Condition No. IV

ADEQUATE REPRESENTATION IN THE LEGISLATURES

The Depressed Classes must be given sufficient political power to influence legislative and executive action for the purpose of securing their welfare. *In view of this they demand that the following provisions shall be made in the electoral law so as to give them—*

(1) Right to adequate representation in the Legislatures of the Country, Provincial and Central.

(2) Right to elect their own men as their representatives—

(a) *by adult suffrage, and*

(b) *by separate electorates for the first ten years and thereafter by joint electorates and reserved seats, it being understood that joint electorates shall not be forced upon the Depressed Classes against their will unless such joint electorates are accompanied by adult suffrage.*

N.B.—Adequate Representation for the Depressed Classes cannot be defined in quantitative terms until the extent of representation allowed to other communities is known. But it must be understood that the Depressed Classes will not consent to the representation of any other community being settled on better terms than those allowed to them. They will not agree to being placed at a disadvantage in this matter. In any case the Depressed Classes of Bombay and Madras must have weightage over their population ratio of representation, irrespective of the extent of representation allowed to other minorities in the Provinces.

Condition No. V

ADEQUATE REPRESENTATION IN THE SERVICES

The Depressed Classes have suffered enormously at the hands of the high caste officers who have monopolized the Public Services by abusing the law or by misusing the discretion vested in them in administering it to the prejudice of the Depressed Classes and to the advantage of the Caste Hindus without any regard to justice, equity or good conscience. This mischief can only be avoided by

destroying the monopoly of caste Hindus in the Public Services and by regulating the recruitment to them in such a manner that all communities including the Depressed Classes will have an adequate share in them. For this purpose the Depressed Classes have to make the following proposals for statutory enactment as part of the constitutional law :—

(1) There shall be established in India and in each Province in India a Public Service Commission to undertake the recruitment and control of the Public Services.

(2) No member of the Public Service Commission shall be removed except by a resolution passed by the Legislature nor shall he be appointed to any office under the Crown after his retirement.

(3) It shall be the duty of the Public Service Commission, subject to the tests of efficiency as may be prescribed,

(a) to recruit the Services in such a manner as will secure due and adequate representation of all communities, and

(b) to regulate from time to time priority in employment in accordance with the existing extent of the representation of the various communities in any particular service concerned.

Condition No. VI

REDRESS AGAINST PREJUDICIAL ACTION OR NEGLECT OF INTERESTS

In view of the fact that the Majority Rule of the future will be the rule of the orthodox, the Depressed Classes fear that such a Majority Rule will not be sympathetic to them and that the probability of prejudice to their interests and neglect of their vital needs cannot be overlooked. It must be provided against particularly because, however adequately represented the Depressed Classes will be in a minority in all legislatures. The Depressed Classes think it very necessary that they should have the means of redress given to them in the Constitution. It is therefore proposed

that the following provision should be made in the Constitution of India :—

British North America Act, 1867. sec. 93.

"In and for each Province and in and for India it shall be the duty and obligation of the Legislature and the Executive or any other Authority established by Law to make adequate provision for the education, sanitation, recruitment in Public Services and other matters of social and political advancement of the Depressed Classes and to do nothing that will prejudicially affect them.

"(2) Where in any Province or in India the provisions of this section are violated an appeal shall lie to the Governor-General in Council from any act or decision of any Provincial Authority and to the Secretary of State from any act or decision of a Central Authority affecting the matter.

"(3) In every such case where it appears to the Governor-General in Council or to the Secretary of State that the Provincial Authority or Central Authority does not take steps requisite for the due execution of the provisions of this Section then and in every such case, and as far only as the circumstances of each case require the Governor-General in Council or the Secretary of State acting as an appellate authority may prescribe, for such period as they may deem fit, take remedial measures for the due execution of the provisions of this section and of any of its decisions under this Section and which shall be binding upon the authority appealed against.

Condition No. VII

SPECIAL DEPARTMENTAL CARE

The helpless, hapless and sapless condition of the Depressed Classes must be entirely attributed to the dogged and determined opposition of the whole mass of the orthodox population which will not allow the Depressed Classes to have equality of status or equality of treatment. It is not enough to say of their economic condition that they are poverty-stricken or that they are a class of landless labourers, although both these statements are statements of fact. It has to be noted that the poverty of the Depressed Classes is due largely to the social prejudices in consequence of which many an accupation for earning a living is closed to them. This is a fact which differentiates the position of the Depressed Classes from that of the ordinary caste labourer and is often a source of trouble between the two. It has also to be borne in mind that the forms of tyranny and oppression practised against the Depressed Classes are

very various and the capacity of the Depressed Classes to protect themselves is extremely limited. The facts, which obtain in this connection and which are of common occurrence throughout India, are well described in the Abstracts of Proceedings of the Board of Revenue of the Government of Madras, dated 5th Nov. 1892, No. 723, from which the following is an extract:—

"134. There are forms of oppression only hitherto hinted at which must be at least cursorily mentioned. To punish disobedience of Pariahs, their masters—

(a) Bring false cases in the village court or in the criminal courts.

