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Uttar Pradesh

## Charan Singh gets into stride

From Kapil Verma in Lucknow

IT is now two months that the BKD leader Charan Singh has been at the helm of the administration in Uttar Pradesh. Despite the obvious handicaps inherent in his having to depend on a numerically larger "New" Congress group for support, he has done quite well.

It is still too early to assess in any detail the impact of the series of administrative and other decisions taken by him since his assumption of office on February 17. But there has been a remarkable transformation in the atmosphere in the Government secretariat.

As an experienced administrator, the Chief Minister knew from the start that he must strike a measure of fear in the services. For one of the failings of the earlier regime had been lethargy at the top levels and the pulling among senior officials that they could get away with anything. In time they began to be indifferent to the needs of the people.

By making slight changes and taking action against a few Mr Charan Singh has let it be known that he will not stand any lapses—moral, administrative or others. Officials at the top know they cannot now afford to be smug or get away with any thing and every thing. Perforce they have had to reorient their attitude and Red tape has been slashed down and the decision making process has become quicker.

By appointing an Inspector General of Police who can im-

plement his ideas and by giving new instructions to the Police for registration of crimes and for tackling the law and order situation in general, the Chief Minister has also tried to reform the one branch of the administration which touches the people most.

Some other decisions such as the appointment of a Law Commission headed by a veteran judge to reform the judicial system to eliminate the delay in court decisions and corruption, and new concessions to cane growers to dispose off their bumper produce have been welcomed.

But not all of Mr Charan Singh's actions have been non-controversial. The decision on the nationalisation of sugar industry and his attempt to lower the farm ceiling to 30 from 40 acres generally have brought him criticism as well as problems.

A committee appointed to suggest the form and procedure of taking over the sugar industry has now come to the conclusion that the solution lay in bringing the mills under co-operatives on the Maharashtra pattern. This is precisely what M. C. B. Gupta wanted to do. The former administration's doubts about the legality of the State Government taking over the industry in isolation are now being better appreciated. Mr Charan Singh's views on the subject were, however, clear and different from the very beginning.

The policy announcement to lower the ceilings to 30 acres

of land and the proposed withdrawal of exemption for groves and co-operative farms has evoked bitter resistance from the big landowners. Some of the political leaders, irrespective of party affiliations, combined to build up such massive pressure on the Government, that it has had to stay its hands and promise further considerations.

The "old" Congress-SSP-Jan Sangh alliance fought energetically for its demand to retain the exemption from land revenue for holdings upto 6.25 acres. But it lost the game early. The Chief Minister conceded only half way—of an exemption upto 3.12 acres.

The new Ministry steered through the last Assembly session rather comfortably. The Opposition avoided divisions all the time except on the no confidence motion at the fag end when it was routed by a large margin of 67 votes. Since then the Opposition made a good showing in the biennial elections to the Rajya Sabha and the Legislative Council with one candidate of the ruling alliance losing in both the bodies. The Opposition is keeping its flock intact and is waiting for a better opportunity to strike.

But as things are, there appears to be little danger to the Charan Singh Ministry, unless there are large scale defections from the ranks of the "New" Congress and the BKD on the question of an expansion of the cabinet.

