12

FEDERATION EXECUTIVE RESOLVES ON DIRECT ACTION

Cabinet Mission Ignored Unimpeachable Evidence

" In a two thousand word resolution, the working Committee of the All India Scheduled Castes Federation, calls upon His Majesty's Government and the Labour Party in England to take up the cause of the Scheduled Castes in right earnest and rectify immediately the worng done to them by the Cabinet Mission. "Failing this," says the resolution, the Working Committee feels, "that there will be no alternative for the Scheduled Castes but to resort to direct action". The resolution further says: "If circumstances require such a direct action to save the Scheduled Castes from the impending catastrophe, the working Committee will not hesitaste to ask the Scheduled Castes to do so."

The Working Committee of the A.I.S.C.F. met at "Raj Griha" the residence of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Labour Member, Government of India, on June 4, 1946 under the Presidentship of Rao Bahadur N. Sivaraj.

On the morning of 4th June the President drove to the Bomaby Central and met Dr. Babasahib Ambedkar in the Saloon. Federation workers from various parts of the country met the leaders and discussed with them on various subjects concerning the country and the community. They had informed the leaders about the untold sufferings and the unimaginable honors to which the Scheduled Castes are subjected to by the Caste Hindus.

At two o'clock in the afternoon the Working Committee sat for-discussion. Eleven out of 20 members of the Committee attended the meeting. These are five from Bombay, four from the Central Provinces and one each from Madras and the United Provinces. Dr. Ambedkar was present by special invitation. The meeting took up for consideration a report submitted by Mr. P.N. Rajabhoj, General Secretary of the Federation, on the general reactions of the Scheduled Castes People to the proposals of the

British Cabinet Mission. The report, it is learnt, expresses the dissatisfaction of the community in that they had not been given any representation in the proposed Constituent Assembly.

The Working Committee has passed ten important resolutions on the British Cabinet Proposals on the interim Government.

The Committee has demanded that Scheduled Castes, should have the right to be represented in the Legislatures through separate electorates, and that the constitution shall contain a provision making it obligatory on the part of the Government to undertake the formation of separate settlements for Scheduled Castes.

The Committee assures the Scheduled Castes that "there is no reason to be panicky and given courage and solidarity, their cause which is the cause of justice and humanity, is bound to triumph notwithstanding the machinations of their enemies."

The Working Committee has authorised the President to constitute a Council of Action charged with the duty of examining the lines of direct action and to determine the action most effective and fix the time for lauching it.

Copies of the Scheduled Castes' Federation's resolution are being forwarded to the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy in New Delhi and Prime Minister Attlee and Mr. Churchill in London.

"In the event of their demand for such protection being turned down, the Committee has authorised the President, Rao Bahadur N. Sivaraj, to constitute a Council of Action to decide upon "the most effective means of direct action to get their demands conceded."

A spokesman on behalf of the Working Committee of the Scheduled Castes Federation explained that the Committee had focussed attention on the future constitutional settlement because they were more concerned with the ultimate statutory protection of the Scheduled Castes, rather than in the formation of the interim Government. He added: "We shall, however, be willing to co-operate with any one in the formation of the Interim Government, provided our co-operation is sought on honourable terms."

The spokesman stated that the Cabinet Mission had partially retrieved the prestige of the British Government by declaring, in their second statement, that the conclusion of the Indo-British treaty would be dependent on the rights of minorities being protected adequately. What the Secheduled Castes Federation demanded, however, was that suitable amendements be made here and now in the Cabinet Mission's proposals to ensure this. He could not see any difficulty in this being done just as in the case of the Muslims.

The Spokesman in conclusion explained that the direct action clause in the resolution would become operative only if the Federation failed to achieve its goal. There was no intention 10 take precipitate actions.

