

SPECIAL ARTICLES

# Rising Kulaks and Backward Classes in Bihar

## Social Change in the Late 1970s

Harry W Blair

*The Janata period in Bihar has been plagued with instability and violence in the state's political life, its universities and its bureaucracy. In the minds of many observers, the disruption and its immediate cause, the Karpoori Thakur ministry's reservation policy, are indicative of a sea-change in the structure of Bihar's political economy: the 'Forwards' or 'twice-born' caste groups that had been dominant in Bihar since independence and before are being replaced by the 'Backward' castes as the dominant stratum in the state.*

*This essay examines the evidence of such a shift in the structure of dominance in Bihar and its implication for the political economy of the state.*

THE current scene in Bihar is a depressing one. College students are burning buses, sacking government offices, seizing locomotives and even derailling trains; other groups of students do combat with the disrupters. The bureaucracy is paralysed. Stories of Harijan atrocities get into the press more frequently than usual, and give the impression that many more such outrages are going unreported. Political life is beset with intense byzantine intrigues and manoeuvres to oust (or to save) the Janata ministry, completely distracting the ministry's already severely limited political will for dealing with the problems of a state that is at the bottom of almost every index of social and economic development in India. There have been reports of "more than 2,000 political murders" in recent months.<sup>1</sup>

### DEFINING THE BACKWARDS

At the eye of the storm has been the one object that Karpoori Thakur in his chief ministership showed himself determined to pursue — his reservation policy. Thakur's successor as chief minister, Ram Sunder Das, has also promised (if more than somewhat half-heartedly) to implement the policy, so it continues to remain at the centre of the stage in the politics of Bihar.<sup>2</sup> Promised in 1977 and finally promulgated in the autumn of 1978, the reservation policy asserted that in addition to the quotas on government employment already reserved for Harijans and Adivasis (24 per cent if taken together), henceforth 26 per cent of new government positions would be reserved for the 'Backward Classes'. More precisely, those Backwards known as being 'Annexure I' would be allotted 12 per cent of the

posts, those known as being 'Annexure II' would be allocated 8 per cent, 3 per cent would go to women of any group, and 3 per cent to those who were 'economically backward'.

The history of the annexures is a tangled one, and the question of how many people they include is even more confusing. The story goes at least as far back as to 1951, when the Bihar government composed two lists of Backward Classes Comprising Hindu and Muslim caste groups that were not Harijans or Adivasis, but were nonetheless determined to be economically and socially backward and in need of special governmental assistance, particularly in the way of educational help. The two lists came to be known as 'Annexure I' and 'Annexure II', which could be thought of as 'more backward' and 'less backward' (but still in need of help) groups. Annexure I (the 'more backward') included some 78 Hindu and Muslim castes, some well-known (e.g. Dhanuk, Hajjam, Kahar and Mallah), others considerably less so (e.g. Gulguha, Jadupatia). The second ('less backward') Annexure included 30 castes altogether; many of them were communities that in terms of social and economic backwardness were difficult to distinguish from those in Annexure I, such as Barhis, Kandus and Kumhars (as well as some Muslim castes like Momins and Rayeens), but the list consisted primarily of the more advanced communities in the Vaishya and Shudra varnas, that is the Banias, Koiris, Kurmis and Yadavs.<sup>3</sup> These groups, while not as powerful (certainly in 1951, anyway) in social, political or economic matters as the first four 'twice-born' caste groups in the state (the Brahmas, Bhumihars, Rajputs and

Kayasthas), were still far ahead of the remaining communities. The Banias, of course, were traditionally traders and small businessmen, while the other three were largely peasant proprietor castes, small-holders in the 5-15 acre range and primarily ryots in the zamindari land tenure system then prevailing in Bihar. Just how many people might be included within these groups was not at all clear, for the Census has not gathered data on caste since 1941 and has not published these data since the 1931 Census.

As with so many things in India, though, there are exceptions. In addition to the data on Scheduled Castes and Tribes that have been gathered in all the recent censuses, the Census of 1951 also took down some information on membership in certain of the backward castes. The Backward Classes Commission (BCC), set up at the Central level and chaired by Kaka Kalelkar, made use of these data in composing its own lists of backward classes for the various states in its report published in 1955. For Bihar some 127 castes (again both Hindu and Muslim) are listed, with a total population of 15.3 million or 38.1 per cent of the state's total population in 1951.<sup>4</sup> The 1955 enumeration was not a complete one, however, for such important castes as Koiri, Mallah and Tatwa were included in the listing as Backward, but had not been counted in the 1951 Census. Overall, figures were available for only 54 of the 127 castes denominated as Backward in the BCC report, and so its 15.3 million total was considerably short of the total number that fell within the Backward category as determined in either the 1951 Government of Bihar list or the 1955 BCC report.

TABLE 1 : MAJOR CASTE AND ETHNIC GROUPS OF BIHAR

Category	Caste/Group	Per Cent of Total Population	
		A*	B*
Forwards, or 'twice-born'	Brahman	4.7	4.6
	Bhumihar	2.9	2.8
	Rajput	4.2	4.1
	Kayastha	1.2	1.2
	Total Forwards	13.0	12.7
Upper Backwards	Bania	0.6	0.6
	Yadav	11.0	10.7
	Kurmi	3.6	3.5
	Koiri	4.1	4.0
	(Total Upper Backwards)	(19.3)	(18.8)
Lower Backwards	Barhi	1.0	
	Dhanuk	1.8	
	Hajjam	1.4	
	Kahar	1.7	
	Kandu	1.6	15.6
	Kumhar	1.3	
	Lohar	1.3	
	Mallah	1.5	
	Tatwa	1.6	
	Teli	2.8	
	Other Shudras	16.0	15.6
	(Total Lower Backwards)	(32.0)	(31.2)
	Total Backwards	51.3	50.0
Muslims		12.5	12.2
Bengalis		—	2.4
Scheduled Castes		14.4	13.8
Scheduled Tribes		9.1	8.9
Grand Total		100.0	100.0

\* Column A does not include Bengali speakers as a separate group, while column B does include them, with the enlarged total (100.0 per cent of population +2.5 per cent Bengali speakers) revised to 100 per cent.

Source of data: For specific Hindu castes, 1931 Census; for all others, 1961 Census. Earlier data have been revised to reflect boundary changes since 1931.

To compound the confusion, the chairman of the BCC repudiated the whole idea of backward castes,<sup>5</sup> and in any event in 1964 the Patna High Court declared the 1951 list to be unconstitutional, as it was composed on the basis of caste rather than educational and social backwardness.<sup>6</sup>

Eventually, the Government of Bihar responded to this legal rejection by appointing in December 1971 a new commission on the matter, headed by Mungeri Lal. This new body submitted its final report in February 1976, settling on a new list of 128 castes. Essentially the 128 were the same ones as in earlier versions, augmented by some Christian groups.<sup>7</sup> The Mungeri Lal Commission was not empowered to take any census of castes, however, and so the question of how many people are included in the new definition is as elusive as with the old ones.

