

SPEECHES BY MR. J. T. M. GIBSON

PRESIDENT OF THE HIMALAYAN CLUB TO
DELEGATES AT THE DARJEELING MEET 14-20
MAY 1973.

I AM very grateful to the Chairman for giving me this opportunity of saying something about the Himalayan Club.

First may I thank him and the Indian Mountaineering Foundation for inviting us all to this most enjoyable and deeply interesting Meet. Those of us who live in India, and have had anything to do with encouraging the sport of climbing, know how hard Mr. Sarin has worked to develop facilities for mountaineering and to attract young Indians to take advantage of their wonderful mountains, and we are full of admiration for his organising abilities and all he has done.

Yesterday, Soli Mehta, Gurdial Singh and I discussed with him and Mr. Chakravarti, the Secretary of the I.M.F., ways in which the Himalayan Club could co-operate with the I.M.F. and avoid duplication of effort.

The I.M.F. has now taken over responsibility for keeping an eye on the interests of the Sherpas in India. On the efforts of the Sherpas, whether from Nepal or India, all, or nearly all expeditions have greatly depended, and the I.M.F. gives its support to the Sherpa Climbers Association organised by Tensing in the middle fifties.

An important asset of the Himalayan Club is its Library. This has now been moved to Delhi, re-catalogued and many of its books rebound with the help of a generous donation from the I.M.F. At present it is housed in the Central Secretariat Library. Eventually, when the I.M.F. has its own building, it is likely to be kept there. It is, perhaps, the finest collection of mountaineering literature in the country.

The production of the Himalayan Journal, edited by Soli Mehta, is now, I suppose, our most important activity as a Club. Rising costs have almost exhausted our funds, and we have had to increase the annual subscription to Rs. 55 and to ask Life Members who wish to continue to receive the Journals to pay Rs. 100 towards the costs of the next five to be produced. I sent all members a circular about this some months ago, and

their response so far has been very encouraging. We had wondered whether we could combine the publications of the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute with the Journal, but this has proved not to be feasible or desirable. May I appeal to all present to send articles of mountaineering interest, particularly concerning the Himalaya, to Soli Mehta. It is our hope to publish more about flora and fauna, ecology, geology, meteorology, glaciology and allied subjects, and if any of you can help us to collect such articles from any reliable source, we would be most grateful.

In the past Local Secretaries of the Club have often given members from abroad information on routes, porters and so on. This information is, at present, largely to the effect that the chosen area is outside the Inner Line and closed to foreigners; but one hopes the time will come when the world is more peaceful and we can all climb again in wider areas.

One of my ambitions, while President of the H.C., is to re-equip our centres in Delhi, Calcutta and Bombay with such equipment as tents that can be hired by small parties, particularly of the young, for trekking and climbing. Anyone who has such equipment no longer wanted, and who would donate it to the Club, would be doing us a great service.

Finally, Mr. Sarin has agreed that any reports we send him of misuse of the environment will be forwarded to the relevant government department, and pressure put on it to put things right. Therefore, if anyone on trek or expedition finds shrubs or trees being over used as fuel, or finds litter left unburied, or that sort of thing, we would be glad if he would let us know. Thank you very much Ladies and Gentlemen.

FAREWELL ADDRESS

WHEN it was suggested to me that I should thank our hosts on behalf of the Indian delegates I felt greatly honoured. Though not an Indian, I have lived in India for 36 years and am getting old, and therefore, by Indian tradition, more respectable; so it gives me great pleasure to speak for its delegates.

I need not repeat how much we have all enjoyed this Meet. Everyone who had attended it has made this clear. For me it has been marvellous to meet so many climbers from abroad like

Heinrich Harrer, Rene Dittert and Maurice Herzog, to mention only three whom I have long looked on as heroes, and whose books we have read and whom we can now count as personal friends.

Many of our sessions have been in this, the Jayal Memorial Hall, and I would like to recall a bit of history. Nandu was taken on his first high climb by R. L. Holdsworth and John Martyn in 1942. In 1946 he joined a party including Tenzing and myself to Banderpunch. It was there that he fell in love, as so many of us have, with Tenzing, and I had some difficulty in persuading him not to ask Tenzing to join the Sappers and become his Batman. I assured him that Tenzing had a greater future. Lt. General Bill Williams was another who encouraged Nandu in his climbing, and Nandu's early death from an illness we have learned more about at this Meet was a sad loss to Indian mountaineering.

Mr. Chairman, you have asked for criticisms rather than bouquets. I have two to make. Next time we have such a Meet can we please be provided with rubber stamps to save us from writer's cramp brought on by all the autographs expected of us? Secondly, can Mohan Kohli please arrange with Indian Airlines for us to be allowed extra weight luggage so that we can carry away all the gifts that have been so generously made to us! We thank you Mr Chairman and the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, and Wing Commander Grewal and the Hiraalayan Mountaineering Institute for such a wonderful week.