(b) Obtain, on application, from Government waste lands lying all round the paracheri, so as to impound the Pariahs' cattle or obstruct the way to their temple.

(c) Have mirasi names fraudulently entered in the Government account against the paracheri.

(d) Pull down the huts and destroy the growth in the backyards.

(e) Deny occupancy right in immemorial sub-tenancies.

(f) Forcibly cut the Pariahs' crops, and on being resisted, charge them with theft and rioting.

(g) Under misrepresentations, get them to execute documents by which they are afterwards ruined.

(h) Cut off the flow of water from their fields.

(i) Without legal notice, have the property of sub-tenants attached for the land-lords' arrears of revenue.

"135. It will be said there are civil and criminal courts for the redress of any of these injuries. There are the courts indeed; but India does not breed village Hampdens. One must have courage to go to the courts; money to employ legal knowledge, and meet legal expenses; and means to live during the case and the appeals. Further most cases depend upon the decision of the first court; and these courts are presided over by officials who are sometimes corrupt and who generally, for other reasons, sympathize with the wealthy and landed classes to which they belong.

"136. The influence of these classes with the official world can hardly be exaggerated. It is extreme with natives and great even with Europeans. Every office, from the highest to the lowest, is stocked with their representatives, and there is no proposal affecting their interests but they can bring a score of influence to bear upon it in its course from inception to execution."

There can be no doubt that in view of these circumstances the uplift of the Depressed Classes will remain a pious hope unless the task is placed in the forefront of all governmental activities and unless equalization of opportunities is realized in practice by a definite policy and determined effort on the part of Government. *To secure this end the proposal of the Depressed Classes is that the Constitutional Law should impose upon the Government of India a statutory obligation to maintain at all times a department to deal with their problems by the addition of a section in the Government of India Act to the following effect:—*

"1. Simultaneously with the introduction of this Constitution and as part thereof there shall be created in the Government of India a Department to be in charge of a Minister for the purpose of watching the interests of the Depressed Classes and promoting their welfare.

"2. The Minister shall hold office so long as he retains the confidence of the Central Legislature.

"3. It shall be the duty of the Minister in the exercise of any powers and duties conferred upon him or transferred to him by law, to take all such steps as may be desirable to secure the preparation, effective carrying out and co-ordination of measures preventative of acts of social injustice, tyranny or oppression against the Depressed Classes and conducive to their welfare throughout India.

"4. It shall be lawful for the Governor-General—

(*a*) *to transfer to the Minister all or any powers or duties in respect of the welfare of the Depressed Classes arising from any enactment relating to education, sanitation, etc.*

(*b*) *to appoint Depressed Classes welfare bureaus in each province to work under the authority of and in co-operation with the Minister.*

Condition No. VIII

DEPRESSED CLASSES AND THE CABINET

Just as it is necessary that the Depressed Classes should have the power to influence governmental action by seats in the Legislature so also it is desirable that the Depressed Classes should have the opportunity to frame the general policy of the Government. This they can do only if they can find a seat in the Cabinet. The Depressed Classes therefore claim that in common with other minorities, their moral rights to be represented in the Cabinet should be recognized. With this purpose in view *the Depressed Classes propose* that in the Instrument of Instructions an obligation shall be placed upon the Governor and the Governor General to endeavour to secure the representation of the Depressed Classes in his Cabinet."[1]

"Dr. Ambedkar despatched some copies of this Declaration of Fundamental Rights to his followers in India, asked them to hold meetings in different cities in support of the demands presented to the Minorities Sub-Committee by the Depressed Class representatives, and instructed them to send copies of the resolutions to Ramsay MacDonald, stating that those demands were the irreducible minimum for willing co-operation of the Depressed Classes : otherwise they would not consent to any constitution for self-government. Accordingly, a number of wires poured into the office of the British Premier from all parts of India."[2]

Similarly, the provisions for a settlement of the communal problem put forward jointly by Muslims, Depressed Classes, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans in the form of memorandum, was submitted to the Minorities Committee. The text of memorandum reads as follows : Editors.

[1] : Proceedings of the Sub-Committee No. III (Minorities) Pp. 168-176.

[2] :Keer, P. 153.

"Provisions for a settlement of the communal problem put forward jointly by Muslims, Depressed Classes, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans

Claims of Minority Communities

1. No person shall by reason of his origin, religion, caste or creed be prejudiced in any way in regard to public employment, office of power or honour, or with regard to enjoyment of his civic rights and the exercise of any trade or calling.

2. Statutory safeguards shall be incorporated in the Costitution with a view to protect against enactments of the Legislature of discriminatory laws affecting any community.

3. Full religious liberty, that is, full liberty of bellief, worship observances, propaganda, associations and education shall be guaranteed to all communities subject to the maintenance of public order and morality.

