

LOCAL PARTICIPATION & NATIONAL POLITICS:

Record of conversation with Assist. Commissioner,
Fakrapattan, sub-district.

15/3/83

" The govt. is giving more development responsibilities to the local bodies. (President) Zia, although he is a military man, is very intelligent. He is giving increasing responsibilities and powers related to development to the local ~~aut~~ bodies. These bodies consist of the middle level politicians and supporters of the ~~old~~ major national parties such as the peoples party that Zia ~~overthrew~~ overthrew. They were previously the intermediaries between the national leadership and the people. Now as they get ~~more~~ and ~~more~~ ^{local} involved in the local body system, in the exercise of power that comes through being able to determine or atleast have some ~~influence~~ influence over where development projects occur and how, (power that comes from Zia and the present govt.) they cut themselves off increasingly from their old political bosses. The chairman of the municipal committee in Ariffwala is an old and ardent supporter of the Peoples' Party. I recently asked him how come he was participating so enthusiastically in Zia's local govt, system (the national parties have ofcourse boycotted ~~the~~ the local elections which now occur on a non-party basis) He replied that if he remained a People's party worker he would remain a mere functionary of his bosses, executing their orders. Now he is the chairman, with much more power and independence and local prestige since he can be instrumental ⁱⁿ to channeling development projects to his constituents. We as civil servant don't object to this sharing of development functions and responsibilities since we maintain our overall law and order, political, and even veto power, on development projects over the local bodies. During this period, June, July, the local bodies are preparing their ^{development} budget proposals. These have to be whetted and approved by us before they go up for consideration. to the province. With a slash of a pen we ~~na~~ can cut out anything we don't like. For ex, if we notice some sector or place is being unduly

favoured by more projects than others. The district council proposals must be approved by the commissioner in Multan, our division HQ, municipal committee and municipality proposals must be approved by the district commissioner in Sahiwal and union council and markaz proposals must be approved by myself as Assist. commissioner. Most fundamental of all, we, specifically the district commissioner, approve whets and approves all candidates for the elections to the local bodies. He can disqualify anyone on 3 grounds. That he is against the Pakistani state, the muslim ideology and ... (?) Such reasons no one can contest. Thus we maintain full control over the political and developmental powers of the local bodies.

We don't mind giving them the more detailed development responsibilities. Infact we much prefer this system. It keeps these politicians busy at the local level vying amongst themselves for the prestige their apparent control over development projects brings them, and out of national politics. In the last- Bhutto period- their equivalents, the members of the local national assemblies, had through their representatives in the national assemblies, had direct access to some important govt. minister, secretary, political leader at the provincial and national level. Many national assembly members were Peoples Party supporters and a word from them to their political bosses could have us discharged or transeferred. Now this access is cut and we have the direct lines of communication to the ministers and secretaries and ofcourse the head of state. The local coucillors excercise power at our pleasure."

Major Fyaz Bashir, Assist. Commissioner, Pakpattan Tehsil (Sub-district)