

elections. It is hoped that experience gained from the current election will make it possible for local supervision of future elections to be left to civilians.

Once marked upon the finger and armed with several ballot papers, each one of which he must be careful to place in a separate box, the Indian voter's task is not an easy one. In the enclosure which has been carefully curtained to accord privacy, he is confronted by a veritable battery of boxes: some for federal seats, some for local seats, and in most cases each group divided into Open, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. To assist the voters, most of whom are unable to read or write, to perform this task accurately, the ballot boxes have been painted in a variety of different colours, each one denoting the kind of seat for which the candidate in question is standing.

Use of Symbols

Another aid, and one which is perhaps the most unique feature of the Indian elections, is the use of symbols. These designs, after a good deal of discussion and compromise, have been allotted by the election commissions at the centre and in the states, one to each party and others to independent candidates. A few of these symbols are reproduced on these pages.

During the election campaign it is hoped that the voter will have learned to associate the appropriate symbol with the party or independent candidate whose policies he wishes to support. Since each of the ballot boxes prominently displays one or other of the election symbols, the voter should be able to find the one belonging to the candidate of his choice. There have been estimates of the proportion of the electorate likely to vote. It is thought unlikely that more than about 60 per cent will go to the polls. If India, with its complex and largely inexperienced electorate, does this well, it will be an achievement.

Only four years ago, most of the above groups, as well as many smaller and purely local political parties, were only vaguely definable since the struggle for independence had claimed the allegiance of all, or nearly all, and had obliterated the normal boundaries between the different political and economic and social ideals for which they stand. At that time, although not all Indians were in the Congress, even those that were not were at least "of the Congress" in the sense that they supported its search for national freedom. It is not surprising, therefore, that the government which has led India in the trying initial period of newly-won independence has been the Congress; nor is it strange that, of all the political parties now in being, only the Congress has the organization and the resources to contest every one of the federal and local seats in the current election. To Canadian readers the name "Congress Party" has now become familiar. It is the name which conjures up for them, not only the long march towards independence, but also the personalities who led that march and played so bold a role in the making of modern India: Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Rajagopalachari, President Rajendra Prasad, and others. Of these, only Mr. Nehru is actively engaged in political life today. Less well known to Canadians are leaders of other political parties, many of whom also played outstanding roles in the early years of Congress itself and all of whom have earned a place in the pages of modern Indian history. They include Archarya Kripalani of the KMPP, Dr. Lohia and Jayaprakash Narayan of the Socialist Party, Dr. N. B. Khare of the Hindu Mahasabha, Dr. S. P. Mookerjee, founder of the Jan Sangh, and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, leader of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation.

The Indian elections, tremendous in scope and effort, are a bold and imaginative attempt to weave a new design in the fabric of democracy and deserve the attention and interest of every Canadian.