No person shall merely by change of faith lose any civic right or privilege, or be subject to any penalty.

4. The right to establish, manage and control, at their own expense, charitable, religious and social institutions, schools and other educational establishments with the right to exercise their religion therein.

5. The Constitution shall embody adequate safeguards for the protection of religion, culture and personal law, and the promotion of education, language, charitable institution of the Minority Communities and for their due share in grants-in-aid given by the State and by the self-governing bodies.

6. Enjoyment of civic rights by all citizens shall be guaranteed by making any act for omission calculated to prevent full enjoyment an offence punishable by law.

7. In the formation of Cabinets in the Central Governnment and Provincial Governments, so far as possible, members belonging to the Musalman community and other minorities of considerable number shall be included by convention.

8. There shall be Statutory departments under the Central and Provincial Government to protect Minority Communities and to promote their welfare.

9. All communities at present enjoying representation in any Legislature through nomination or election shall have representation in all Legislatures through Separate Electorates and the minorities shall have not less than the proportion set forth in the Annexure but no majority shall be reduced to a minority or even an equality. Provided that after a lapse of ten years it will be open to Muslims in Punjab and Bengal and any minority communities in any other Provinces to accept Joint Electorates, or Joint Electorates with reservation of seats, by the consent of the community concerns. Similarly after the lapse of ten years it will be open to any minority in the Central Legislature to accept Joint Electorates with or without reservation of seats with the consent of the community concerned.

With regard to the Depressed Classes no change to Joint Electorates and reserved seats shall be made until after 20 years' experience of Separate Electorates and until direct adult suffrage for the community has been established.

10. In every Province and in connection with the Central Government a Public Service Commission shall be appointed, and the recruitment to the Public Services, except the proportion, if any, reserved to be filled by nomination by the Governor-General and the Governors, shall be made through such Commission in such a way as to secure a fair representation to the various communities consistently with the considerations of efficiency and the possession of the necessary qualifications. Instructions to the Governor-General and the Governors in the Instrument of Instructions with regard to recruitment shall be embodied to give effect to this principle, and for that purpose, to review periodically the composition of the services.

11. If a Bill is passed which, in the opinion of two-thirds of the members of any Legislature representing a particular community affects their religion or social practice based on religion, or in the case of fundamental rights of the subjects if one-third of the members object, it shall be open to such members to lodge their objection thereto, within a period of one month of the Bill being passed by the House, with the President of the House who shall forward the same to the Governor-General or the Governor, as the

case may be, and he shall thereupon suspend the operation of that Bill for one year, upon the expiry of which period he shall remit the said Bill for further consideration by the Legislature. When such Bill has been further considered by the Legislature and the Legislature concerned has refused to revise or modify the Bill so as to meet the objection thereto, the Governor-General or the Governor, as the case may be may give or withhold his assent to it in the exercise of his discretion, provided further that, the validity of such Bill may be challenged in the Supreme Court by any two members of the denomination affected thereby on the grounds mat it contravenes one of their fundamental rights.

Special Claims of Musalmans

A. The North-West Forntier Province shall be constituted a Governor's Province on the same footing as other Provinces with due regard to the necessary requirements for the security of the Frontier.

In the formation of the Provincial Legislature the nomination shall not exceed more than 10 per cent of the whole.

B. Sind shall be separated from the Bombay Presidency and made a Governor's Province similar to and on the same footing as other Provinces in British India.

C. Musalman representation in the Central Legislature shall be one-third of the total number of the House, and their representation in the Central Legislature shall not be less than the proportion set forth in the Annexure.

Special Claims of the Depressed Classes

A. The Constitution shall declare invalid any custom or usage by which any penalty or disadvantage or disability is imposed upon or any discrimination is made against any subject of the State in regard to the enjoyment of civic rights on account of Untouchability.

B. Generous treatment in the matter of recruitment to Public Service and the opening of enlistment in the Police and Military Service.

C. The Depressed Classes in the Punjab shall have the benefit of the Punjab Land Alienation Act extended to them.

D. Right of Appeal shall lie to the Governor or Governor-General for redress of prejudicial action or neglect of interest by any Executive Authority.

E. The Depressed Classes shall have representation not less than set forth in the Annexure.

Special Claims of the Anglo-Indian Community

A. Generous interpretation of the claims admitted by Sub-Committee No. VIII (Services) to the effect that in recongnition of the peculiar position of the community special consideration should be given to the claim for public employment, having regard to the maintenance of an adequate standard of living.

B. The right to administer and control its own educational institutions, *i.e.,* European education, subject to the control of the Minister.

Provisions for generous and adequate grants-in-aid and scholarships on the basis of present grants.

C. Jury rights equal to those enjoyed by other communities in India unconditionally of proof of legitimacy and descent and the right of accused persons to claim trial by either a European or an Indian Jury.

