

on the majority to consent to the safe-guards for the minorities. But there rests upon the minorities an obligation of equal sanctity not to insist on such safeguards as will block the way to the unity of all. From this point of view, the scheme of joint electorates and reserved seats must be pronounced to be superior to that of separate electorates. It meets the realities of the present and also helps the ideal of the future.

15. There is another matter which must be of special concern to the Depressed Classes for their safety. That relates to their entry into the public services. The power to administer laws is not less important than the power to make laws. And the spirit of the legislator may easily be violated if not nullified by the machinations of the administrator. This is not only the reason why the Depressed Classes should show special concern for securing power of control over administration. Often time sunder pressure of work or under difficulties of circumstances law has to leave good deal of discretionary power in the hands of the heads of the administrative department. The welfare of the people must greatly depend upon how impartially this discretionary power is exercised. In a country like India where the public service is almost exclusively manned by people of one community there is a great danger of this vast discretionary power being abused for the aggrandisement of a class. The best antidote against it is to insist on a proper admixture of castes and creeds including the Depressed Classes in the public services of the country. We should demand a certain percentage in the public service to be preserved for the Depressed Classes and there will be no difficulty in guaranteeing this safe-guard to us by a clause in the constitution. Such a protection you could have dispensed with if there was any chance of the Depressed Classes being represented in the future cabinets of the country. But there is not the remotest chance of this in view of the fact that the Depressed Classes will always remain in minority. This makes it all the more necessary why you must insist upon such a guarantee.

IV. Depressed Classes and the Simon Commission.

16. I have drawn your attention to the various safeguards that I think we need must have in the constitution

of self-governing India, I will now turn to the recommendations of the Simon Commission in our behalf. The Simon Commission has no doubt sympathetically considered the case of the Depressed Classes for constitutional safeguards. The Commission has attempted to give a true picture of the conditions of the Depressed Classes, although that picture is by no means complete. They have only referred to the difficulties of the school and the well. They form but a very small part of the long list of the grievances of these-unfortunate classes. All the same it must be conceded that the necessity to the Depressed Classes of constitutional safeguards is more truly realized by the Simon Commission than it was by the Montford Report. But I am sorry to say that both as regards the manner of our representation and the strength of our representation the recommendations of the Simon Commission are very disappointing.

17. At present the Depressed Classes, as you are aware, are represented by nomination. Those of us who have had the misfortune of representing you in the councils will tell you of the evil effects of the system of representation by nomination. And I am glad to say that in the evidence given before the Simon Commission by our people all over India, the system was universally condemned. It deprives our people of their liberty to choose their best men to represent them and it leaves our nominated representatives no freedom of action. It is regrettable that the Simon Commission does not discard that vicious system. It still clings to it and recommends that the Governor may nominate representatives of the Depressed Classes if suitable candidates are not available for election. Not only this, the Simon Commission makes a most undesirable proposal by recommending that the Governor may authorise persons who are themselves not members of the Depressed Classes to represent them in the legislatures. These are however reserve measures the consideration of which need not detain us much. But the main proposal of the Simon Commission is in my opinion equally unacceptable. According to it the Depressed Classes are to be represented by election in a system of joint electorates with reserved seats. This, no doubt, would make great advance in our present position if the recommendation had nothing more

in it. But this proposal is conditioned by the proviso that no candidate from the Depressed Classes will be allowed to stand for election unless his fitness is certified by the Governor of the Province. The reason why such a system is unacceptable is because it makes the proposed system of election so much akin to the system of nomination now prevalent that there is nothing to choose between them. And in cases in which the Governor chooses to certify only one candidate in a constituency, the system of election will in practice be nothing else than nomination pure and simple. There is no knowing how the system of certification will work and what will be the elements that will be taken into account in granting it. The Commission suggests that the Governor should certify "after consultations with the Associations of the Depressed Classes or otherwise as he thinks best." In either cases we ought not to consent to it. If the system of consultation with Associations is adopted, it will only result in the multiplication of bogus associations with no other object except that of supporting their pet candidates howsoever unacceptable they might be to the generality of the people. On the other hand if the system adopted is "otherwise," then there can be doubt that it will degenerate into the worst sort of officialdom and will leave the power of certification into the hands of the Mamlatdars and the Tahasildars. For, it is on their reports that the Governor will have to act, if he is to act some intelligent basis. You know what class of Officers these Mamlatdars or Tahasildars are, and the attitude they generally bear to the Depressed Classes and to their intelligentsia. You can therefore well imagine what sort of persons they are likely to recommend for certification.

