

HOW TO END INDIAN POLITICAL IMPASSE

“A plan for ending the political deadlock in India which would, at the same time, solve the knotty problems raised by the Pakistan issue and pave the way for the formation of a national government during the war was adumbrated by the Hon. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Labour Member, Government of India, in an interview to a representative of *Tire Times of India*, at Bombay, on Wednesday.*

“The Pakistan issue, he said, must be regarded as a preliminary issue. No steps can be taken for the framing of a constitution unless this issue is settled one way on the other. We have, hitherto, depended upon the leaders—Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Jinnah—to come to terms on this question, but they have failed. It seems to me now that the time has come when the decision of this issue must be taken by the people.

“I do not think Pakistan is an issue which the British Government can solve. It would not be right to ask them to do it, nor would it be justifiable for them to give a decision on it. The Pakistan issue is one of self-determination, and, as such, can be decided only by the people affected by it. If this position is accepted, it seems that an Act would have to be passed by Parliament called ‘The Indian Constitution Preliminary Provisions Act.’

Referendum of Muslims

In that Act provisions should be made for the following points:—

(a) a referendum of Muslims in the Pakistan areas exclusively to determine whether they want severance of the predominantly Muslim areas from the rest of India; (b) a separate referendum exclusively of non-Muslims in Pakistan areas to determine whether they prefer to go into Pakistan or desire to remain in Hindustan; (c) if Non-Muslims decide by a majority not to go into Pakistan, a boundary commission to be setup to demarcate those districts in which Muslims predominate and those in which Non-Muslims predominate.

* The 12th May 1943.

A schedule should be prepared consisting of a list of the districts set apart by the boundary commission as being predominantly Muslim districts. This should be called the scheduled districts schedule.

After this is done, the next step is to permit the Muslims to decide by a referendum on one of the following alternatives:—

To consent to allow the scheduled districts to remain part of a united India for period of ten years at the end of which they may be permitted to sever the scheduled districts and to establish Pakistan; or to decide that the Scheduled districts be forthwith constituted into a separate state of Pakistan, and to permit the State of Pakistan, and to permit the State of Pakistan to be amalgamated with Hindustan on a referendum to be taken after ten years on terms agreed upon by Pakistan and Hindustan.

Council of India

In case the Muslims should decide to have Pakistan forthwith there may be established a council of India having equal representatives from Hindustan and Pakistan to discuss matters of common concern. This Council will be dissolved, if, after ten years, the Pakistan State decides to amalgamate with Hindustan.”

Dr. Ambedkar emphasised that the passing of the Act suggested by him need not be followed up immediately by a referendum. It could be taken after the war. The passing of the Act would have, in his view, a salutary effect on Hindus and Muslims, because both of them would know that whatever constitution came into existence, it would have the consent of the people. If matters could be brought to such a state, it would pave the way for the formation of a National Government during the war.

“I cannot see,” Dr. Ambedkar concluded, “how a statute like this can be avoided. It shall have to be passed in any case, now or after peace, but necessarily before constitution making is taken in hand. So far as the first referendum is concerned it should be made dependent upon Muslims of legislatures of Pakistan provinces passing a resolution demanding separation.”¹

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1. : The Times of India, dated 13th May 1943.