Special Claims Of The European Community

A. Equal rights and privileges to those enjoyed by Indian-born subjects in all industrial and commercial activities.

B. The maintenance of existing rights in regard to procedure of criminal trials, and any measure or bill to amend, alter or modify such a procedure cannot be introduced except with the previous consent of the Governor-General.

Agreed by—

HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN (Muslims),
DR. AMBEDKAR (Depressed Classes),
RAO BAHADUR PANNIR SELVAM (Indian Christians),
SIR HENRY GIDNEY (Angol-Indians),
SIR HUBERT CARR (Europeans).

ANNEXURE

REPRESENTATION IN LEGISLATURES

Figures in brackets=Population basis 1931 figures and depressed percentages as per Simon Report.

Stength of Chamber			Hindus			Muslims	Christians	Sikhs	Anglo-Indians	Tribal etc.	Europeans
			Caste	Depressed	Total						
Census ALL India (1931)											
			(47.5)	(19)*	(66.5)	(21.5)					
Upper	..	200	101	20	121	67	1	6	1	..	4
Lower	..	300	123	45	168	100	7	10	3	..	12
			(48.9)	(13.4)	(62.3)	(34.8)					
Assam	..	100†	38	13	51	35	3	..	1	..	10
			(18.3)	(24.7)	(43)	(54.9)					
Bengal	..	200	38	35	73	102	2	..	3	..	20
			(67.8)	(14.5)	(82.3)	(11.3)					
Bihar and Orissa		100	51	14	65	25	1	..	1	3	5

* Represents percentage in Governor's Provinces of British India.

† Population figures exclude Tribal Areas.

ANNEXURE—contd.

REPRESENTATION IN LEGISLATURES

Figures in brackets=Population basis 1931 figures and depressed percentages as per Simon Report.

Stength of Chamber			Hindus			Muslims	Christians	Sikhs	Anglo-Indians	Tribal etc.	Europeans
			Caste	Depressed	Total						
			(68)	(8)	(76)	(20)					
Bombay	..	200	88	28	116	66	2	..	3	..	13
On Sind being separated weightage of Musalmans in Bombay to be on the same footing as to the Hindus in the N.W.F.P.											
			(63.1)	(23.7)	(86.8)	(44)					
C.P.	..	100	58	20	78	15	1	..	2	2	2
			(71.3)	(15.4)	(86.7)	(7.1)	(3.7)				
Madras	..	200	102	40	142	30	14	..	4	2	8
			(15.1)	(13.5)	(28.6)	(56.5)		(13)			
Panjab	..	100	14	10	24	51	1.5	20	1.5	..	2
			(58.1)	(26.4)	(84.5)	(14.8)					
U.P.	..	100	44	20	64	30	1	..	2	..	3

Sind and N.W.F.P. Weightage similar to that enjoyed by the Musalmans in the Provinces in which they constitute a minority of the population shall be given to the Hindu minority in Sind and to the Hindu and Sikh minorities in the N.W.F.P.

Explanatory Memorandum to the said Memorandum

1. The suggested details for community representation have not been agreed by the Hindus or the Sikhs, but the full representation claimed by the latter in the Central Legislature is provided for.

2. The proposed distribution of seats for the different minorities constitutes a whole scheme and the detailed proposals cannot be separated one from another.

3. This distribution of seats follows the principle that in no case is the majority community to be reduced to the position of a minority of even equality.

4. No representaion is provided for Commerce, Landlords, Industry, Labour, etc. It being assumed that these seats are ultimately communal and that communities desiring special representation for these interests may do so out of the communal quota.

5. The allowance of 33½ per cent representation to Muslims in the Central Legislature is based on the assumption that 26 per cent shall be from British India and at least 7 per cent by convention out of the quota assigned to the Indian States.

6. In the Punjab the suggested common sacrifice by the Muslims, Caste Hindus and the Depressed Classes, would permit of a weightage of 54 per cent, being given to the Sikhs, giving them representation of 20 per cent, in the Legislature.

7. The proposals may be taken as being acceptable to well over 115 millions of people, or about 46 per cent of the population of India." *

The British Premier tried in his own way to bring the Indian delegates to a frame of mind for a settlement. The Premier's daugther gave a party to choice delegates. The Maharaja of Baroda,

*This appeared as appendix III in the original proceeding of the Federal Structure Committee and Minorities Committee, Pp. 1394-99.

Dr. Ambedkar, Sir Mirza Ismail, Jinnah, Tambe and few others attended it. The British Premier took some of the delegates to his country home at Chequers. They had a talk there relating to the Indian problem, but there, too, they could not come to a settelment.

The Minorities Sub-Committee submitted its report to the Conference. The last paragraph of that report recorded that "the Minorities and Depressed Classes were definite in their assertion that they could not consent to any self-governing constitution of India unless their demands were met in a reasonable manner."