Perhaps the best way to arrive at a reasonable estimate of the number of Backwards in Bihar is through a pro-

cess of elimination, as is done in column A of Table 1. Here the figures for Scheduled Castes and Tribes and Muslims are taken from the 1961 Census and for the traditional four Hindu varnas from the 1931 Census. All Hindu castes with one per cent or more of total population are listed, leaving a residual of 16 per cent, who presumably fall into the large number of Shudra castes. If we say that all the Forwards, Harijans and Adivasis are *not* Backwards, we are left with Banias, Shudras and Muslims. A part of the Muslim community has been included in all the listings of backward classes, but we will exclude them here for three reasons. First, the Census, while it does count Muslims, does not distinguish between Muslim castes, so it is impossible to say which Muslims are Backward and which are not. Second, Muslims are generally thought of in Bihar simply as Muslims, rather than as belonging to caste groups within their religion. According

to their political persuasion, Biharis tend to think of all Muslims as being "backward" or "not backward". Third, it is relatively easy to keep track of Muslims as a single group in the analysis that follows, but it would be quite difficult to add portions of them to the Forward and Backward groups as the analysis moves along.

Subtracting Muslims, then, we are left with 0.6 per cent Banias and 18.7 per cent 'Upper Shudras' (that is, the three advanced but still officially Backward Shudra communities) or a total of 19.3 per cent that we may call 'Upper Backwards'. Among the remaining Shudra caste groups are the ten that had more than one per cent of total population in 1931, accounting for 16.0 per cent, and a further 16.0 per cent in the smaller Shudra groups, or a total of 32.0 per cent that can be conveniently labelled 'Lower Backwards'. Altogether, there is a total Backward community of 51.3 per cent of the state's population, of which about one-third (19.3 per cent) are Upper Backwards and about two-thirds are Lower Backwards.

This taxonomy does not exactly accord with those of the various commissions mentioned above, in that it excludes a portion of the Muslims and includes a few minor Hindu castes not on any of the lists, but it has two major advantages: it does include the groups that people in Bihar think of as being 'backward', and it is relatively easy to work with in identifying who the Backwards are.

One more modification is necessary before we can proceed. In Bihar about 2.5 per cent of the total population have returned themselves as Bengali speakers in the Census. Some of these are Muslims, some are Hindus of the various north Indian caste groups such as the Brahmans or Kayasthas, while others are Hindus of strictly Bengali castes like the Gandhabaniks, Napits or Sadgops. In other words, many of the Bengali speakers overlap with the categories we already have. But in Bihar they are thought of as Bengalis rather than Bengali Kayasthas, Sadgops or whatever. For instance, a Bengali Brahman MLA is generally thought of as a Bengali MLA, not a Brahman MLA, so it makes good sense to think of the Bengalis here as a separate category. To do so means some redundancy, for the Bengalis have already been counted in other groups, but since they behave and are treated as members of a separate group, we

TABLE 2 : SELECTED CASTES AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION IN BIHAR, 1901-1971

Caste	1901	1911	1921	1931	1951	1961	1971
<b>Upper Backwards</b>							
Bania	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.6	na	na
Yadav	11.3	11.3	11.3	11.0	10.8	na	na
<b>Lower Backwards</b>							
Dhanuk	2.1	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.7	na	na
Hajjam	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.5	na	na
Kahar	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.6	na	na
Kumhar	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.4	na	na
Teli	2.8	2.8	3.1	2.8	2.8	na	na
<b>Harijans</b>							
Chamar	3.7	3.8	4.0	4.0	na	4.1	4.2
Dusadh	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.1	na	3.7	3.7
Musahar	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.3	na	2.2	2.1

*Note* : Figures for Harijans were not available for individual castes for 1951, and data for all castes were not published for 1941. Figures have been adjusted where appropriate for boundary changes over the period.

*Source* : For all years except 1951, figures were derived from the *Census of India*; for 1951, figures were derived from the *Report of the Backward Classes Commission*, vol 2, pages 16-22. Castes listed here are all the major Hindu castes for which data were given in the *Report*, except that the three major Harijan communities of Bihar are added for comparison.

must consider them as such as well. In column B of Table 1, then, Bengalis are added in, which makes the total 102.5 per cent, and then all the group percentages are recalculated so that the total again adds to 100.0 per cent.

How accurate is such a listing, based as it is primarily on data from 1931? It is, of course, hard to say, in view of the absence of later data for most of the caste groups, but for those groups on which there are later figures, there is a remarkable consistency over time. A comparison of the 1951 data published by the BCC and the 1961 and 1971 census data on Scheduled Castes with the figures for 1931 and even earlier censuses for some of the major caste groups is presented in Table 2. Here we find that despite urbanisation over the years, perhaps some upward caste mobility,<sup>8</sup> and possibly a tendency for wealthier (and higher caste) families to be larger than poorer and lower caste families,<sup>9</sup> these caste groups have retained essentially the same proportion of total population over quite a long time period. In sum, the list in Table 1 should be a reasonably accurate portrayal of the various communities in Bihar today.<sup>10</sup>

#### RESERVATIONS AS SYMBOL

Somewhere in the vicinity of half the population of Bihar, then, has been designated as officially Backward, and is eligible for 20 per cent of the new positions open in the state bureaucracy, with an additional 3 per cent reserved for women of any caste and 3 per cent reserved for economically

backward groups (generally interpreted to mean poor members of the Forward castes), with a ceiling of Rs 8,000 on annual family income for the applicant. For the 20 per cent portion, three-fifths (12 per cent) were to go to the Annexure I Backwards who, as we have seen, constitute about two-thirds of the Backwards overall and two-fifths (8 per cent) were to go to the Annexure II or Upper Backwards, who make up about one-third of the total Backward population. A proviso in the regulation stipulated that if the reservation for Annexure I Backwards could not be filled by members of those caste groups within three years, then they could be filled with candidates from Annexure II.<sup>11</sup> Thus the reservation decision would appear to represent a substantial victory for the Backward classes, especially for the more advanced Backwards of Annexure I. After being grossly underrepresented at all echelons of the state bureaucracy for the entire period since independence and the period of British rule as well, the Backwards finally gained a modicum of their fair share of the posts.

But how much of a victory was it? An estimate of all the governmental posts created in Bihar per year came out to a mere 9,000.<sup>12</sup> 20 per cent of that comes to only 1,800 positions, and this figure includes all jobs from the state Class I services to the minor functionaries of Class IV. Considering that by 1977-78 there were about 210,000 college students in Bihar,<sup>13</sup> a good number of whom were Backwards, this was not many jobs to go

around.<sup>14</sup>

The widespread violence that has bedevilled and disrupted the state over the job reservation issue clearly could not have arisen solely from the less than 2,000 posts that were at stake. If the policy is actually implemented, only a few Backwards can directly benefit from the quotas, and they will be from the richer families that can afford the education required for the higher posts, or those lucky families that have the connections to get the lower posts. The positions will no doubt be important on an individual basis both to those who get them and those who would otherwise have got them but were denied them because of the reservation policy. But this will scarcely amount to a transformation of the social structure in favour of the Backwards.

