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DOES THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS REPRESENT THE UNTOUCHABLES OF INDIA?

Since the Cabinet Mission did not provide proper representation and safeguards to the Untouchables in its proposal, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar sent a memorandum to Mr. Atlee, Mr. Churchill and other Leaders of the Labour Party immediately after issuing the telegram. The text of this memorandum is as follows……Editors.

A Critique of the Proposals of the Cabinet Mission for Indian Constitutional Changes in so for as they affect the Scheduled Castes

(Untouchables)

by

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

The Cabinet Mission sent out to India by the Labour Government early this year to resolve the political deadlock in India set out a Scheme for the framing of the constitution by a Constituent Assembly. This Constituent Assembly is to be composed of representatives chosen by the members of the Provincial Legislatures by a single transferable vote. For the purpose of the composition of the Constituent Assembly the Cabinet Mission's Scheme has divided the members of the provincial legislatures into three categories (1) Muslims (2) Sikhs and (3) General, each with a fixed quota of seats. Each category has a Separate Electorate whereby the Muslim representatives of the Constituent Assembly will be elected by the Muslim members of the Provincial Legislature, the Sikhs by the Sikh members and the General by all the rest. The 'general' includes (1) Hindus, (2) Scheduled Castes, (3) Indian Christians, and (4) Anglo-Indians.

2. The Scheduled Castes of India were greatly surprised to find that they were lumped together with the Hindus. It has been declared time and again by His Majesty's Government that His Majesty's Government recognizes that the Scheduled Castes are separate element in the national life of India and that His Majesty's Government will not impose any constitution to which the Scheduled Castes are not willing party. The question is asked

why the Cabinet Mission recognized the Muslims and the Sikhs as separate elements and why they refused to give the Scheduled Castes the same status ?

In the debate that took place in Parliament on the 18th of July 1946 on the proposals of the Cabinet Mission, Sir Stafford Cripps, Mr. Alexander and Lord Pethick-Lawrence tried to defend themselves against this criticism, Their argument was two-fold :—

> (1) That, in the elections to the Provincial Legislature which took place in February last, the seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes were captured by the Congress and that this shows that the Scheduled Castes were with the Congress and trusted their destiny to the Congress i.e. the Hindus and that there was no ground for separating them.
>
> (2) That, there is to be an Advisory Committee on the minorities in which the Scheduled Castes will be represented and will have a voice in the framing of the safeguards necessary for them.

The second defence is worse than useless. The reasons are obvious. The status and powers of the Advisory Committee are not defined. The quantum of representation of the Scheduled Castes is not prescribed. The decisions of the Advisory Committee are left to be carried by a bare majority. Lastly, the Advisory Committee cannot be anything else than a mere reflection of the Constituent Assembly. The representatives of the Scheduled Castes in the Constituent Assembly all belong to the Congress Party and they do not represent the Scheduled Castes. They are, therefore, subject to the Mandate of the Congress Party. Those of them who will be put in the Advisory Committe will be subject to the same Party Mandate. They cannot put forth the real point of view of the Scheduled Castes either in the Constituent Assembly or on the Advisory Committee.

The principal line of defence used by the members of the Cabinet Mission in justification of their failure to give the Scheduled Castes separate and independent representation is that the Congress won the Scheduled Caste seats in the last election. Even, this line of defence cannot stand. It is true that in the *final* election the Congress did capture the Scheduled Castes seats. But the reply is

that this election results should not have been taken as the test for various reasons.

Firstly, the parties such as the Scheduled Castes who had co-operated with the British Government were at a discount with the people on that very account.

Secondly, the trial of the Indian National Army men which synchronized with the election placed the Congress at an advantage and other parties at a disadvantage. If the Indian National Army trial had not been staged at the time of the election the Congress would have lost completely, so low was its stock.

Apart from these two reasons why the election results should not have been as a test, there is a special reason why it should not have been taken to detemine whether the Congress did or did not represent the Scheduled Castes. That reason is that the final elevation for the Scheduled Castes seats is by a system of joint electorate in which the Hindus also vote. The Hindus vote being preponderent it is easy for the Congress to elect a candidate belonging to the Scheduled Castes standing for the Scheduled Castes seats *entirely* by Hindu votes. That the Scheduled Castes representative in Provincial Legislatures who stood on the Congress ticket were elected solely by Hindu votes and not by the votes of the Scheduled Castes is a fact which even the Cabinet Mission will not be able to deny.