Like Joshi, Jadhav and Paul, Dr. Ambedkar dissented from the proposals of the Franchise Sub-Committee as in their opinion the proposals were inadequate, and they pleaded for immediate introduction of adult franchise. In the written speech, which he could not make for want of time, Dr. Ambedkar warned the British Government that it would be betraying the Depressed Classes if by limiting the franchise the Labour Government left them to the mercy of those who had taken no interest in their welfare.

Such was his sincerity and devotion to the problem and to the welfare of his people that Dr. Ambedkar worked day and night, sought interviews, gave interviews, supplied information, and even addressed a meeting of some Members of the British Parliament to acquaint them fully with the problem of the Untouchables. He took every opportunity of contributing articles to foreign journals, of issuing statements to the foreign press and of addressing meetings in London with the sole object of exposing the intolerable humiliations and unbelievable suffering under which the Depressed Classes were groaning in India for ages. In appeal after appeal to the Press he said that the cause of the Untouchables in India needed the support of the enlightened world. He, therefore, urged that it was the sacred duty of the people at large to help the solution of their problem on the basis of humanity!

The result was that the world came to know for the first time that the fate of the Untouchables in India was worse than that of the Negroes in America. The appeal moved some of the British leaders and consequently a deputation consisting of some Members

of the British Parliament such as Miss Eleanor, Miss Ellen, Norman Angle and a few others, waited on Lord Sankey and pleaded for investing the Depressed Classes with franchise, and for removing their disabilities. Lord Sankey promised that in their proposed political set-up they would be placed with the other classes and masses of India. Some of the British papers, however were hostile to Dr. Ambedkar because he said, "I do not oppose the move for Dominion Status" * He said that he, too did not mind their indifference or opposition to his cause.

Dr. Ambedkar's profound study, great industry and conquering intellect created a tremendous impression upon the delegates and the British statesmen. He inspired respect as well as hatred in different circles. The *Indian Daily Mail* reporter observed: "Dr. Ambedkar pointed out that he had a mandate to see that no responsible Government was established, unless it was at the same time, accompanied by a truly representative Government. He voiced a fear that the proposed form of Government would be one of the masses by the classes and his protest found much echoing sympathy in the Labour and Liberal Parties of Great Britain."

After recording the reports of the different Sub-Committees, the Round Table Conference adjourned on January 19, 1931. This was followed by a debate on India in the House of Commons. During the course of the debate, one voice echoed the grievances of the Depressed Classes. It was Issac Foot who was a man of broader sympathies. Referring to the disabilities of the Untouchables, he said, "If we do not establish safeguards for their protection, their blood may cry out against us. If I had any advice to give to future Governors, it will be 'Let your main concern be for these people.' They may be defenceless now, but one day they will be strong. As there is justice upon the earth, there is no bank

* Dr. Ambedkar's letter 19th December 1930.

that can keep back for ever the accumulated sufferings of these people. The real test of the progress of India twenty years hence will be 'what have you done for these people ?" This speech was an eloquent tribute to Dr. Ambedkar's ceaseless work in London.

Before leaving London, Dr. Ambedkar expressed his opinion on the work of the Round Table Conference in a letter to his secretary Shivtarkar that although he was in two minds as to the outcome of the Conference, he was confident that it had laid the foundation of the self-government of India. Viewed in this light the Conference was a success. Yet viewed from another angle, he observed that the foundation had more of sand than mortar.* Hence the foundation was not strong enough. But so far as the rights of the Depressed Classes were concerned, it was a tremendous success, he added.

The notable contribution of this session of the Round Table Conference to Indian political thought was the evolution of the conception of a United India. Another solid outcome was the definite emergence of the Depressed Classes in the political picture of India, and more important was the brilliant and moving exposition of their insufferable conditions by Dr. Ambedkar before the bar of world opinion. Owing to disagreement on the question of seats, which the different communities sought to secure in the proposed legislatures, and on the system of election whether separate or joint electorates with reserved seats should be employed, the Conference was adjourned. Besides, it must have been thought that taking any vital decision at that time was like reckoning without hosts ; for Congress, the major political party of India, had not participated in the proceedings. Dr. Ambedkar left for India, embarking at Marseilles on February 13, 1931."[1]

* Dr. Ambedkar's letter, 21st January 1931.

[1] :Keer, Pp. 154-157.

" DEPRESSED CLASSES AND FUTURE CONSTITUTION

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who also arrived in Bombay on Friday the 27th February 1931 morning was given an enthusiastic reception at Ballard Pier by a *battalion of the Ambedkar Seva* Dal Interviewed by a representative of *The Times of India* he made the following statement:" The Round Table Conference is to my mind a triumph of statesmanship. It would be an idle pretence to say that there are no defects in the Constitution as outlined by the Conference, but in my opinion they are not of a vital character. Even assuming the contrary to be the truth there is yet time and opportunity for all those who believe in a peaceful solution of the Indian problem to step in and improve the framework. My greatest disappointment arises from the fact that the Constitution as outlined by the Conference is most undemocratic in as much as it is based on a very restricted franchise. It is a great pity that Mr. Gandhi, judging from the reports of his pronouncement on the results of the Conference, seems to have entirely lost sight of this aspect of the Constitution and is laying stress on elements which, I venture to think, are the most trivial and the most transient. Those of us who represented the Depressed Classes and labour fought for adult suffrage and although we failed, because all other parties played false to their position as signatories to the Nehru Report. I for one have been living in the hope that when Mr. Gandhi comes to lay down his terms of settlement he will see to it that the Constitution to which he will be a party will be a thoroughly democratic one.