The whole struggle is not really over the 2,000 jobs, however; rather, the reservation policy is a symbolic issue that has gripped the imagination of virtually everyone in Bihar who has even the slightest degree of political awareness. Through the reservation issue, Karpoori Thakur asserted that the Backwards had displaced the Forwards as the dominant force in Bihar politics, that the old days of dominance in public affairs from village to Vidhan Sabha by the 'twice-born' were gone forever, and that his government would be one based on the support of the Backwards. The Forwards interpreted things this way as well, fearing that their days of dominance might indeed have departed, and responded with a volatile mixture of fear and rage.

At the student level, the Forwards showed their distress and anger in bus burnings, train derailings and vandalism upon government buildings. At the political level, the Samastipur bye-election for the Lok Sabha, held in late November 1978, proved a test for the Thakur government and its Backward support base. The campaign generated an almost complete polarisation of rural society in the constituency between a united Forward group that had put away its many intercaste differences of the past and a solid Backward bloc. The Forwards supported the Bhumihar Congress (I) candidate, Tarkeshwari Sinha, and the Backwards united behind a Koiri college teacher handpicked by the Chief Minister. As it turned out, there were more Backwards than Forwards in Samastipur, just as in the state as a whole,<sup>15</sup> and the Janata candidate

TABLE 3 : CASTE COMPOSITIONS OF GENERAL SEATS IN BIHAR VIDHAN SABHA, 1961-1977  
(Figures in Percentage)

Group	1962	1967	1969	1975	1977	General Population
Brahman	17.2	13.2	12.3	18.3	7.6	6.0
Bhumihar	12.6	14.8	14.8	14.7	14.8	3.6
Rajput	23.8	22.2	23.5	19.8	21.7	5.3
Kayastha	5.4	4.9	3.3	2.0	4.4	1.6
Forwards	59.0	55.1	53.9	54.8	48.6	16.5
Bania	3.3	5.3	6.2	4.6	3.2	0.8
Yadav	11.7	15.2	18.5	11.7	20.5	13.8
Kurmi	7.1	5.3	3.3	5.6	4.8	4.5
Koiri	6.7	5.8	4.1	5.6	6.4	5.2
Upper	(28.8)	(31.6)	(32.1)	(27.5)	(34.9)	(24.3)
Lower	(1.7)	(2.9)	(2.5)	(2.0)	(3.6)	(40.3)
Total						
Backwards	30.5	34.5	34.6	29.5	38.5	64.6
Muslims	8.8	7.4	7.8	13.2	10.0	15.8
Bengalis	1.7	2.9	3.7	2.5	2.8	3.1
Grand Total	100.0	99.9	100.0	100.0	99.9	100.0
N	242 <sup>a</sup>	243 <sup>b</sup>	242 <sup>c</sup>	197 <sup>d</sup>	249	
Gini co-efficient	.778	.756	.767	.734	.702	

Notes: Scheduled Castes and Tribes are not included, as they are represented proportional to population through the reserved seats.

<sup>a</sup>Excludes 3 MLAs for whom caste was not available and 1 Adivasi elected from a general seat.

<sup>b</sup>Excludes 1 Adivasi elected from a general seat.

<sup>c</sup>Exclude 2 MLAs for whom caste was not available.

<sup>d</sup>Position as of June 1975, after the resignations in connection with the JP Movement in Bihar.

Source: Interviews with MLAs in various years.

won the election amid a torrent of charges and countercharges of ballot stuffing, voter intimidation and booth capture.

Karpoori Thakur survived one challenge to his ministry in January 1979, when he was able to beat down a no-confidence motion in the Assembly. But finally in April the combination of a Forward-Harijan alliance in the Assembly and the national-level Jana Sangh/BLD conflict within the Janata party brought down the Thakur government. It was succeeded by a ministry headed by a Harijan, Ram Sunder Das, but dominated by the same combination of Forwards and Jana Sanghis that had defeated the Thakur government. Thus the shift from Forward to Backward control at the ministerial level under Karpoori Thakur was in the end a short-lived one, but the underlying trends in the state overall, it will be argued in this essay, is in favour of the Backwards.

#### CASTE IN THE STATE ASSEMBLY

In a state where caste and politics have been mixed in such a strong and often explosive combination for so long, the Vidhan Sabha is a natural place to look for evidence of a change from Forward to Backward primacy. Table 3 gives a caste breakdown of the general seats in the Bihar

Legislative Assembly over the 1962-77 period. Here we find the familiar story of upper caste domination in the early years, when well over half of the MLAs from non-reserved seats belonged to the four 'twice-born' castes. The pattern maintained itself through the 1967 and 1969 elections, and even down to the period of the Emergency, when fully 54.8 per cent of the MLAs from general seats were Forwards, as against their 16.5 per cent of the non-Scheduled population.<sup>16</sup>

The 1977 election meant a noticeable decline in the Forwards' representation, to 48.6 per cent, though a look at the figures for the individual caste groups shows that all that decline was borne by the Brahmans, who dropped from 18.3 per cent of the general seats in 1975 to only 7.6 per cent in 1977, or in numerical terms from 36 MLAs to 19. The other three castes among the Forwards even gained a bit; in fact their collective share (for Bhumihars plus Rajputs plus Kayasthas) went up from 36.5 to 40.9 per cent. Why should it have been only the Brahmans that were purged by the voters? Perhaps they suffered from their caste connection with Indira Gandhi and the Emergency period Chief Minister of Bihar, Jagannath

Mishra, both of whom are Brahmans; perhaps the voters in some sense held Brahmans generally responsible for the 'excesses' committed under the Emergency leadership of Brahman Prime Minister and Chief Minister.

As the Forwards declined in strength, the Backwards grew, but just as the Forwards' loss was really the drop of just one caste group, so the advance of the Backwards was actually the progress of only one community, the Yadavs, who by 1977 had become the second largest group in the Assembly, next only to the Rajputs. For the other Upper Backwards, representation has been essentially stationary over the period (Banias and Koiris) or even declining, as with the Kurmis, who basked under Congress patronage back in the days of Binodanand Jha's chief ministership in the early 1960s, but who have faced leaner times since. The category labelled other Shudras has consisted of a different mix each time, with never more than two from any caste group. They are primarily the Annexure I Backwards, such as Dhanuks, Hajjams, Kahars, Kewats, Mallahs and Noniyas.