The real test by which to determine whether the Congress represents the Scheduled Castes is to examine the results of the Primary Elections which preceded the Final Elections, for in the Primary Election the Scheduled Castes have a Separate Electorate in which the Hindus have no right to vote. The Primary Election, therefore, reflects the real sentiments of the Scheduled Castes. What does the result of the Primary Election show ? Does it show that the Scheduled Castes are with the Congress ?

The Scheduled Castes have been allotted 151 seats in the Provincial Legislatures. They are distributed among the different Provinces except Sindh and the North-West Frontier Province.

Primary Election is not obligatory. It becomes obligatory only if there are more than *four* candidates contesting for a seat.

In the last Primary Election which preceded the Final Election, Primary Election became obligatory in 40 constituencies out of 151.

They were distributed as follows :--

Madras	. .	. .	10
Bombay	. .	. .	3
Bengal	. .	. .	12
United province	. .	. .	3
Central Provinces	. .	. .	5
Punjab	. .	. .	7

There were no Primary Elections in the Provinces of Bihar and Orissa.

The results of the Primary Elections in the 40 constituencies are tabulated in the Appendix which accompanies this note. The results prove :—

(I) That, out of 283 candidates the Congress put up only 46 candidates on its ticket (*See* Table I) and out of 168 successful candidates had only 38 to its credit (*See* Table V)'.

(II) The object of a Party in entering into a Primary Election is to drive out all rival parties from the Final Election by putting up at least four candidates on its party ticket. Whether a party can put up four candidates on its ticket depends upon how much confidence it has in the voters to vote for its party ticket. The Congress has not ventured to put up more than *one* candidate in each constituency. This shows that the Congress had no confidence that the Scheduled Caste voters would vote for the Congress ticket. If there is any party which has ventured to put up four candidates for each it has contested, it is the Scheduled Castes Federation. (See Table II, Parts I, V, Columns 3 and 4).

(III) Measured in terms of votes cast in favour of the Congress it is proved beyond dispute that the Congress obtained only 28 per cent of the total votes polled in the Primary Election (*See* Table IV).

(IV) If there was not the temptation to get oneself elected in the final election with the help of the Hindu votes, the Independents would all be members of the Scheduled Castes Federation. On that assumption the Scheduled Castes Federation is the only party which represents the Scheduled Castes and the 72 per cent voting in favour of the Non-Congress Parties should be set out to its credit (*See* Table IV).

The members of the Cabinet Mission argued that Dr. Ambedkar's following was confined to the Scheduled Castes in the Bombay Presidency and the Central Provinces only.

There is no foundation for this statement. The Scheduled Castes Federation is functioning in other Provinces as well and it has won notable electoral success as great as in Bombay and the Central Provinces. In making this statement the Mission has failed to take account of the single victory Dr. Ambedkar secured in the election to the Constituent Assembly. He stood as a candidate from the Bengal Provincial Legislature Assembly. He secured 7 first preference votes and topped the poll so far as the general seats were concerned beating even Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose, the Leader of the Congress party. If Dr. Ambedkar has no influence outside Bombay and Central Provinces how did he get elected from Bengal? It must be further remembered that there are 30 seats for the Scheduled Castes in the Bengal Provincial Assembly. Out of the 30 as many as 28 were elected on the Congress ticket. Of the two who belonged to his party one fell ill on the day of election. This means that 6 Scheduled Caste members elected on the Congress ticket broke the Congress Mandate and voted for Dr. Ambedkar. This shows that even these Scheduled Caste members who belong to the Congress regard him as the leader of the Scheduled Castes. This is complete disproof of the statement made by the Mission.

