APPENDIX—VI

GANDHI DIS-FRANCHISED UNTOUCHABLES BY FORCING POONA PACT

BRITISH LEADERS SCATHING CRITICISM OF GANDHIAN TACTICS

Lord Winterton, speaking on the Scheduled Castes, status during the course of the debate on July 16th on *India Independence Bill* in the House of Commons said that one of the many evil things Mr. Gandhi had done to India was what he had succeeded in bringing about by the Poona Pact. Had it not been for his action, these people would have enjoyed a much better franchise than they did today, but Mr. Gandhi threatened to fast to death. If he again threatened to fast to death after the transfer, it would not be the affair of the Brithish Government.

It had been said that Britain left India a cockpit. Few people had done more than Mr. Gandhi to make it a cockpit, and he regretted that at this late hour Mr. Gandhi had shown no appreciation of the task which had been achieved by the British on the one hand, and Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Nehru on the other.

Another Prominent Conservative Leader Mr. Bucher who spoke on the problem of minorities in India observed,

"Scant attention has been given to minorties, especially in the Committee stage. It is virtually impossible to raise their case, Indeed it is very difficult to do so because this House is today deciding to transfer sovereignty, and power to Indians themselves.

"We are also deciding that independence shall take place before the actual Constitution making. That means that the Constituent Assemblies have it in their power to make the Constitution under which the minorities will have to live.

Dr. Ambedkar, leader of the Scheduled Classes, who has himself served the cause of self Government, has told me that it would be helpful if some reference could be made to his community.

"I, therefore, say I trust that when the new constitution is made full consideration will be given to the position of the Scheduled Classes themselves.

"It is sometimes said that Britain has not done enough for them. It is well known that Queen Victoria's original proclamation about our not interferring too much with the religion, and habits of the people has prevented the British from doing as much as they might desire.

"But in later years, by a variety of devices, we have attempted to improve these Scheduled Classes and mitigate the horrors of Untouchability.

"The Franchise Committee recommended an electorate which would have given the Schedule Classes an opportunity of looking after their own affairs.

Poona Pact

"Unfortunately the decisions of the Franchise Committee were abrogated by the Poona Pact, produced by one of Mr. Gandhi's longest fasts.

"I cannot now influence the decision of the Constitution making body, but it is quite clear that under the Poona Pact the Scheduled Castes did not get a chance of electing their ultimate representatives who would really represent their point of view.

"I hope that in part, or parts of India it may be possible to find an electoral system which will be more suitable for them."

After referring to other minorities, Mr. Butler said : "We trust that in the future India, the minorities, and the Europeans who stay there will find free, and fair opportunity, and happiness under the regime.

"But there are many other sections of opinion—minorities among the Muslims, cultivators who do not mix in the political life, and have not shouted or taken part in politics, but whose views are sometimes not quite the same as those who steal the thunder and appear before the footlights.

SOLICITUDE FOR PEOPLE

"At the inauguration of the Round Table Conference in the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords on November 12, 1933 the King's speech contained this passage:

"I have in mind the just claims of majorities and minorities, of men and women, of town dwellers and tillers of the soil, of landlords and tenants, of the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, races, castes and creeds of which the body politics is composed. For these things I care deeply."

"For these people and these things," Mr. Butler concluded, "we care deeply. They are passing out of our immediate care. We are moved on this occasion and we wish those well who are assuming the Government and responsibility for the welfare of the Indian people."[1]

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[1]: Jai Bheem, dated 23rd July 1947.

APPENDIX—VII

UNDER-PRIVILIGED IN INDIA SOLD TO OPPRESSORS

CABINET PLAN EXPOSED IN COMMONS DEBATE

During his speech in the debate Mr. Churchill referred to the British Government's statement after the recent London talks and said:

"That, declaration appears to me to be the most important milestone in this long journey.

"The British Government owed special protection to the Muslims numbering 90,000,000 who comprised the majority of the fighting elements of India, and the Untouchables of anything from 40,000,000 to 60,000,000. They had been out witted and outmanoeuvred on this question. The pretence was put forward that they were a small part of the vast Hindu community not entitled to be considered as a minority community in Indian life.

"I must ask the Prime Minister to state the Government's view and intentions on this particular point. Are Untouchables to be considered as an entity by themselves entitled to consideration given to entities or are they merely to be used to swell the numerical size of those whom they regard as their oppressors ?"

CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

Turning to the character of the Constituent Assembly which, he said, was apparently to proceed to make a Republic for India and engage upon it at once. Mr. Churchill said, "They are dealing with the fortunes of all Indians, while a large part is not even to be represented."

Mr. William Cove (Labour) interjected : Is Mr. Churchill in favour of extending the franchise ?

Mr. Churchill : "Yes, Certainly" Mr. Cove laughs "I have always been in favour of extending the franchise. I believe in the will of the people. But I do not believe in perversion of the will of the people—actively organised and engineered minorities who having seized upon power by force or fraud or chicanery go forward and use that power in the name of vast masses with whom they have long lost all effective connection.

"But the Cabinet Mission's proposal of May for the setting up of the Constituent Assembly was essentially a proposal that the main political parties of India should meet and through their representatives endeavour to work out the proposed constitution."

Mr. Churchill, continuing, said, "It is still pertinent to inquire if His majesty's Government consider that their proposed conference of the Constituent Assembly has begun."

He added, "I feel bound to end on a positive conclusion although I will express it rather in terms of negation." (Government laughter).

"In all this confusion, uncertainty and gathering storm which those who have studied the Indian problem for long years might well have foreseen, there appear at the present time three choices—three proverbial choices—before the British Parliament.

"The first is to proceed with ruthless logic to quit India regardless of what may happen there. The second is failing a measure of agreement not now in sight, an impartial administration appointed by Parliament should be set up to maintain the fundamental guarantees of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness to the hundreds of millions of humble folk who now stand in jeopardy, bewilderment and fear. The third course is to let the Indian communities go their separate ways as they desire in or out of the British Commonwealth, whatever happens."

CASTE HINDU DOMINATION

"One thing however there is that we must not do whatever happens: we must not allow British troops or British Officers in the Indian Army to become agencies and instruments of enforcing Caste Hindu domination upon 90,000,000 Muslims and 60,000,000 Untouchables, nor must the prestige or authority of the British power in India even in its sunset be used in partnership on either side of these profound and awful cleavages.

"For such a course to be used to enforce religious and party victory upon minorities of scores of millions would seem to combine the disadvantages of all the policies and lead us ever deeper in tragedy without giving us relief from our burdens, or liberation, however sadly purchased from moral and factual responsibility.

"It is because we feel that these issues should be placed bluntly and plainly before the British and the Indian peoples even amid their present distresses and perplexities that we thought it our bounden duty to ask for this debate." (Loud Opposition cheers).

MR. BUTLER EXPLAINS TORY STAND

Winding up for the opposition, Mr. R. A. Butler, former Under-Secretary of State for India, said that the opportunities he had of meeting Indian Statesmen convinced him that in the work he had done with them there were no statesmen of higher quality in the world. "There is therefore no difference of opinion about the goal we are setting before us. We (the opposition) have always said in the past that self-government for India can be achieved only under a constitution or constitutions framed by Indians to which the main elements in India's national life are consenting parties. That has been our first stand. Our second stand has been that we can only transfer our ultimate control over India to a Government or Governments capable of exercising it. We cannot hand over India to anarchy or to civi1 war. The Government's last statement on the Indian situation gives evidence of acceptance of the first of these obligations.

Mr. Butler added, "I welcome the Government's last statement and in particular the last part of it that it is not contemplated that any constitution will be forced on unwilling parts of country. I should, however, like clarification on one or two points. The statement refers to a large section of Indian population inhabiting parts of the country. These words are new to those of us who are versed in Indian affairs. Sir Stafford Cripps speaking in the debate used a rather different language, which I maintain is too narrow in its terms and there may be confusion in India if this matter is not cleard up.

"Sir Stafford Cripps said that if the Muslim League cannot be persuaded to come into the Constituent Assembly then parts of the country where they are in a majority cannot be held to be bound by the result, I do not think the Government ought to confine themselves solely to the Muslim League. It is much fairer to use the expression Muslims as a whole and I hope that the Minister replying today will confirm that the original sense prevails and that communities and elements are in question and not simply a League, a party of representative of a community."

Mr. Butler said, the Opposition was not thinking only of the Muslim community, but other minorities whose case had been put in Parliament and would be put again.