Among the Backwards, the Upper Backwards have been consistently overrepresented. Even back in 1962, the four Upper Backward castes had 28.8 per cent of the general MLA seats, as against only 24.3 per cent of the non-Scheduled population. By 1977, their percentage of seats had grown to 34.9. The Lower Backwards, on the other hand, are 40 per cent of non-Scheduled population, but have never had more than 3.6 per cent of the general seats. Backward participation in state politics, then, has been a very uneven business, confined for all practical purposes to the Upper Backward community.<sup>17</sup>

The gini coefficient is an overall measure of inequality generally used to measure the degree of equality in the distribution of income or land, but it can also be used to measure the relationship between distribution of castes in the population (analogous statistically to classes of landowners) and MLA seats in the Assembly (analogous to the amount of land held by the different classes of landowners). As in the conventional use of the gini coefficient, its value here varies between zero (perfect equality, or each group represented in proportion to its share of the population) and unity (perfect inequality). Over the 15 years covered in Table 3, the gini coefficient

TABLE 4 : CASTE COMPOSITION OF PARTIES AND COALITIONS IN POWER IN BIHAR VIDHAN SABHA, 1962-1977

(Figures in Percentage)

Group	1962	1967	1969	1975	1977	State Population
Brahman	14.1	8.6	11.8	16.0	2.8	4.6
Bhumihar	13.6	11.1	10.5	9.3	12.0	2.8
Rajput	14.1	24.1	19.1	14.4	19.4	4.1
Kayastha	6.0	3.1	2.6	1.5	5.1	1.2
Forwards	47.8	46.9	44.0	41.2	39.3	12.7
Bania	2.7	3.1	3.3	4.1	2.8	0.6
Yadav	8.2	14.8	15.1	9.3	14.3	10.7
Kurmi	6.5	1.2	3.3	4.6	2.3	3.5
Koiri	6.5	6.8	3.9	4.1	4.1	4.0
(Upper Backwards)	(23.9)	(25.9)	(25.6)	(22.1)	(23.5)	(18.8)
(Lower Backwards)	(0.5)	(3.1)	(1.3)	(1.5)	(2.3)	(31.2)
Total						
Backwards	24.4	29.0	26.9	23.6	25.8	50.0
Muslims	8.2	4.9	8.6	10.3	6.5	12.2
Bengalis	1.1	3.1	.0	0.5	2.3	2.4
Scheduled Castes	17.4	11.7	12.5	15.5	18.0	13.8
Scheduled Tribes	1.1	4.3	7.9	8.8	8.3	8.9
Grand Total <sup>a</sup>	100.0	99.9	99.9	99.9	100.2	100.0
N	184	162	152 <sup>b</sup>	194	217	
Gini co-efficient	.760	.674	.635	.599	.618	

Notes : <sup>a</sup>Totals may not add to 100.0 because of rounding.

<sup>b</sup>This coalition included the support of several independents to give it a majority in the Vidhan Sabha; these independents are not included here.

Source : As for Table 3.

has gone down from .778 to .792 — some progress toward equal representation, to be sure, but hardly a revolution. The Backwards, or more precisely the Upper Backwards, have made some progress in state politics over the last decade and a half, but they have not brought about any sweeping change in the politics of representation.

#### CASTE IN RULING PARTIES

A better gauge of the respective strength of different caste groups at state level than total membership in the Vidhan Sabha would perhaps be the composition of the ruling party, for after all, it is the governing party that makes policy in the parliamentary system, not the legislative body as a whole. Table 4 presents a breakdown of the major ruling parties and coalitions since 1962. Here we again see evidence of a steady fall in the position of the Forwards, from 47.8 per cent of Binodanand Jha's Congress party in 1962 to 39.2 per cent of the 1977 Janata Legislature party.<sup>18</sup>

Again also, it is the Brahmans who have lost most heavily. They were (along with the Rajputs) the principal element in the Congress headed by Pandit Jha, himself also a Brahman. Brahmans were somewhat less well represented in the United Front and

Congress coalition alliances of the late 1960s and then recovered to become the major contingent in the Congress party headed by Brahman Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra during the Emergency. Perhaps because of their intimate connections with the Congress, the Brahmans were not a major element in the Janata party in 1977. In fact the proportion of Brahmans in the Janata was even less than their percentage of the population as a whole, the first time that any of the Forwards suffered such an embarrassment. But as the Brahmans were down, other castes among the Forwards came up, with the Rajputs, Bhumihars and Kayasthas all improving their representation under the Janata significantly.

Somewhat surprisingly, the Backwards, though the centrepiece of the Janata strategy in Bihar, were no better represented in the Janata Legislature Party than in any of its predecessors. Indeed, the total Backward group was virtually the same in 1977 as it had been in 1962, with the four Upper Backward communities comprising almost all the Backward membership of the Assembly throughout the entire period.

Rather than the Backwards replacing the Brahmans, it was the Sche-

duled Tribes that increased their participation as members of ruling parties and coalitions. In 1962 the Jharkhand movement was still running strong in Bihar, and its members would have no part of Congress rule, but as the 1960s wore on, the Jharkhand fragmented, and Adivasis became as divided between different parties and factions as any other groups. In the process they became better represented in the make-up of the ruling coalitions of 1967 and 1969 and in the governing parties of the 1970s.

In an overall sense, representativeness as measured by the gini coefficient improved over the 1962-77 period, with a drop from over .700 to around .600, but it is interesting to note that Jagannath Mishra's party in power, widely viewed as an upper caste enterprise, was slightly more representative (gini coefficient = .599) than Karpoori Thakur's Janata party (= .618) with its much more avowedly lower caste rhetoric.

#### CASTE AT MINISTRY LEVEL

Evidence of a massive change from Forwards to Backwards is not to be found, then, in the composition of party and coalition rule in Bihar. The next logical place to look is the ministry level, for here is where the real power is thought to lie in a parliamentary system — with the cabinet ministers, who both produce the legislation and direct the bureaucracy that implements it, not with the backbenchers, who in theory have to toe meekly the line laid down by the ministry. The successive waves of defections of the 1960s and early 1970s have eroded much of this traditional party discipline, certainly, but even so the ministry is still where the power is. Table 5 gives a caste breakdown for full ministers in all the ministries since 1962 that lasted 10 months or more (thereby leaving out seven ministries during 1968-69 and 1970-72 that lasted anywhere between 4 days and 7 months) and also the Ram Sunder Das ministry that replaced Karpoori Thakur's government in the spring of 1979. They range in size from K B Sahay's trim 10-man ministry to Karpoori Thakur's much larger ministry of 24 members.