The Congress has been so much encouraged by the surrender of the Mission that a letter addressed to the Mission the Congress has gone to the length of denying that the Scheduled Castes are a minority. This means that the Congress is not prepared to give the Scheduled Castes the same safeguards as they would to other minorities. The Mission has not repudiated this suggestion of the Congress. Herein lurks a great danger and it is necessary to pin down the Mission in the course of the debate and compel them to say if they do or do not regard the Scheduled Castes as a minority.

The Cabinet Mission have said in their proposals that before sovereignty is transferred Parliament will have to satisfy itself that the safeguards for Minorities are adequate. The Mission has

nowhere defined the machinery for examining the safeguards. Whether there would be a Joint Committee of the two Houses of Parliament to examine the minority safeguards has not been made clear. The Mission has not even stated that His Majesty's Government will exerecise its independent judgment in coming to its conclusion on the adequacy of the safeguards. It is necessary to have these matters defined because this provision was an afterthought with the Mission and did not form part of its original proposals which gives the impression that this was intended merely to act as a stop to the minorities.

Analysis of the Results of Primary Elections

Held in December, 1945

(Preliminary to the General Election in India Held in February 1946) for Choosing Candidates from the Scheduled Castes (Untouchables) for the Seats Reserved for the Scheduled Castes in the Provincial Legislatures of India

Note.-The Tables in this Analysis are prepared from official figures.

TABLE I

Parties which contested the Primary Election for seats reserved for Scheduled Castes shown Province-wise

Name of the party which put up Candidates to contest Primary Elections	The Number of Candidates put up by each Party in—						Total number of Candidates put up by the party in all the Provinces
	Madras	Bombay	Bengal	United Provinces	Central Provinces	Punjab	
1. Congress	10	3	13	11	5	4	46
2. Scheduled Castes Federation	35	6	8	9	12	none	70
3. Harijan League	none	none	none	1	3	none	4
4. No-Party Candidates (Independents)	5	9	76	3	8	52	153
5. Hindu Maha Sabha	none	none	1	1	none	none	2
6. Communists	6	none	1	none	none	none	7
7. Radical Democratic Party	none	none	1	none	none	none	1
Total ...	56	18	100	25	28	56	283

TABLE II

Parties which contested the Primary Election for seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes shown constituency-wise

PART I-MADRAS

Constituency in which Primary Election was contested	Total of Candidates who took part in the contest	Parties which fought the election and the number of candidates put up by each			
		Congress	Scheduled Castes Federation	Communists	No-Party Candidates (Independents)
1. Amlapuram	7	1	4	2	none
2. Coconada	5	1	4	none	none
3. Bandar	5	1	1	3	none
4. Cuddappa	5	1	4	none	none
5. Penukonda	5	1	4	none	none
6. Tirnvannamali	6	1	5	none	none
7. Tindivanam	6	1	5	none	none
8. Mannergudi	5	1	none	1	3
9. Pollachi	7	1	4	none	2
10. Nammakal	5	1	4	none	none
Total	56	10	35	6	5

PART II--BOMBAY

Constituency in which Primary Election was contested	Total of Candidates who took part in the contest	Parties which fought the election and the number of candidates put up by each		
		Congress	Scheduled Castes Federation	No-Party Candidates (independents)
Bombay City (North)	7	1	1	5
Bombay City	6	1	1	4
(Byculla& Parel) East Khandesh (East)	5	1	4	none
Total	18	3	6	9

TABLE II

PART III—BENGAL

Constituency in which Primary Election was contested	Total Candidates who took part in the contest	Parties which fought the election and the number of candidates put by each					
		Congress	Scheduled Castes Federation	Hindu Maha Sabha	No-Party Candidates (Independents)	Communists	Radical democratic Party
1. Hoogly ..	5	1	none	None	3	..	1
2. Howrah ..	7	3	none	None	4	..	..
3. Nadia ..	12	1	none	None	11	..	..
4. Jessore ..	7	1	2	none	4	..	..
5. Khulna ..	11	none	none	none	11	..	..
6. Dinajpur ..	16	2	none	none	13	1	..
7. Bogra ..	6	1	none	none	5	..	..
8. Mymansing ..	7	1	none	none	6	..	..
9. Faridpur ..	18	2	3	none	13	..	..
10 Bakergunj ..	6	none	3	1	2	..	..
11 Tipperah ..	5	1	none	none	4	..	..
Total ..	100	13	8	1	76	I	1

