

WE MAY BE CONQUERED BUT WE SHALL NOT CAPITULATE

Dissatisfaction at “the inadequate representation” given to Scheduled Castes in the newly-constituted Interim Government at the Centre was expressed by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who is in Poona for the meeting of the Working Committee of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation.”¹

“The Interim Government formed by the Viceroy is not entitled to claim either obedience or respect from the Scheduled Castes, in view of the attitude taken up by the Congress with regard to the representation of the Scheduled Classes in the Executive Council,” said Dr. B.R. Ambedkar when interviewed on the formation of the Interim Government.

Dr. Ambedkar said: “There seems to be a studied conspiracy between the British Government and the Congress to reduce the Scheduled Classes to utter nonentity in the Executive Council. We think there is justification for Pakistan, but there is no justification for the Muslims to be given parity with the Caste Hindus, nor any justification for restricting the representation of the other minorities to four only, when one of them, namely the Scheduled Castes number more than 50 percent of the total population of the Muslims. The utmost the British Government had accepted so far as regards the claims of the Muslims was to give them weightage of 33, 1/3 per cent. Nothing has happened since then that they should have been granted increased representation. If the Muslims are justified to claim equality with the Caste Hindus, then there is more justification for the Scheduled Classes to claim at least 50 per cent of the representation given to the Muslims.

“In the Simla Conference”, Dr. Ambedkar continued, “it was agreed by the Viceroy that they should have at least two seats, and the Scheduled Castes, although they pressed for three seats, were prepared to accept two for the interim arrangement. The

¹: The Times of India, dated 26th August, 1946.

Congress was prepared to give two seats to the Scheduled Castes at that time. In the light of this it is certainly a matter of grave concern for the Scheduled Classes, whether they could co-operate with the new Interim Government sponsored by the Congress, when they know the Congress has done a glaring injustice to them. The Federation thinks that in view of the attitude now taken by the Congress in regard to representation to Scheduled Classes in the Executive Council this Government as constituted by the Viceroy is not entitled to claim either obedience or respect from the Scheduled Classes.”

“More surprising than this”, Dr. Ambedkar said, “is the acceptance by Mr. Jagjivan Ram of the offer made to him to join the Executive Council. When I sent a wire to the Prime Minister protesting against inadequacy of representation to the Scheduled Classes in the Executive Council, Mr. Jagjivan Ram himself issued a statement to the Press supporting the claim made by me on behalf of the Scheduled Classes for increased representation in the Executive Council. That, Mr. Jagjivan Ram should have accepted the invitation, notwithstanding the fact that the Congress has not agreed to increase representation to the Scheduled Classes, shows to what extent he can be expected to stand out for the rights of the Scheduled Classes. The occasion provides a very good test of the sincerity and honesty of men like Mr. Jagjivan Ram, who are inside the Congress and who are pretending they are representatives of the Scheduled Classes and can be depended upon to see that the Scheduled Classes are not let down by the Congress.”

Referring to the movement started by the Federation Dr. Ambedkar said that their fight for the achievement of their legitimate rights would continue. “We may be conquered, but we shall not capitulate,” he declared.¹

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¹: Jai Bheem : dated September 16, 1946.