"In order that Britain's mission should be well, honourably and successfully discharged it seemed to be essential that a proper understanding should be established between Parliament and the Indian people. There was every reason why all points of view should be put clearly round the table and no facts left unfaced.

Mr. Buttler said that no section of Sir Stafford Cripps speech had been less convincing and more reprehensible than his skating over the manner in which Scheduled Castes representation had been introduced into the Assembly. He had never been able to understand the facile acceptance by the labour movement of the position in which the interests of poorest and most under-privileged section in India had been neglected and sold to their long-time oppressors and he was astonished that the Prime Minister had been able to lend himself to this bargain. The Government ought never to have accepted this positions.

Mr. Alexander (intervening):—Does Mr. Butler realise that in the provincial elections there was a very large proportion of Independent Scheduled Castes elected apart from other two categories he mentions and secondly, that we had to act in the way we did to deal with an urgent situation ?

Mr. Alexander continued, "Franchise is not merely the Poona Pact, but what the Government of 1935 put in the 1935 Act.

"Thirdly, would he suggest that we should go into an entirely new basis of new franchise and India wide compilation of new register and put off for a long time a possible new settlement ? Shall we not face those facts now ?"

SCHEDULED CASTES' REPRESENTATION

Mr. Butler: The first point about Independent members is certainly correct. From all opinions I have been able to gather in investigating this point, there is no doubt that the Scheduled Castes have been so terrorised by Congress discipline that many of them have decided to stand as Independents rather than take the label of the Congress.

Mr. Butler said that he did not think it right that the Scheduled Castes should be represented in the Assembly by representatives of the Congress. The Government were reposing most of their confidence for obtaining justice for the minorities on the Advisory Committee and he asked if the Committee's decisions about minorities would be embodied in the Constitution.

If a spirit of compromise and give and take was absent in India, the Government would be faced with a very serious situation but he trusted that if there was a breakdown, the Government would give a further lead. If a new initiative proved necessary, it would have to be towards simplification of the scheme and a clearer acknowledgment of British responsibilities in the period before a successful issue of the negotiations, there was still a chance of orderly solution, but it depended upon how determined the Government was and would be and how clearly it saw the dangers of the situation. "We cannot, at the moment, shuffle off our obligations. They remain and upon their adequate discharge, depends the future happiness of the Indian people," Mr. Butler concluded.

MR. ALEXANDER'S REPLY TO DEBATE

Mr. A. V. Alexander, Minister designate of Defence, replying to the debate, said, it was taking place in the most crucial hour in the history of India and its people, as well as the British Commonwealth. He asked responsible leaders of all parties in India to take note that the great majority of the speakers in the debate desired nothing more than that India should achieve her freedom on the basis of the good-will and co-operation of all concerned.

Replying to Mr. Churchill's question whether it was the Government's policy for the Depressed Classes to be treated as a separate political entity, Mr. Alexander said that in the Act of 1935 the Depressed Classes were treated as a separate political entity and whether or not any separation of that kind should be given to them in the new Assembly was a matter for the Constituent Assembly. The Government, he declared, did not consider it desirable or in the interests of the Depressed Classes that they should attempt to influence the Assembly in that matter. Their view was that provisions in the Constitution were the right methods for providing safeguards over the rights of minority elements.

He reminded the House of what the Cabinet Mission said namely that when the Constituent Assembly completed their labours the British Government would recommend to Parliament to take necessary action to enable the new Constitution to come into operation subject to two matters. One of them was adequate provision for the protection of minorities. Both the major parties had declared their intention of making proper provision for protection in the Constitution and the Government saw no reason to doubt that the Constituent Assembly would do so.

Mr. Alexander said that he agreed with Mr. Hugh Molson (Conservative) that it was the Government's intention that protection of minorities must be provided for in the Constitution. He added : "I understand that Dr. Ambedkar argued strongly for that during the Cripps Mission. In the last paragraph of our statement last week we made it clear we would not contemplate forcing upon an unwilling community anything they did not want. The Congress itself accepts that. In our statement of May 25 we have agreed to leave Constitution making to Indians provided we get proper protection for minorities. We want that in the Constitution. We shall adhere to our pledges to the Indian people."[1]

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1. : Jai Bheem, dated 1st January 1947.