuous system of transfers. In fact, his studies show that there is a direct relationship between the frequency of change and the quality of work achieved.

Ideally, therefore, men should not be allowed to settle down in their jobs. But this is a goal to be aspired to, and cannot be achieved immediately. To begin with, he suggests transfers at intervals which may be reduced

progressively. He has also outlined the method of making transfers. The easiest method is to order a "shuffle". This is a term taken from the game of cards. A given set of officials — 52 is the ideal number — should be shuffled like a pack, pulling out the ones below and slapping them on top.

This gives fairly good results, but the mixing is not perfect. A more ambitious administration can try the "reshuffle." This is achieved by dividing the pack into two equal halves, holding each between the middle finger and the thumb, and fluttering them together into a perfect mix. Card players are familiar with the technique, and administra-



tors (except the very dull-witted) can learn it fairly quickly. This system gives an almost perfect mix of the officials to be transferred.

But for those seeking perfection the Acharya has prescribed the "shake-up". Much as he dislikes it, the Acharya has been forced to explain this in terms of an American cocktail. The names of those to be shifted are placed in a jar, which is shaken vigorously. The cover is then taken off, and the names taken out one by one, and places of transfer allotted in serial order. The American cocktail is renowned for its perfect blend of the ingredients. In administration, too, the "shake-up", promises similar gratifying results.

For the present only names can be put into the shaker, but

the Acharya hopes that, with the advancement of Indian science, it will soon be possible to put the men themselves into a giant shaker. They can then be picked out at a well-publicised function. The National Physical Laboratory is working on this giant administrative shaker for which large export orders are expected from other Asian and African Governments.

Acharya Ghasita Ram decries our habit of running after Western thought and technology. The use of computers he abhors. He pleads for the use of the ancient Indian science of astrology. His suggestion is that on joining service public servants should be required to file their horoscopes with the Gov-

ernment, who should then be able to rationally plan their careers. He has proposed the creation of the post of "Astrologer to Government" in the super time-scale of the I.A.S. Given this technical assistance, the administration should invariably be able to pick the right man for the right job.

The "Astrologer to Government" is bound to be in great demand, and the Acharya has suggested that in all fairness (like free medical aid) his services should be available to Government servants for their personal problems also. He has also visualised that the Government servant is likely to ask for the right of private practice, and has suggested that his case should be treated at par with doctors. Given these two re-

forms, the Acharya is confident that Indian administration can regain its past glory.

Prof Jhanda Singh, the famous historian of the 18th century Misl period of Punjab, differs violently. He argues that instead of harking back to ancient scriptures of doubtful authenticity, we should learn from our recent known historical experience. In his opinion we should follow the system that was used in another context at the end of the 18th century by the Sikh Misls. It is recorded history that at that time men rode their horses in a wild spree from the Sutlej to the Jamuna. On the way they threw the scabbard in one village, the sword in another and the turban in the third. The villages so claimed were considered to belong to the person who had thrown his accoutrements in them.

Prof Jhanda Singh, therefore, suggests that all public servants should be collected on a given day in the plaza in front of Carbousier's Secretariat. The "Uch Adhikaris" should stand on top of the building under the dramatically sited review pavilion. At the appointed moment a flag should be dropped in the manner of inaugurating a car rally. The men and women crowded below should then be free to run and throw their hats or turbans into whichever chair they choose, or can find. In his view, in an egalitarian society—and he admiringly cites the Misls — this is the most democratic and efficient method of placing administrative personnel.

In order to consider these suggestions the Government of Chanchal Pradesh has appointed a small committee of 79 persons from the public and the professions. The committee left recently on a world tour to make a study of all systems prevailing everywhere, ranging from those of the Yorubas of Nigeria to those of the Pigmies of the Brazilian rain forest, who incidentally prefer to eat an unwanted civil servant rather than transfer him.

It is now hoped that a decision on the system to be finally followed will be taken in due course.