A.I.S.C.F's Ultimatum to the Cabinet Mission

[The following is the full text of the resolutions passed at the Working Committee Meeting of the All India Scheduled Castes Federation held at Bombay during the first week of June]

The Working Committee of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation has taken into consideration (1) the first statement issued by the Cabinet Mission on the Constitution of India; (2) the Press interviews given by the Members of the Mission in amplification of their statement (3) the second statement made by the Cabinet Mission and (4) the correspondence between the Cabinet Mission and the Hon'ble Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. There are many points arising from the statement of the Cabinet Mission on which the Working Committee would like to state its views. For the present, the Working Committee prefers to deal with the plan of the Cabinet Mission for framing the future constitution of India in so far as it affects the Scheduled Castes.

2. The Working Committee has noticed with profound indignation that the Cabinet Mission has not mentioned the Scheduled Castes even once in the course of their statement of 5000 words. It is difficult to understand the working of the mind of the Cabinet Mission. The Mission could not have been unaware of the existence of the Untouchables, their disabilities, the tyrannies and oppression practised upon them day to day by the Caste Hindus all throughout India. The Cabinet Mission could,

not have been unaware of the pronouncement made by His Majesty's Government that Untouchables were separate from the Caste Hindus and constituted a distinct element in the national life of India. The Cabinet Mission could not have been unaware of the pledges given by His Majesty's Government that no constitution which had not the consent of the Scheduled Castes would be imposed upon them. The Cabinet Mission could not have been unaware of the fact that at the Simla Conference convened by Lord Wavell only a year ago the Scheduled Castes were given a separate representation from the Caste Hindus. Having regard to these circumstances, the Working Committee feels no hesitation in saying that in ignoring the Scheduled Castes in the manner in which it has done, the Cabinet Mission has brought the name of the British nation into disgrace and disrepute.

3. The Working Committee has noticed the statement made by the Cabinet Mission in the course of Press interview that they have made double provision for the representation of the Scheduled Castes in the Constituent Assembly and in the Advisory Committee. The Working Committee feels bound to say that these provisions are absolutely illusory and unworthy of serious consideration. In the plan set out by them, the Mission have not reserved any seat for the Scheduled Castes in the election by the Provincial Legislatures to the Constituent Assembly as they have done for the Sikhs and the Muslims. There is no obligation on the Provincial Legislatures to elect a specified number of Scheduled Caste members to the Constituent Assembly. It is quite possible that the Constituent Assembly may not have in it any representative of the Scheduled Castes. And even if a few representatives of the Scheduled Castes should find a place in the Constituent Assembly, they being elected by Hindu votes, they can never represent the true interests of the Scheduled Castes. As to the Advisory Committee, it cannot be substantially different from the Constituent Assembly. It will only be a reflection of the Constituent Assembly.

4. The Working Committee finds it extremely difficult to understand how the Cabinet Mission could how come to believe that they had mand enough and good provision for giving

effective voice to the Scheduled Castes in the Constituent Assembly and the Advisory Committee. Aboundant and incontrovertible evidence was presented to the Cabinet Mission to show that the real representatives of the Scheduled Castes are those who were elected in the primary elections for which the Scheduled Castes have separate electorates, that the present Scheduled Caste members of the Provincial Legislatures who fought the primary elections were at the bottom of the poll and that on account of the victious system of joint electorates the men who were at the bottom in the primary elections came to the top in the final elections only because of the Caste Hindu votes and that therefore the Scheduled Caste members of the Provincial Legislatures in no way represent the Scheduled Castes but are the tools of the Caste Hindus. Far from making double provision for representing the Scheduled Castes in the Constituent Assembly and the Advisory Committee, the Mission has without compunction ignored this unimpeachable evidence and without any justification committed the gravest act of treachery in leaving the Scheduled Castes to the mercy of the Hindus. The Working Committee desires to inform the Mission that the Scheduled Castes are not impressed either by their logic or by their sense of moral responsibility.