Here there is some indication of real change. Down through Jagannath Mishra's Emergency-period cabinet, the Forwards invariably had the major role, in the early years with twice (B N Jha and K B Sahay cabinets) or

TABLE 5 : CASTE COMPOSITION OF MAJOR CABINET MINISTRIES, 1962-1979

(Full Ministers Only: Figures are in Percentages<sup>a</sup>)

Category	B N Jha 1962	K B Sahay 1963	M Pd Sinha 1967	D Pd Rai 1970	Kedar Pandey 1972	Abdul Gafoor 1973	Jagannath Mishra 1975	Karpoori Thakur 1977	Ram Sun- der Das 1979	State Population
Forwards	58	40	67	33	38	38	40	29	50	13
Upper Backwards	8	20	20	20	23	23	20	38	20	19
Lower Backwards	0	0	7	0	0	5	0	4	0	31
Muslims and Bengalis	8	20	7	13	15	10	13	13	15	15
Scheduled Castes and Tribes	25	20	0	33	23	24	27	17	15	22
Total	99	100	101	99	99	101	100	101	100	100
N	12	10	15	15	13	21 <sup>b</sup>	15	24	20	
Gini co-efficient	.701	.540	.745	.505	.516	.473	.532	.467	.614	
No of months in office	32	41	11	10	15	21	25	22	3 <sup>c</sup>	

Notes: <sup>a</sup>Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

<sup>b</sup>Excludes one minister of undetermined caste.

<sup>c</sup>Until the wave of resignations in July 1979.

Source: As for Table 3.

three times (Mahamaya Prasad Sinha cabinet) the representation of the next highest group. In the four Congress ministries of the 1970s, Forward preponderance was not so overwhelming, but was nonetheless very definitely present. Only with the Janata ministry did the Backwards form something approaching a majority. Of course, by 'Backwards' we in fact mean Upper Backwards, for they had 38 per cent of the posts, while the Lower Backwards have only 4 per cent, or one minister (though he was a very potent one, the Chief Minister himself). As elsewhere, then, the advance of the Backwards meant the advance of the Upper Backwards. With Ram Sunder Das, the older pattern reasserted itself; exactly half the ministers were Forwards, and the Backwards were reduced to the level that they had been relegated to in earlier times.

During the 22 months that the Karpoori Thakur ministry was in power, the Forwards, with about 40 per cent of the Janata MLAs (Table 4) had only 39 per cent of the minister-ships, while the Upper Backwards (about 24 per cent of Janata MLAs) had fully 38 per cent of these posts. On the other hand, the Ram Sunder Das ministry, whatever its other faults, much better reflected the make-up of its party than did Karpoori's government, as a comparison of Tables 4 and 5 will show. How is it that the Karpoori ministry was so overrepresented with Backwards?

One explanation could be that the Janata MLAs were not that concerned

with matters of caste, but in the context of Bihar's caste-ridden political tradition and the current Forward-Backward confrontational politics over the reservation issue, such a happy line of reasoning can be dismissed out of hand.

Instead, it must be that the Forwards in the Janata party went along with the division of minister-ships for reasons that overrode their own immediate caste considerations, strong though these latter remained. There are at least two reasons why this might have been so. The first is that various constituent elements of the Janata were feeling strong pressure from the national level to stay in the Janata fold in Patna. This was particularly true of the Jana Sangh group of the Bihar Janata (its largest constituent, with something like 65 out of its total 217 MLAs), whose members privately were most critical of the Thakur government's pro-Backward policy. Many of the Jana Sangh MLAs would have liked to revolt against the Thakur ministry, and in fact eventually they were the major factor in bringing it down, but up through early 1979 at least, the national Jana Sangh leadership saw itself as having everything to gain if it became the main pillar of support for the Desai government while Charan Singh's BLD group dissipated itself in its various intrigues. The party at the national level, in short, was anxious that its Bihar MLAs not destroy the Janata government in Patna by pulling out their support, for a Janata collapse in Bihar might very well have shaken loose the foundations

of the Janata government in New Delhi as well. As things eventually unfolded, that in large part was precisely what did happen, with the Jana Sangh's muscle-flexing in Bihar a major factor in the BLD campaign against them in New Delhi and in the collapse of the Jana Sangh-backed government of Morarji Desai at the Centre in July 1979.

#### POLITICAL ECONOMY IN RURAL BIHAR

But an even more important reason for the Forward MLAs to support a ministry dominated by Backwards was what was going on in their own constituencies, that is to say in the countryside in this 90 per cent rural state. It is at this point that we must enter the thicket of political economy and confront the juxtaposition of caste and class in the Bihar mofussil. At the entrance to the thicket, though, it is necessary to pause for a moment to look at the geography of caste. Taking the 1911 Census as a guide again, we find that there are a few areas of Bihar where the Forwards are in a plurality; they form over 30 per cent of total population in parts of Bhojpur and Saran districts and over 25 per cent in pockets of Aurangabad, Patna, Rohtas and Siwan districts.<sup>19</sup> For the most part, however, they collectively amount to between 5 and 15 per cent of the population. Instead it is the Backwards that are the plurality group in most of the state, and in particular the three Upper Shudra communities. Yadavs alone account for over 25 per cent of population in areas of Bhagalpur, Gaya, Hazaribagh, Patna, Saharsa,

Saran and Vaishali districts, and taken together with the Kurmis and Koiris amount to over 30 per cent in larger parts of Giridih, Nalanda and Rohtas districts in addition to those just named.<sup>20</sup>

In short, the Upper Backwards simply outnumber the Forwards in most places. In the past this numerical inferiority did not hurt the Forwards, for they were the major landowning castes under the British zamindari system; they were the zamindars and the intermediaries in the structure of subfeudation that built up over the years of British rule. The actual farmers or ryots were largely the Hindu agricultural castes of Upper Backwards, and under them were the mazdoors or landless labourers, mainly Harijans, who were often in a relationship of debt bondage or *kamyoti* to their patrons. There was not an exact identity between caste and class here, for there were some Shudra zamindars and a good many twice-born ryots to say nothing of Shudra mazdoors, but for the most part caste and class fit together very well indeed.<sup>21</sup>

After the zamindari abolition of the 1950s, the picture became a bit more blurred, as large numbers of zamindars 'resumed' cultivation of their lands and became ryots, but the basic division remained. Now the Forwards became the larger cultivators, often with holdings greatly in excess of the land ceilings imposed by the Congress government, holdings which they were able to retain through a combination of benami transfers, badly maintained land records and corruption.<sup>22</sup> The Upper Backwards became the small cultivators, and the Harijans stayed where they were as landless labourers.

