13

MEANING OF THE CONGRESS DECISION

"Dr. Ambedkar on Mr. Gandhi's objections

To the Editor,
'The Times of India'

Sir, Two views are prevalent in Bombay about Mr. Gandhi's performance at the A. I. C. C. meeting held in Bombay.

One is that the performance of Mr. Gandhi was the cleverest something beyond the ken of ordinary mortal, and that by his performance Mr. Gandhi has avoided the turmoils of Civil Disobedience. To me both these views appear most astounding. That the public should form its views on such vital matters in such a fascile manner is a sad commentary upon his thinking capacity, especially of the Hindu public. I cannot see how Mr. Gandhi has by his project avoided Civil Disobedience. It is true Mr. Gandhi is asking for liberty to preach against the war, to tell people that they should not take part in the war or help it's furtherance either by supplying men or money. But what does this mean ? To my mind it means nothing else but Civil Disobediance of the Defence of India Act. How the Hindu public can interpret Mr. Gandhi's project as not amounting to Civil Disobedience is beyond my comprehension.

Very Baffling

What is, however, most baffling in the whole Situation is the audacity of Mr. Gandhi to call upon the Viceroy arid the absolute certainty of the Viceroy giving him an interview. A man with much less intelligence than Mr. Gandhi realise that nothing can be more riduculous than to go to the Viceroy to ask his permission to break the Defence of India Act. It cannot be beyond the knowledge of Mr. Gandhi that he is asking something far in excess of what has been conceded to conscientious objectors in England or America. All that conscientious objector has been given is that he will not be forced to join the combatant service He has not been given exemption from non-combatant service nor has he been given any liberty to preach against the war while war is going on. It cannot be beyond Mr. Gandhi to appereciate that while all

14

Dr. AMBEDKAR'S PLAN TO SOLVE INDIAN CRISIS MUSLIM DEMAND CRITICISED

"General Chiang Kai-shek has made an appeal to the British Goverment to give the people of India, without waiting for any demands on their part, real political power as speedily as possible. But he has not given any solution of the difficulties which have come in the way of such a consummation," says Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in a statement to the Press.

The difficulty is caused by the Congress not accepting the fundamental feature of the August Declaration made by the Viceroy that the future constitution of India must have the consent of certain important elements in the national life of India. Equally, the difficulty is due to the British Government not realising what its responsibility is.

The Congress cannot expect any sane person who known anything about conditions in India to agree to the Government of the country being placed in the hands of the Hindus majority, simply because it is a majority. The Congress chooses to forget that Hinduism is a political ideology of the same character as the Fascist or Nazi ideology and is thoroughly anti-democratic. If Hinduism is let loose—which is what Hindu majority means—it will prove a menace to the growth of others who are outside Hinduism and are opposed to Hinduism. This is not the point of view of Muslims alone. It is also the point of view of the Depressed Classes and also of the Non-Brahmins.

Need To Share Power

The only antidote is to have a constitution in which political power is distributed among the various elements in the national life of British India. If India is to be made safe for democracy, some arrangement whereby power is shared directly—which is another name for checks and balances—shall have to be agreed upon before power is transferred from British to Indian hands. It is, therefore, quite proper for the British Government to tell Indians to produce an agreed solution of their constitutional differences before they demand any transfer of political power.

purpose. That the Congress is fighting for the cause of the country is humbug. The Congress is fighting to obtain the keys of power in its own hands. That the Congress is fighting for freedom of speech is equally humbug. The Defence of India Act has been in existence for one whole year. The toil it has taken is detailed by the recent report of the Civil Liberties Union. If Mr. Gandhi felt that the Defence of India Act had deprived the country of his liberty of speech, why did he not start his Civil Disobedience immediately after the Act was passed ? Why did he wait for a year ? Why this revolt after the Viceroy's statement that Government must now be carried on with the help of the representatives of the minorities and other parties in the country? There is no answer. The hardship caused by the Defence of India Act is only an excuse putforth by the Congress to clothe the torpedoing of the Viceroy's plans and to prevent the minorities and others from getting political power.

British Example

Such are the springs of Congress action. It may be good tactics and, if the Congress succeeds, it will provide additional proof that the British, having established a parliamentary system of Government will not risk being in the bad books of a party that is popular. But, is it statesmanship ? In this connection one is reminded of the action of Mr. Asquith in 1923. In the 1923 elections no—one party had a majority. The Conservatives had 255, Labour 191, and Liberals 158. As the Leader of the Liberals, three courses were open to Mr. Asquith : (i) to support the Conservatives; (ii) to support Labour; or (iii) to take office himself relying on Conservative support. Appeals were made to Mr. Asquith to enter into a compact with the tories and thereby prevent labour from getting office. But so far from being tempted by these suggestions Mr. Asquith was averse to any such plot. His reasons were first of all that it would be seriously harmful to the national interest and an incitement to class antagonism for the two middle-class parties to combine together to deprive Labour of an opportunity to rule. If Congress men deprive the minorities of their opportunity, they will, I hope realise that they are purchasing their victory at great cost. If they do not realise it now they will realise it when parties meet to revise the Constitution. By the action of

the Congress, two things have become abundantly clear. First, that British Parliamentary Government is unsuited in this country. Secondly, that anyone who leaves an important safeguard to a gentlemen's agreement for its guarantee will do so at his peril.

Dr. B. R. AMBEDKAR."[1]

●●

1. : The Times of India, dated 24th September 1940.