

CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

(By P.Dwarakanath, Swamy Associates)

"Everything will change except the theory of change"

In good olden days, when we have to photocopiers, no facsimile machines and most importantly we do not have the facility of the "worldwideweb!" Union Budget means a day with colossal activities. There used to be a feverish pitch of activity right from a Group-D Officer to the Collector of Customs and Central Excise.

I vividly remember, the Administration Section Head gearing up for the budget by getting all the Typewriters overhauled, ensuring proper stocking of Stencils, duplicating paper, duplicating inks. All the Superintendents and Assistant Collectors were directed to send their LDCs, Stenos to pool typing and all UDCs for verification/comparison of Budget papers typed by the pool and getting the same duplicated and pinning. Teams of Inspectors, Superintendents mill around eagerly waiting for the Budget Papers to take them to their respective Divisions for study and immediate actions. The activity is like conducting 10 marriages at a time and the Head of the Department and Administrative Officers running around to clear the same.

Before the D Day, One officer nominated used to go to Madras (now Chennai) to collect the Budget Books, a Team of Officers used to keep glued at the Police Wireless Room to collect the Wireless messages that used to start coming from 1700 Hrs. onwards, as Union Budget was always presented at 17.00 Hrs. on the last working day of February as a tribute to the erstwhile British Rulers.

On the D Day, the Collector with all his subordinate officers used to sit in the conference hall and the best and accurate Stenographers were also used to be placed strategically to jot down the Speech. Once the speech is completed, there used to be a general discussion and then the race against time used to be started. I still remember those nights when we were made to type endless Wireless Messages and after completion of the typing, duplicating, there used to be pinning as per the requirement and the work used to be endless. Officers from outside Divisions and local Divisions used to wait for the papers and the moment, they are available, Officers used to jump with eagerness and read them in a flash and immediately used to give instructions, as those were the men who not only knew their law, but also the units with product-wise, revenue-wise details. We, the small nuts and bolts of a giant Budget machine were normally used to be sent home, exhausted of course, at the end of the next day evening, but not before the Senior Officers thanking us and used reach home and tell that what is written in News Papers etc., that Soaps will cost less etc., is only for public consumption and wherever the Government wants to raise the duties they have done and all rates are going to shoot up.

Now, all things have to change and change for better and have changed for better. There is no longer the Budget fever in the Department, in most of the cases, Budget is another day in functioning of the department and in some cases Commissioner level officers are even holding personal hearings. There is no need for remembering the units and their products, as you can get the same by sorting out your data. Well, everything has to change and I am sure the only thing that will not and should not change is the "Pride" of the officers that we are the collectors of National Revenue.