Even where the Forwards became what would have to be called small farmers on the basis of landholding size, they have tended to behave like big farmers, for in one of those interesting instances where cultural norms reinforce class differences, there is a traditional taboo against upper caste men actually handling the plough or physically working in the fields. An upper caste landholder, whether large or small, either let out his land on tenancy or share, or he 'cultivated' it directly by hiring landless workers and supervising them in the field, generally directing them in their tasks from a comfortable vantage point under a shade tree or an umbrella. He maintained control over his status and wealth through the harsh terms of his rents (usually a 50-50 split of the pro-

duce with the *bataidar* paying all the costs of the inputs), through money-lending at high interest rates, through paying low wages (generally below the legal minimum wage) if he 'cultivated' directly, and through the 'enforcers' that he maintained as retainers to collect rent and interest payments.<sup>23</sup>

In addition, the landowner has had the police at his beck and call in those relatively rare instances when the lower orders, usually Harijan mazdoors, demanded better conditions and it looked as though his own enforcers might not be able to control things.<sup>24</sup> The object of all these machineries of control, it should be noted, has not been primarily profit-maximisation or even pre-capitalist accumulation, but rather maintenance of position, for the larger farmers are motivated more than anything else by fear of losing control, of being sucked under by the huge undermass in the countryside. For them risk is not measured in terms of possible financial gain and loss, or opportunity cost considerations, so much as in terms of possible loss of social, economic and political control over the rural areas.<sup>25</sup>

Money-lending may be taken as a case in point here. If the outrageous rates of interest that one hears mentioned so often — 50 per cent per season, 150 or 200 per cent per year, etc — were the real rates of interest, then within a short space of time the money-lenders (who are mostly the big farmers) would in short order own everything in the countryside, lock, stock and barrel. But they do not, and the reason is that they never realise these nominal interest rates, nor do they intend to. Their purpose is not to own *everything* but to keep *everyone* in thrall as much as possible. Thus the basic point of lending money is to keep the borrower in one's debt, not to make a profit.<sup>26</sup>

The failure of governmental rural development efforts in Bihar is another example. It is well known that at the local level programmes mounted in Patna (or in New Delhi) have been taken over by local elites and perverted by them to their own ends. Part of this perversion has been because of the money involved, of course, for big farmers in Bihar are no more immune than any other group to the lure of easily gained loot. But more of the perversion has been because of what might be called a political economy of fear: big farmer elites have been afraid that if the rural economy did expand, they would lose their control

over it. By taking over and milking community development, co-operatives, panchayati raj, minor irrigation and all the other programmes, they assured that very little development ever occurred and that their own control endured.

This situation fits in very well with the needs of the politicians managing things at the state level from the 1950s onward, for their principal objective was also to stay in power and enjoy its fruits, not to develop the state. Their major worries were two: insurrection in the countryside and displacement by other elites in the corridors of power at Patna. With the main power groups at the state level and in the countryside both wanting above all to maintain their control, and both being composed primarily of the same caste groups, it is not surprising that a tacit arrangement developed between them, whereby each assisted the other.<sup>27</sup>

The big farmers kept order in the *mofussil* through their sharecropping, money-lending, patron-client relationships and enforcers. They also mobilised their retainers, followers and dependents in electoral support of the dominant groups in Patna. This did not mean invariable support for the Congress, for in the elections of 1967 and 1969 large portions of the rural elite deserted the Congress, but they did so in favour of other 'responsible' parties, such as the Jana Kranti Dal, Lok Tantrik Congress Dal, Congress (O), Bharatiya Kranti Dal, etc, which were filled with dissident and disgraced Congressmen. Other rural elites went for conservative parties like the Jana Sangh or the various parties improvised by the Raja of Ramgarh, or even the 'left' parties like such as the Praja Socialist Party, Samyukta Socialist Party or Communist Party of India, which espoused radical rhetoric but, with an occasional exception like the 'land grab movement' of the early 1970s, gave little serious indication of putting it into action.<sup>28</sup> The rural elites definitely did not give any support to insurrectionary movements like the Naxalites of the CPI (M-L), who surfaced in several areas of the state in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Nor did any serious support go to the Communist Party of India (Marxist) with its designs of restructuring the economy within the democratic framework; the CPI (M) won only 4 seats in 1967, 3 in 1969 and none in 1972.

For their part of this *de facto* bargain, the successive ministries in Patna did three things. First, despite the salvos of rhetorical bombast fired off on numerous occasions on land reform, minimum wage, bonded labour and so on, they precluded any real change in the land structure after the zamindari reforms of the 1950s. Thus big farmers were guaranteed security of tenure. Second, as has been noted above, they insured that the state police would be available to protect landlords in the event that the latter's own enforcement machinery should be unable to handle matters. The fact that serious threats to the landowners from below happened only sporadically and in isolated instances assured that a relatively small constabulary could handle matters, so the cost of police protection was not a great burden.<sup>29</sup> Thirdly, there was the patronage system of rural development that has also been considered previously, whereby the government in Patna funnelled money to local elites in the form of development programmes.

This arrangement worked reasonably well down through the Emergency, but in the post-Emergency period it came under attack, for the forces that created it also put into motion other developments that eventually promised to overturn it.

#### IMPORTANCE OF SUFFRAGE

The key here is the universal adult franchise that was instituted in the Indian Constitution of 1950. At first, voting in the rural areas simply fitted into the prevailing patron-client system, with the voting being just one more thing that the patron manipulated for his benefit. But then as other parties began to contest the Congress for supremacy, first at state and then at national level, there came to be more competition for votes. The various factions within the Congress and then other parties began to reach out further for electoral support. Actually, this spread had begun even before the universal franchise. In the early years after the formation of Bihar and Orissa as a province separate from Bengal in 1912, Kayasthas and Muslims from the great landholding zamindari families were the major actors; then participation spread to Bhumihars and Rajputs in the 1930s and 1940s, and finally to the Brahmans in the post-Independence period.<sup>30</sup> Then parties like the SSP began to appeal specifically to the

Backwards, and even the Congress started to take them seriously as an important constituency. Naturally the Upper Backwards, being more advanced economically and better organised, were the first to respond to such opportunity and to gain important leadership posts. By the mid-1960s, for example, Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav had become known throughout the state as the 'chief lieutenant' of Chief Minister K B Sahay. Still, there was a good deal of time lag between political awakening and the acquisition of real political power. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were several Backward Chief Ministers, but they tended to be compromise candidates between various factions of Forwards and behaved as such, rather than as champions of the Backwards during their invariably short chief minister-ships.<sup>31</sup> It was not until the late 1970s that the Upper Backwards became truly powerful politically, for it was only then that a Karpooi Thakur was able to unite them behind a common policy, that of the reservation issue.

The dominance of the Backwards is bound to be somewhat shaky, certainly at first, as we have already seen. The Forwards are unreconciled to the situation, to say the least, and though they did support Karpooi Thakur in his first crisis of January 1979,<sup>32</sup> in the April crisis they combined with the Jana Sangh element of the Janata party (actually quite a number were members of both the Forward castes and the Jana Sangh) to unseat him. The Forwards will be around as a strong factor for the indefinite future.

The rising Backwards are also facing a challenge from below, for the same expansionary tendencies within the Indian electoral system that got them involved in politics have also energised those at the bottom level, the Harijans, who are in general the landless agricultural labourers of Bihar. A few Harijans have been led by Naxalite cadres to demand better working conditions, but far more have been awakened through the populist rhetoric of the Emergency Congress and Janata regimes on land reform, minimum wages, bonded labour, debt redemption, and so on. The preponderance of evidence is that these programmes were not meant to be taken seriously but in a number of cases (and probably far more than the few that have been reported) landless labourers have organised themselves at the village level

and demanded that governmental promises on minimum wage, bonded labour and the like be implemented.<sup>33</sup> Thus far the government has used the police power to back the landowners against these upstarts, and the story of Harijan uplift in the rural areas has been in large measure a story of Harijan atrocities.<sup>34</sup> But for the immediate political future, landless labourers have been aroused and will continue to make demands on their landlords, large and small.