If Mr. Gandhi fails us in our efforts to secure political power to the common man and woman in India, I would not hesitate to call his act as the greatest betrayal of trust and his campaign of civil disobedience as the worst exploitation of the masses for the service of the classes. In view of the fact that Mr. Gandhi's political philosophy is not known to many it may be advisable for those leaders of the masses who count themselves among his followers and disciples to ask from him a declaration of his views on the question of adult suffrage before they give him any further support in his campaign of civil disobedience."

The Minority Problem

"The most important problem is, of course, the minority problem. Without a solution of this problem there can be no liberty for India. Unfortunately the Conference failed to solve this problem. But a solution must be found before any further steps can be taken in the direction of political reform. He does not seem to have been realised in India that the Conference has virtually made the grant of political power dependent upon an agreed solution of the majority problem. Regarding the question of the Depressed Classes whom Mr. R. M. Srinivasan and myself represented at the Conference, I am glad their place in the future Constitution of India is secure and their disabilities will be non-existent"[1].

"Just at this time the names of the delegates to the second session of the Round Table Conference were announced in the third week of July. Dr. Ambedkar, Sastri, Saprti, Jayakar, Setalvad, Malaviya, Sarojini Naidu, Gandhi, Mirza Ismail, Jinnah, Ramaswami Mudaliar and others were invited to attend the Conference in London. Dr. Ambedkar was purposely dropped out from the Federal Structure Committee at the first session of the Round Table Conference. His patriotic mind and his fearless advocacy for the common man and democracy had given the Britishers an offence. But this time he was selected on the Federal Structure Committee, which was vitally connected with the drafting of the new Constitution for India.

Congratulations were showered from all quarters of India and even from England on Dr. Ambedkar. Newspapers from the opposite camp also began to appreciate his patriotism, his love for democracy and his anxiety for the welfare of the common man. The *Kolaba Samachar,* a district paper of note, which was hostile to him in matters of social reforms, expressed a debt of gratitude to Dr. Ambedkar for the patriotic service he had rendered to the country in the Chirner Trial. It recalled his services at the time of the visit of the Simon Commission and at the first session of the Round Table Conference ; and it added that Dr. Ambedkar was a true patriot and would fight to break the shackles of the country and help Others do so at the second session of the Round Table Conference."[2].

[1] : The Times of India, dated 28th February 1931.

[2] : Keen P. 163.

The *Indian Daily Mail,* in its issue dated 21st July 1931, congratulating the Doctor upon his nomination to the Federal Structure Committee, paid a glowing tribute to Dr. Ambedkar.

It said : "I congratulate Dr. Ambedkar upon his invitation. Dr. Ambedkar made a tremendous impression at the Round Table Conference and his speech at the opening session was one of the finest bits of oratory delivered during the whole Conference. His final attitude to the Sankey report was that of' one who does not approve but also who does not object. ' He pointed out that he had a mandate to see that no responsible Government was established unless it was at the same time, accompanied by a truly representative Government. He voiced a fear that the proposed form of Government would be one of the massses by the classes, and his protest found much echoing sympathy in the Labour and Liberal Party of Great Britain. On the other hand Dr. Ambedkar will not play the old fashioned minority game. He is a patriot and is vitally interested in securing self-government. In the future discussions, which will centre round the franchise of the senate and" the Federal Assembly, this brilliant representative of the Depressed Classes is certain to play a most important part."[1].

The Sunday Chronicle in its issue dated 26th July 1931. under the initials A.T.T., appreciating the services of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as a true nationalist, said ; "One of the delegates nominated to the Federal Structure Committee is my friend Dr. Ambedkar. When he was in London last year attending the R.T.C. I saw a good deal of him. At heart a true nationalist he had to put up a stem fight against the persuasive coquetry of the British diehards who are anxious to win him over to their side and at the same time his task was made more difficult by his anxiety to retain his brother delegate Rao Bahadur Srinivasan within the Nationalist fold. At the Chesterfield Gardens, time and again, he complained that Sir Tej Bahadur was giving more to the Princes in the process of give and take. But he admitted that Sir Tej had to manouvre through a very difficult situation."[2].

[1] : Reprinted, Ganvir, Ambedkar-Gandhi : Teen Mulakhati, (Marathi) Pp.6-7.

