

* Proposed Evacuation of Villages in the Prosecution of the Damodar Scheme

Mr. President: Then there is the motion of Mr. Ram Narayan Singh, about the proposed and forced evacuation of thousands of people of hundreds of villages of the Hazaribagh, Manbhum and Sonthal Parganas districts of Bihar from their homes and hearths in the process of the prosecution of the Damodar Scheme. I should like to know what exactly the Honourable Member means by this motion.

Babu Ram Narayan Singh (Chota Nagpur Division : Non-Muhammadian): Sir, land acquisition proceedings are going on in some of the districts. In the process of the prosecution of the Damodar Scheme, several villages are going to be occupied by the Government and the people are about to be asked to evacuate those areas.

Mr. President: May I know when the scheme was started and how far it has proceeded ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (Labour Member) : I would like to submit that at this stage there is absolutely nothing to be discussed. Government has no doubt under contemplation putting certain dams on the Damodar River, which flows through Bihar and Bengal; but with regard to the specific questions raised in this adjournment motion, which speaks of forced evacuation, all I have to say is this : that we are at a very very preliminary stage : we are merely making an inquiry as to how much land would be submerged by the enclosure of this water, what would be the area that would be affected, etc., and we are trying to see how many persons will have to be evacuated, the nature of their holdings and what rights they have. There is really nothing specific ; no action has been taken by Government at this stage which could be the subject-matter of discussion ; and what I would like to say is this : that I hope when the government has come

* Legislative Assembly Debates, Vol. I-No. 12, 7th February 1946, p. 606.

to some definite conclusion in this matter I shall be able to circulate a paper to the House containing the conclusions of Government and members can then raise the matter for discussion in any way they like.

Babu Ram Narayan Singh : My information is that the land acquisition proceedings are going on in the Hazaribagh district and they are asking people to go away.

Mr. President: Is the Honourable Member sure that those proceedings are in respect of this very scheme ?

Babu Ram Narayan Singh : Yes.

Mr. President: But it appears that the Government has done nothing so far.

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : Government are merely acquiring some land for the purpose of having access roads.

Mr. President: In connection with this scheme ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : Yes: they have only served notices in order to prepare some access roads. No question of evacuation has arisen at this stage

Mr. President: The acquisition is for the purposes of collection of data?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : There is no question of acquisition at this stage at all. No doubt if government decide to construct certain dams on the Damodar River, certain approach roads must be made for that purpose ; and for that purpose they have served notices on a few people in order to acquire small strips of land for the purpose of making roads. As to the specific question raised in the adjournment motion regarding forced evacuation of thousands of people in hundred of villages in the Hazaribagh districts and Manbhum and Sonthal Parganas, from their homes, it certainly does not arise at this stage because government has no idea as to what will happen, if I may say so. It is very very preliminary.

Mr. President: The difficulty I am feeling about this is that, if government have decided that the dams should be put up and if they are taking steps initially for approach roads, what does it matter whether they have been able to ascertain or not as to how many people will have to be evacuated, because the dam will be an established fact ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: No, Sir; we are still consulting consultants from outside to help us as to what correct

decision we should take. I submit it is very preliminary. I can make no statement to the House at all.

Mr. President: What I want to know is, have the government decided that the dams should be put up ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : It is their project—it is not a final project as yet.

Shri Mohan Lal Saksena (Lucknow, Non-Muhammadan Rural) : May I understand that it will come up before the House ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : It is under examination. We have not yet got the financial sanction for it.

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