The Harijans have also become active in state level politics. In the various manoeuvres connected with the fall of the Desai ministry at the Centre in July 1979, a good number of Harijan MLAs lined up with the Jana Sangh and against Karpooi Thakur in the Bihar Assembly, just as the national Harijan leader Jagjivan Ram was courting Jana Sangh support in his bid against Thakur's patron at the national level, Charan Singh.<sup>35</sup> The difference between the two levels of activity was that while Charan Singh won (at least temporarily) in New Delhi, Karpooi lost in his efforts to topple his successor Chief Minister Das in Patna. The Harijans, then, constitute a threat to the dominance of the Backwards, at least in so far as they can ally with the Forwards. The rural Backwards thus face resentment from above and possible rebellion from below in consolidating their control.

The Backwards also have an agenda of class interests that is broader than merely opposing other class/caste groups. As middle and small farmers, or cultivators who actually work their holdings themselves and as a new group in power, they are not only interested in stability and control, but also are much more concerned with maximising profits than the old 'twice-born' *maliks*. They are Charan Singh's natural constituency, very much interested in such things as higher grain prices, abolition of agricultural taxes, and state programmes subsidising agricultural inputs and infrastructure. As chief minister, Karpooi Thakur was well aware of these interests, and was not at all shy in articulating them.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, he has been a champion of the rural middle class interests as well as of the rural middle caste interest.

#### CONCLUSIONS

In the near and middle term we may expect several developments. First, the transfer of power to the



Upper Backwards may be expected to continue at the local level along political lines. In the summer of 1978 the Thakur government conducted panchayat elections throughout the state, with the object of getting its supporters into power at the village level.<sup>37</sup> No thorough analysis of these elections has yet emerged, but impressionistic indications in the districts and in Patna are that there was a large scale displacement of the old officeholders, both Forwards and Backwards, by new men who are Karpoori Thakur supporters. Second, there will likely be a noticeable transfer of economic power in the countryside to the Backwards, as the Forwards prove unable to cope with the aggressiveness, industry and profit orientation of the Backwards.<sup>38</sup> To say that Bihar will turn into a Punjab would surely be too much, but now there is at least some chance that Bihar's incredibly rich natural potential in agriculture will be exploited.

Third, at the state level there will doubtless be a continuing struggle between Backwards and Forwards in the Legislative Assembly and perhaps even a series of alternating governments in the short term. But with the next elections there will surely be a pronounced shift towards the Backwards in terms of MLAs returned to office, a shift that should be sufficient to make them the dominant voice in the state's politics. The 1977 election was, in Bihar as elsewhere in North India, essentially a referendum in the Emergency, and caste, although by no means absent, probably played a smaller role than in any recent election in Bihar. The next election will be different, turning into a referendum on Karpoori Thakur's Backward policy and very definitely fought along caste group lines between Forwards and Upper Backwards. The Samastipur bye-election served as a preview of what will happen; the Upper Backwards will use their numbers, aggressiveness and economic and political power at the local level to overwhelm the Forwards, and there will be a great many more Backwards returned as MLAs. To look at it another way, the Forward-Harijan alliance that worked to keep Karpoori and the Backwards at bay on the Legislative Assembly floor in July 1979 will not work out in the Constituencies, where Harijans have no more reason to support the declining fortunes of their Forward patrons than to support the

advancing fortunes of the Backwards who employ them as day labourers.

Fourth, the condition of landless labourers will probably deteriorate, as the agricultural structure of the state slowly moves from semi-feudalism to capitalism. The patron/client system that attached agricultural labourers to their masters and that Grierson despaired of in the 1890s still very much exists today, but it is the system of the upper castes.<sup>39</sup> As the Upper Backwards take over more of the agricultural economy of the state and gradually take over more of the land from the less efficient Forwards, they will spread their own system, which is to maximise use of labour within the family and hire in outside labourers for cash only as needed. The landless labourers will cast off from their serf-like bonded or attached status to become 'free' labour, giving up a position of degradation with some security for one of degradation without any security at all. In the near term future the increasing economic activity of the Backward farmers may provide some increase in employment, but in the middle and long run a good part of that added demand for labour will be met from within the family and by mechanisation, as the Backwards consolidate and build upon their position. As their welfare goes down, the militancy of the landless labourers may well go up in terms of confrontation with the Upper Backwards, but the material reality of their plight can only worsen over time.

Overall, there is emerging into view the outlines of a new political economy in Bihar that will be quite similar to the old one in many respects. As before there will be a tacit arrangement between the dominant class in the countryside and the governing elites in Patna. The Thakur government already began its own patronage programme to insure the continued allegiance of its rural support base; under future ministries the Integrated Rural Development Programme, Food for Work Programme, Antyodaya Programme, etc. will all channel state funds into the hands of the locally dominant strata, though their ostensible purpose will be much more egalitarian.

In its relations with New Delhi a Backward-dominated state government in Bihar will pursue a middle farmer orientation, continuing to demand higher prices for foodstuffs and lower

prices (that is, subsidies) on credit and physical inputs. The Upper Backwards in the countryside will continue to maintain stability and will support the Janata party at state level, while prospering as the new dominant stratum at village level, though worried about opposition from Forwards unreconciled to their loss of power and from Harijans restive at the bottom.

There is little doubt that Bihar is in process of undergoing its third major social, economic and political change in this century. Sachhidanand Sinha, who led the struggle culminating in the separation of Bihar from Bengal in 1912, could be said to be the creator of Modern Bihar. Sri Krishna Sinha, who shepherded the province into independence and through its first decade and a half thereafter, could be described as the creator of a Forward Raj in Bihar. And Karpoori Thakur may well turn out to have been the creator of a Backward Raj.