TABLE II

PART IV—UNITED PROVINCES

Constituency in which Primary Election was Contested	Total of Candidates who took part in the contest	Parties which fought the election and the number of candidates put up by each				
		Congress	Scheduled Castes Federation	Harijan League	Hindu Maha Sabha	No-Party Candidates (Independents)
Agra City	11	1	5	1	1	3
Allahabad City	6	1	4	none	none	3
Almora	8	3	none	none	none	3
Total	25	5	9	1	1	9

PART V--CENTRAL PROVINCES

Constituency in which Primary Election was contested	Total of Candidates who took part in the contest	Parties which fought the election and the number of candidates put up by each			
		Congress	Scheduled Castes Federation	Harijan League	No-Party Candidates (Independents)
Nagpur-*cum* Sakoli	5	1	2	1	1
Hinganghat	6	1	2	1	2
Bhandara	5	1	3	1	none
Yeotmal	6	1	2	none	3
Chikhli	6	1	3	none	2
Total	28	5	12	3	8

PART VI-PUNJAB

Constituency in which Primary Election was contested	Total of Candidates who took part in the contest	Parties which fought the election and the number of candidates put up by each		
		Congress	Unionists	No-Party Candidates (Independents)
Gurgaon	10	..	1	9
Kurnal	10	1	..	9
Ambala	8	..	..	8
Hoshiyarpur	9	1	1	7
Jullunder	6	1	1	4
Ludhiyana	10	1	..	9
Lyalpur	6	..	..	6
Total ..	59	4	3	52

TABLE III

Showing Province-wise the Votes obtained by different Parties which contested the Primary Elections

Name of the Party	Votes secured by each Party in											
	Madras		Bombay		Bengal		United Provinces		Central Provinces		Punjab	
	aggregate	p.c.	aggregate	p.c.	aggregate	p.c.	aggregate	p.c.	aggregate	p.c.	aggregate	p.c.
1. Congress ..	27,838	33	5,333	14	56,848	32.7	4,101	41.8	1,131	10.7	8,298	17.6
2. Scheduled Castes Federation	30,199	36	28,489	74	21.129	12.2	3,093	30.5	8,685	82.8	nil	.53
3. Independents ..	4,648	4.5	3,814	10	83,869	47	1,773	18.8	551		24,618	
4. Harijan League ..	nil		nil		nil		370		113		nil	
5. Hindu Maha Sabha ..	nil		nil		760		452		nil		nil	
6. Unionists ..	nil		nil		nil		nil		nil		13,521	
7. Communists ..	20,814	25	nil		10,049	5.8	nil		nil		nil	
Total ..	83,499		37,636		1,72,655		9.789		10,480		46,437	

TABLE IV

Distribution of Total Votes polled in Primary Elections all through India and their distribution between Congress and Non-Congress Parties

Total Votes Polled throughout India in Primary Election	In favour of Congress Parties				In favour of Congress Parties							
	Congress	Harijan League	Total	PC.	Scheduled Castes Federation	Independents	Hindu Maha Sabha	Communists	Unionists	Radical Democratic Party	Total	P.C.
3,59,532	1,03,449	483	1,03,932	28	91,595	1,19,273	1,212	30,863	13,521	136	2,56,600	72

TABLE V

Number of Candidates who became successful in Primary Elections in different Provinces classified according to their Party Affiliations

	Name of the Party	Madras	Bombay	Bengal	U. P.	C. P.	Punjab	Total
1.	Congress ..	10	3	12	4	5	4	38
2.	Scheduled Castes Federation ..	24	5	6	5	11	none	51
3.	Independents ..	3	4	36	2	3	21	69
4.	Hindu Maha Sabha ..	none	none	1	1	1	....	3
5.	Harijan League ..	none	none	none	none	None	....	....
6.	Communists ..	3	none	1	none	None	....	4
7.	Radical Democratic Party ..	none	none	none	none	None	....	....
8.	Unionists ..	none	none	none	none	None	3	3
	Total ..	40	12	56	12	20	28	168