5. While the whole plan of the Cabinet Mission is mischievous in as much as it proposes to solve the minority problem by allowing freedom to the Muslim majority to dispose of the Non-Muslim minorities in the Muslim zone and to the Hindu majority to dispose of the Non-Hindu minorities including the Scheduled Castes in the Hindu zone. The Working Committee finds that the Cabinet Mission in framing its plan has show greater concern for the protection of the Muslim community but have paid no attention whatever for safeguarding the interests of the Scheduled Castes. In para 15 of their plan the Cabinet Mission have prescribed what matters are to be beyond the reach of the Constituent Assembly. The object behind this provision in para 15 is to prevent the domination of the Muslim community by the Hindu community. The fear which the Scheduled Castes have of the Hindu majority is far greater and far more real than the

Muslim community has or can have. The Scheduled Castes have been urging that the only effective protection they can have is representation through separate electorates and the provision for separate settlement. The Cabinet Mission was aware of these demands and all the evidence in support of them. Following the principle adopted by the Cabinet Mission to guarantee freedom from the domination of the Hindu majority in the manner referred to above it was possible for the Cabinet to lay down in the same para 15 a further limitation of the powers of the Constituent Assembly by laying down that the Scheduled Castes should have the right to be represented in the Legislature through separate electorates and to have a statutory provision for separate settlements as means of escape from the domination of the Hindu majority.

6. The Working Committee has noted that the Cabinet Mission has in its second statement, provided that the ratification of the Treaty between the United Kingdom and the Indian Constituent Assembly will be subject to proper safeguards being made for the protection of the minorities including the Scheduled Castes. The Cabinet Mission in its hurry to placate the Congress Party had not dared to include this provision in Clause 22 of its first statement although it had formed part of the Cripps proposals of 1942.

While the Working Committee is glad that the Mission has retrieved its position and saved the honour of the British people in whose name pledges were given to the Scheduled Castes, the working Committee demands that the plan of the Cabinet Mission should be amended in the following respects :—

(1) The following clauses should be added as clause (7) to para 15 of the Statement :—

"(7) The Scheduled Castes should have the right to be represented in the Legislatures through separate electorates."

(8) That the Constitution shall contain a provision making it obligatory on the Government to undertake the formation of separate settlements for the Scheduled Castes.

(2) Para 20 of the First statement should be so amended as to make those members of the Scheduled Castes who topped the polls in the last primary elections, members of the Advisory Committee and be allowed to elect five other representatives of the Scheduled Castes to the Advisory Council.

7. The Working Committee desires to inform His Majesty's Government and British Labour Party that they should take up the cause of the Scheduled Castes in right earnest and at once rectify the wrong done to them by the Cabinet Mission. Failing this, the Working Committee feels that there will be no alternative for the Scheduled Castes but to resort to direct action. If circumstances require, the Working Committee in order to save the Scheduled Castes from this impending catastrophy will not hesitate to ask the Scheduled Castes to do so.

8. The Working Committee is aware of the panic caused among the Scheduled Castes by the plan put forth by the Cabinet Mission. The Working Committee desires to tell the Scheduled Castes to maintain the courage and heroism they have shown in fighting the last elections against the Congress single handed and without resources in spite of the acts of violence, coercion and arson practised by the Congress and when every other party had shut its shop, and assures them that there is no reason to be panicky and given courage and solidarity, their cause which is the cause of justice and humanity is bound to triumph notwithstanding the machinations of their enemies.

9. The Working Committee hereby authorises the President to constitute a Council of Action charged with the duty of examining the lines of direct action and to determine the one most effective and fix the time for launching the same.

10. The Working Committee has noticed :

(1) the campaign of tyranny and oppression which is being carried on by Caste Hindus against the Scheduled Castes in villages and towns throughout the length and breadth of India for no other reason except that they fought the elections against the Congress, and which has caused many deaths and injuries;

(2) the shameful part which the police have been playing in siding with the Caste Hindus in belabouring and arresting innocent men and women from among the Scheduled Castes.

(3) the part played by the rationing shops in refusing to supply rations to the Scheduled Castes ;

(4) the conspiracy of silence observed by the newspapers who have never cared to condemn these outrages on innocent men and women.

(5) the utter indifference shown by the Provincial Government in protecting the lives and properties of the Scheduled Castes.

The Working Committee cannot help feeling that this conduct of the majority community proves beyond the shadow of a doubt how unworthy the Hindu community is to be trusted with power and that if the majority does not improve its morality the Scheduled Castes would be forced to protect themselves by every means open to them."[1]

●●

[1] :Jai Bheem dated, June 11 and 18, 1946.