[2] : Ibid. Pp. 7-8.

"The Kesari and several other news-papers expressed satisfaction at the nomination of Dr. Ambedkar. Congratulating the Doctor and N. M. Joshi, the Journal of the Servants of India Society observed : "Being drawn from the humble ranks of the society. one representing the labour classes and the other Depressed Classes, they are necessarily strangers to 'high politics' as they are understood in this country. They have the simple faith of the simple folk whose cause they have espoused, and they will not be deterred by the superior smile of the eminent personages surrounding them, from insisting on the literal application of certain principles which they have been taught to hold as inviolable." A little before this the London representative of the *Free Press Journal,* a leading nationalist daily in Bombay, in his reply to Miss Mayo had eulogised the services which Dr. Ambedkar had rendered at the first session of the Round Table Conference, and said that Dr. Ambedkar was a fearless, independent and patriotic-minded leader whose fearlessness was unbearable to both Hindus and Muslims, and that his opening speech at the first session of the Round Table Conference was the best speech in the whole proceedings of the Conference.

It was not decided as yet whether Gandhi would attend the Round Table Conference. Naturally all eyes were focussed on Manibhuvan at the Malabar Hill in Bombay, owing to the mysterious suspense created by Gandhi's stagecraft and statecraft. In the bustle and hurry Gandhi wanted to sound Ambedkar as to his demands. So Gandhi wrote to Ambedkar on August 6, 1931, informing him that he would come to see the latter at eight o'clock that night if Dr. Ambedkar could spare the time. Gandhi added that he would gladly come over to Dr. Ambedkar's residence, if it was inconvenient to Dr. Ambedkar to come to him."[1].

Accordingly the meeting between Ambedkar and Gandhi was held on August 14, 1931, at Manibhuvan, at two in the afternoon.

"SEGREGATING UNTOUCHABLES

Dr. Ambedkar, the Depressed Classes leader, who saw Mr. Gandhi before he sailed by the *Mooltan* to take part in the Round Table Conference, is said to have told the Mahatma a few hometruths

[1] :Keer;Pp. 163-64.

about the insincere attitude of the Congress towards the grievances of Untouchables. What *can* the poor Mahatma do when the whole country simply believes in Untouchability ?"[1]

The next day was Saturday, August 15, 1931. Almost all the Round Table Conference delegates were to sail for London by the *S. S. Mooltan*. The Ballard Pier at Bombay presented a picturesque appearance on the day. From princes to paupers all soils of people were present at the Pier. Friends, admirers, followers and devotees assembled to wish *bon voyage* to their Princes and heroes. One leader who received a great ovation as soon as he got down from the car was Dr. Ambedkar. Over two thousand volunteers had collected on the road outside and greeted him as he arrived at the Mole Station with shouts of "Dr. Ambedkar ki jai" and "Long live Dr. Ambedkar ".[2]

"On boardship Dr. Ambedkar came across Sir Prabhashankar Pattani, who asked him about the outcome of the latter's interview with Gandhi. Sir Prabhashankar told Dr. Ambedkar that as he had left the hall in the middle of the interview, he was not in the know of its outcome or end. Dr. Ambedkar, who got the clue from the strange note in the voice of the Knight, asked him why he had left the hall in the middle. The Knight said bitingly that according to Hindu scriptures a gentleman should quit the place where a detractor reviled a good man, if the hearer could not cut out the tongue of the detractor on the spot. Dr. Ambedkar was all the more tickled by the growing insensible temper of the Knight and, without any sign of irritation on his face, asked him what punishment was prescribed by Pattani's Hindu scriptures for a rank hypocrite and an abject flatterer. At this crack of the whip Pattani got wild and asked Dr. Ambedkar what he meant by such a brutal attack. Dr. Ambedkar replied that he meant what the knight understood and added that Gandhi should be freed from the grip of abject flatterers like him. The Police Commissioner, Wilson, intervened, and a further scene was averted. The Knight must have left a wiser man. Indeed, the world would be no less benefited, if all its great men turn introspective and get themselves rid of the flattering functions of men surrounding them !

[1] : The Times of India, dated 18th August-1931.

[2] : Keer:Pp. 168-169.

Sarojini Naidu and Malaviya, who were to go by the same steamer, cancelled their passages, as Gandhi had not yet decided about his departure. In the interview which Dr. Ambedkar gave on the steamer he referred to Gandhi's refusal to go the Round Table Conference and said it was the height of folly to place the interests of Bardoli above those of India. "to bother about petty grievances and to be unmindful of bigger problem the settlement of which will enable him to exercise control over those very officers is a thing which I cannot understand."

Ambedkar was now deeply thinking of Gandhi's decision to oppose his demands. So he sent a message to his people in India through his secretary to hold meetings to denounce the attitude of Gandhi towards their claims. From Suez he wrote another letter to Shivtarkar asking him to send copies of the Memorandum which he had submitted to the Minorities Sub-Committee of the first session of the Round Table Conference. He also asked him to send with Rao Bahadur R. Srinivasan the leather bag which he had left behind.

