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MINISTRY SEEMS TO BE INTOXICATED WITH POWER

Bombay, Thursday.*

'In the name of the working class of Bombay, in the name of Law and Order and in the name of decent administration of the province I demand an impartial and public inquiry into the scandalous mismanagement of the protest strike by the police department under the control of the Hon. Mr. Munshi. I demand a public inquiry into the absolutely uncalled for firing and lathi charges to which the police repeatedly resorted' said Dr. B. R. Ambedkar leader of the Independent Labour Party in the course of a statement to the Press.[1]

'What has come over the Congress Ministry, asked Dr. Ambedkar, 'that it should not be able to manage a single day's strike without resorting to such disgraceful terror.'

'There were strikes that lasted for days and weeks and months in the past. There was one that lasted for seven and a half months with processions and meetings and demonstrations every day. There were no such lathi charges and firing during the whole of this period.'

'Today under Congress Raj we cannot have a single day's strike without repression and terrorism being let loose. That i s what the Congress has come to.'

The Press

What about the press, the press that stood for freedom and rights of workers and championed their cause as long as the Congress needed their help ?

Today that press is resorting to lies and falsehoods and distortions and suppression of facts that must make the British and Anglo-Indian journal blush with shame.

1: Free Press Journal, dated 9th November 1938. i.e. Wednesday.

* The 3rd November 1938.

'The Protest Strike is condemned as having fallen flat, that it was a fiasco, that the workers defied the orders of their leaders. Those who went on strike were supposed to have been 'intimidated' 'bullied' 'terrorised' 'coerced' and so on'.

People are familiar with these words. But so far they used to come from a press that was considered anti-national. Today they come from Congress and pro-Congress press. That is the tragedy. That is the grim reality we have to face.

'I ask these journals, what has happened to your Truth and Non-violence, what has happened to your common decency ?'

'As far as the workers are concerned they cannot be misled by this or any other propaganda. They were witnesses to the gigantic demonstrations of protest against the Trades Disputes Bill. They know what mighty success the strike has been.'

Ministry Warned

'Let the Congress Ministry and Congress leaders remember this one fact very clearly, that every lathi charge that has been directed on the workers, every shot that has been fired on members of the working class will echo and re-echo in this city and this presidency for weeks and months to come.'

'Those lathi charges and firing will be echoed and re-echoed during the forth-coming Municipal Elections from a hundred platforms and in a hundred meeting. Those lathi charges and firing are going to cost the Congress much more than its leaders seem to realise today.

'Those outrages on our right and our freedom will be heard in the farther most corners of this province in the remotest villages of this presidency.

'The Congress Ministry seems to be intoxicated with power. They seem to be ignorant of the one great lesson of democracy that mighty majority in parliaments and legislatures are swept off overnight by a single incident by single miscalculated step. But that lesson will be driven home during

the Bombay Municipal Elections, it will be driven home when the Government face the electorate again.

'I have not the slightest doubt that it will be driven home with a deadly effect.'

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