#### Notes

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- 1 The Bajitpur tragedy in Begusarai District, on November 15, 1978, offers a good example of press coverage. See *The Times of India* (1978a); also *EPW*, (1978b). Concerning political murders, see *The Statesman Weekly*, (1979c). On the situation in Bihar generally, see *India Today* (1978).
- 2 See *Hindustan Times* (1979b.)
- 3 These lists were used by the Government of Bihar for various purposes in the 1950s and 1960s. For examples of their use (and copies of the lists themselves), see Government of Bihar (1966: 136-63, 404-6, 487-93, 509-12). Galanter (1978: n40) reports provisions by the Government of Bihar for Backward Classes as far back as 1947.
- 4 Government of India (1955: Volume 2, 16-22, Volume 3, 14-5).
- 5 *Ibid.*, (Volume 1, i-xxxiii); also Galanter (1978: 1817).
- 6 AIR (1965).
- 7 For a summary of the Mungeri Lal report, see Mishra (1978). The saga of defining the Backwards continues today, with the appointment of a new Backward Classes Commission at the Central level, headed by B P Mandal, himself a Backward from Bihar; this new

- BCC is to report by the end of December 1979. See *Indian Nation* (1978b) and *Hindustan Times* (1979a).
- 8 The party successful efforts of the Bhumihars to transform themselves into Brahmans during the early part of this century is well documented (see Blair, 1979b). It is possible that other castes of lower ritual rank have also transformed themselves upwards in recent decades, though the census no longer records their successes and failures, and for the numerically significant caste groups, there would appear to be more to be gained from political mobilisation than from social climbing.
  - 9 On this relationship, see Blair 1979a: 76-78); also Nicholas (1961).
  - 10 It would perhaps be better to use the 1971 Census data for the religious, linguistic and Scheduled categories in Table 1, rather than the 1961 figures, but even as of 1978 all the relevant Bihar census volumes for 1971 had not been published, so it was not possible to do so. The consistency of caste strength at state level over time is also true at district and thana level (Blair, 1979b.)
  - 11 *Indian Nation* (1978a).
  - 12 That is, 2,500 in state government departments, 4,000 in state undertakings and 2,500 in local bodies (Mishra, 1978: 29-30).
  - 13 Government of Bihar (1978: 314).
  - 14 There are no data available on college enrolment by caste, but thirty to forty per cent would not be an unreasonable estimate of the Backwards' share.
  - 15 In the three revenue thanas that make up the Samastipur Lok Sabha constituency, there were according to the 1911 Census (the most recent to include sub-district level data) 16.8 per cent Forwards and 26.2 per cent from the Upper Shudras caste groups (Baniyas were not reported at thana level in 1911). Of the 10 Lower Shudra groups listed in Table 1, thana level data were available for 9 for 1911, showing them to have a collective 23.1 per cent of the population. In other words 49.4 (26.1 + 23.1) per cent of the population consisted of 12 Backward castes.
  - 16 Data are given for 1975 rather than 1972 (the year of the election) in order to give a better comparison between the Janata era and the Emergency Congress domination that immediately preceded it. The total *n* of 197 for 1975 reflects the resignations of a large number of MLAs in response to the demands of the JP Movement of 1974-75.
  - 17 Of course one finds exceptions, a most notable one being the first Janata Chief Minister himself, Karpooi Thakur, who is a Hajjam, or Nai, by caste background.
  - 18 Note that in Table 4 the Scheduled Castes and Tribes are included, unlike Table 3, because while over-
- all representation is assured to Harijans and Adivasis in the Assembly proportional to their numbers in the whole population of the state, representation in the ruling party is not. In other words, their inclusion in Table 3 would always be equal to their percentage of the state's population, so there is no point in including them, but this is not the case in Table 4.
  - 19 For more on the geographical distribution of caste, see Blair (1979b).
  - 20 *Ibid.* As mentioned in note 15, Baniyas were not included in the 1911 data, for they were too few in overall numbers (cf Table 1).
  - 21 For examples of this complementarity (and sometimes contradiction) of caste and class, see Dhar (1976), Dhar and Mukherjee (1978), Sinha (1977a, 1977g, 1978c) and *EPW* (1978b).
  - 22 For an exhaustive treatment of this whole process, see Jannuzi (1974).
  - 23 For examples of conflicts involving these matters, see *EPW* (1973) Correspondent (1973), Das (1975) and Sinha (1976a and 1976b).
  - 24 On police co-operation with landlords, see Sinha (1975), Das (1975).
  - 25 For support of these points, see also Prasad ((1979).
  - 26 Roth (1979) gives a case study from Bihar with evidence illustrating this point.
  - 27 For an extension of this analysis to the national level, see Blair (1979c).
  - 28 Even the CPI was largely a Bhumihar party in the 1950s and 1960s. See Navneeth (1968); also Heidenreich (1971).
  - 29 The police establishment in Bihar has grown since independence, even taking into account population growth. In 1951 there were about 18,000 policemen in the state, a number which increased to some 33,000 at the beginning of 1961 and 44,000 in 1971. In relative terms there were about 4.8 policemen per 10,000 population in 1951, 7.1 in 1961 and 7.8 in 1971 (Bayley, 1969: 61-4; Government of Bihar, 1975). As of 1961, Bihar had the lowest ratio of police to population of any of the Indian states (Bayley, 1969: 65-7). In recent years the number of police has surely increased, and has been further augmented through infusions of Central Reserve Police in the state as the need arose. Still, it is dwarfed by comparison with the position in the United States, where there were 21.2 police per 10,000 population in 1960, 37.8 in 1970 and 49.3 in 1975. Even in comparison with other Indian states, the police establishment is thin. In the spring of 1979 it was estimated that in Bihar there were 1,104 people for each policeman, as against 943 in Uttar Pradesh, 806 in Madhya Pradesh and 724 in West Bengal. See *Hindustan Times* (1979c).
  - 30 This story has been recounted many times. See for example Jha (1972) and Singh (1975).
  - 31 Daroga Prasad Raj a Yadav, was the longest in office of these Backward Chief Ministers (cf Table 5). The other Backwards were all in power for less than 8 months.
  - 32 In early January 1979, the Assembly rejected a no-confidence motion in the Thakur government by 215-76 votes. Obviously, the Forward MLAs in the Janata party must have supported the Chief Minister for the most part, despite the many Forward machinations against him both within and without the Janata Legislature party.
  - 33 See, for instance, Arun Sinha's series of articles (Sinha, 1977b, 1977c, 1977d, 1977e, 1977f, 1978a, 1978b, 1978d).
  - 34 For example, the Harijan atrocities at Belchi (Bhushan, 1977; Sinha, 1977b; Narayan, 1979), Bishrampur (Sinha, 1978b), Pupri (Narayan, 1978) and Bajitpur (*The Times of India*, 1978a, 1978b; *EPW* 1978b; *India Today*, 1978; Sinha, 1978f). At the beginning of 1979 it was reported that 81 Harijans had been killed in incidents of caste violence during the Janata government's term of office (*Searchlight*, 1979). In March 1979 the Bihar government announced it would set up an "armed Harijan volunteer force" in ten "atrocities-prone districts" of the state (*The Times of India*, 1979), but it remains to be seen how effective the measure will be, or whether it will even be seriously implemented at all.
  - 35 *Hindustan Times* (1979d).
  - 36 For instance, *The Statesman Weekly* (1979a); also *Searchlight* (1979b).
  - 37 See Sinha (1978e) and *EPW* (1978a).
  - 38 According to Prasad (1979), the process of land transfer from Forwards to Upper Backwards is already under way.
  - 39 See Grierson (1893), also Stevenson-Moore (1893). For current evidence of the practice, see Lal (1977).

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