On the steamer, Jayakan the Maharaja of Rewa and other leaders expressed their satisfaction at the imposing sight of the Samata Seva Dal of the Depressed Classes. Shaukat Ali was glad ; Dr. Moonje was pleased and even expressed his hidden joy that in spite of the failure of the Hindu Mahasabha to raise such a disciplined volunteer corps, there was one organization of the Untouchable Hindus to stand face to face with the Muslim volunteers ! Moonje even congratulated Dr. Ambedkar on his being the leader of the Untouchables, who were conscious enough to know Dr. Ambedkar's services to their cause, and added that they were not indifferent and ungrateful, like the Caste Hindus, who knew not their benefactors !

On reaching London on August 29, Dr. Ambedkar was down with influenza and suffered terribly from vomiting and diarrhoea. The illness sapped his energy, so much so that he wrote to Shivtarkar that his health was on the brink of a crisis. From Monday, September 7, he began to feel better but weakness still lingered. All the time he advised Shivtarkar not to utter a word about his illness to his wife. One thing weighed on his mind. Defeated at the Mahad Sub-judge's Court the Orthodox

Hindus had appealed to the District Court at Thana, and the judgment of the District Judge at Thana was due. He asked Shivtarkar to inform him about it as soon as it was delivered.

In the meanwhile, Gandhi, Vallabhbhai Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sir Prabhashankar Pattani met the Viceroy at Simla where the differences were patched up, and Gandhi left for Bombay to catch the earliest steamer to go to London. Gandhi, alongwith Sarojini Naidu, Pandit Mataviya, and his party, sailed for England on August 29, and reached London on September 12, 1931,

The second session of the Round Table Conference commenced on September 7,1931. This time the personnel of the Conference was enlarged by including a few more delegates such as Sir Muhamed Iqbal, the Muslim League President : Dr. S. K. Dutta. the Christian representative ; G. D. Birla, the great financier ; Pandit Malaviya, a *Sanatani* reformer ; Sarojini Naidu, the Nightingale of India ; and Sir Ali Imam. The outstanding feature of this session was the presence of Gandhi's enigmatic personality. The first session of the R. T. C. was 'Hamlet' without the Prince of Denmark !

Shortly before the Conference met, a change had come over-Britain. The Labour Government was replaced by a National Government, the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, remaining in the saddle as before. The Secretary of State for India, Wedgwood Benn, was replaced by Sir Samuel Hoare. Conservative leaders like Churchill vehemently opposed the proposed transfer of power to India.

The main work of the Round Table Conference was to be done in the Federal Structure Committee and the Minorities Committee. The Conference was to re-examine and amplify the reports prepared by the corresponding Committees of the first session of the Round Table Conference. Mahatma Gandhi made his first speech in the Conference on September 15, 1931, in the Federal Structure Committee. He claimed that the Congress represented all Indian interests and classes. He told the Conference that the Congress represented the Muslims because it had Muslims as Presidents and Muslims as members of its

Working Committee. It represented the Depressed Classes because removal of Untouchability was a plank on the political platform of the Congress. Gandhi told the Princes that Congress stood for States also inasmuch as "even now the Congress had endeavoured to serve the Princes of India by refraining from any interference in their domestic and internal affairs". The Congress represented women, Gandhi observed, because Congress had Dr. Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu as Presidents. And because he was the sole representative of the Congress, it followed that he was the sole representative of the Indian nation !

Dr. Ambedkar sensed from this speech of Gandhi in what direction the wind was blowing. Dr. Ambedkar made his first speech in the Federal Structure Committee on the same day. He told the Princes that the Federal Structure Committee could not blindly give to the State what they wanted. This put the Maharaja of Bikaner on his legs, and he replied that nor could the States sign a blank cheque either. Dr. Ambedkar, emphasizing his point, said that before a State was allowed to join the Federation, it must prove that it had the necessary resources and the capacity to give its citizens a civilized life, and the main condition laid down by Dr. Ambedkar was that the States' representatives to the Federal Assembly should be chosen by election and not by nomination. It was his confirmed opinion that nomination made the Executive irresponsible to the Legislature giving a false appearance to the outside world that the Legislature was working normally on the basis of a majority rule. He added that the principle of nomination was against the principle of responsible Government. As regards the demand of the landlords for special representation, he said that they should not be given special representation as they sided with the orthodox, and thereby defeated the ends of freedom and progress. Obviously, this was the first and best speech made in defence of the rights of the States' people.

These strong views gave a shock to the Princely Order, the landlords and their benefactors, who favoured the view of the Princes that their representatives to the Federal Assembly should be selected by nomination. The result was that every speaker devoted some part or other of his speech to refuting or supporting Dr. Ambedkar's speech as a majority of them thought that his views were radical and revolutionary.