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DR. AMBEDKAR'S INTERVIEW WITH CABINET MISSION

Cabinet Mission interviewed Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as a representative of the All India Scheduled Castes Federation. Similarly, Mr. Jagjiwan Ram, Mr. Radhanath Das and Mr. Prithvi Singh Azad were also interviewed as representatives of All India Depressed Class League—Editors

"Dr. Ambedkar was interviewed on behalf of the Scheduled Castes Federation. In reply to an enquiry as to the method of representation of Scheduled Castes in the constituent assembly he said that he did not want a constituent assembly at all. It would be dominated by the Caste Hindus and the Scheduled Castes would be no more than a small minority which would always be outvoted. All the assurances of protection which His Majesty's Government had given to the minorities would go by the board.

His own proposal was that the tasks envisaged for the constituent assembly should be divided into two classes, namely (a) constitutional questions properly so called, *e.g.* the relation between the legislature and the executive and their respective composition and functions, and (b) communal questions. Matters under (a) should be referred to a commission presided over by an eminent constitutional lawyer from Great Britain or the U.S.A. The other members should be two Indian experts and one representative each of the Hindu and Muslim Communities. The terms of reference should be the Government of India Act of 1935 and the Commission should be required to recommend what changes should be made in the Act as it stood. Matters under (b) should be referred to a conference of the leaders of the different communities. If the conference failed to arrive at an agreed solution, His Majesty's Government should make an award.

Dr. Ambedkar claimed that, before they left, the British must ensure that the new constitution guaranteed to the Scheduled Castes, he elementary human rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and that it restored their Separate Electorates and gave

them the other safeguards which they demanded. The Secretary of State suggested that Indian politics had been dominated by two issues, the question of winning independence from British rule and the Hindu-Muslim problem. Once these were out of the way, party divisions would probably on economic issues. Surely the Scheduled Castes would have a better chance of securing their rights by allaying themselves with the left wing than by relying on British, who were about to hand over power. Dr. Ambedkar reiterated that so long as there were joint electorates Scheduled Caste voters would be so few that Hindu candidates could safely ignore their wishes. Caste Hindus would never support Scheduled Caste candidates. Separate Electorates were fundamental, without them the Scheduled Castes would never have their own representatives."[1]

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[1] : The Transfer of Power in India, Pp. 243-44. Quoted, Khairmode, Vol.8, Pp. 62-64.

For interviews of Jagjivan Ram, Radhanath Das and Prithvi Singh Azad, see Appendix No. IV.