21

CONTROL AND UTILISE THE MAHANADI TO THE BEST ADVANTAGE

LETTER BY DR. AMBEDKAR, CABINET MEMBER, LABOUR REGARDING HIRAKUND DAM

Letter by Dr. Ambedkar,

Department of Labour

Dear Lord Wavell,

Would you refer to paragraph 2 of your letter of the 20th January ? I have had this matter examined by my Department in consultation with Finance Department. Khosla has reported that the Sambalpur Dam must definitely form part of the Mahanadi Scheme, that the geological report is satisfactory but that he is not yet able to estimate the cost or the revenue accruing from either the dam or the scheme as whole. He considers, however that it is so certain that the Sambalpur Dam will form part of the Mahanadi Scheme that it is quite legitimate to lay the foundation stone in March. The Finance Member is all in favour of schemes of this sort and does not consider that the laying of the foundation stone will involve any specific commitments though he considers—as I do—that if a decision to lay a foundation stone is taken we can authorise the Governor to state that the Government are determined to control and utilise the Mahanadi to the best advantage of the country and that in this matter the Provincial Government hopes to receive all reasonable support from, the Central Government provided that the project plans now under preliminary preparation show, as is expected that it is worth while to go on with the scheme,

In your letter you have said that we might perhaps aim at a decision early enough to enable Lewis to lay the foundation stone before he hands over charge. I think the only decision we can take is that we will assist Orissa in carrying forward the Mahanadi Scheme subject to the proviso indicated above. I think that this decision justifies us in going ahead with laying a foundation stone provided that with this assurance the Governor himself is prepared to do so from the Orissa angle.

My Department has shown this letter to Finance Department who agree with it.

Yours Sincerely,
B. R. Ambedkar
Member Labour
February 1946"[1]

His Excellency

the Right Honourable Viscount Wavell.

Dr. Ambedkar's this letter was in response to following letter by Viceroy Viscount WAVELL.

The Viceroy's House
20th January 1946

Dear Dr. Ambedkar,

It is very satisfactory that Madras and Orissa have been able to come to terms about the Machkund case. I have telegraphed to both the Governors asking them to see that the agreement is confirmed as soon as possible.

I understand from Menon that in the course of negotiations the desirability of making an early start with the Mahanadi scheme by the contruction of a dam at Sambalpur was mentioned. Orissa is a very poor and backward Province, and if it is technically sound to construct the Sambalpur Dam—a point on which I think we should be able to satisfy ourselves at once—I hope we shall be able, subject to Rowlands agreement, to go ahead almost immediately. You know my interest in water control and irrigation, and I should like to be kept in touch with progress. Perhaps we could aim at a decision early enough (if we decided to go ahead) to enable Lewis to lay the foundation stone before he hands over charge on the 31st March.

Yours sincerely,
Wavell

The Hon'ble
Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

1 Thorat, Pp 172-174.