18. I cannot agree with the Commission that there is any special necessity of certification in the matter of the representation of the Depressed Classes. If the object is to rule out ineffectives from the legislature then I submit that there are many other interests whose representation in the legislatures must be made subject to the process of certification. If ineffectiveness implies want of the knowledge of English and inability to deliver speeches in it, then I know of instances in the Bombay Legislative Council where many of the Non-Brahmin members and a vast majority of the Sind Muslim members are

quite innocent of English. Seldom have they asked a question or made a speech. I dare say that our friends who are representing the Depressed Classes on the various Legislative Councils will be able to recall similar instances in their Provinces. If certification is not necessary in their case I fail to understand why it is necessary in the case of the Depressed Classes only. We must therefore reject the scheme of representation outlined by the Simon Commission and demand the right to elect our own representatives of our own choice untrammelled by any conditions or limitations whatsoever. We are certainly the best judges of our own interests, and we must not allow even the Governor to assume the authority to determine what is good for us.

19. I do not know how you feel about the scheme framed by the Simon Commission for the composition of the Central Legislature. In the present state the form of election to the Council of State as well as to the Legislative Assembly is direct. The Simon Commission recommends that the Council of State should retain its present constitution, but that the Legislative Assembly should be constituted upon the basis of indirect elections by members of the Provincial Legislatures regulated by the system of proportional representation. I am not a supporter of the system of indirect elections and in my minute of dissent which I wrote as a member of the Bombay Provincial Simon Committee, I have condemned it. But the system in the form in which it is clothed by the Simon Commission has its advantages as well as disadvantages. First of all it avoids the problem of joint or separate electorates in the representation of minorities. Secondly, it eliminates the evils of a double franchise, one for the Provincial Councils and another for the Assembly. Thirdly, it makes the Assembly a more manageable body. On the side of the disadvantages it must be mentioned that the system is bound to weaken the tie between the people and their Government and is sure to retard the growth of national unity by concealing the vision of the country as a whole from the gaze of the people. But whether the balance lies on the side of advantages or whether it lies on the side of disadvantages, the scheme of the Simon Commission must find a place

in the constitution of the Central Legislature. The only question is about its proper place, whether it will be more appropriate for the Assembly or the Council of State, it is obvious that it cannot be applied to both. For, it is a great weakness of the system of indirect elections that it exhausts itself in the very first use. It may be depended upon for securing some reality of representation when the elector is only once removed from the voter. But it must lose all its reality if it were worked through the instrumentality of an elector who is twice removed from the voter. That means if their system is applied to the Legislative Assembly there will be no resource left for the construction of the Council of State if it is decided to retain the two chamber system in the Central Legislature. Now the Council of State is the ugliest deformity in the whole structure of the Government of India and it cannot be allowed to remain in the condition in which it is, if it is to discharge in a satisfactory manner the functions of a revising chamber. If I am correct in the view I have taken, then it follows that direct election should be the basis of the Legislative Assembly and indirect elections from Provincial Legislatures with the system of proportional representation would be the most appropriate devise for the constitution of the Council of State. But whatever be basis that may ultimately be adopted for the constitution of the Central Legislature indirect elections must remain the easiest method for the representation of the Depressed Classes in either of them. This is not a result to be deplored. On the contrary as compared with nomination it marks a great advance in our position.

20. In the Provincial Legislatures constituted as at present, the Depressed Classes are very poorly represented. The Southborough Committee in 1919 did a great wrong to them in this respect and even the Government of India recommended an increase in the miserable quota of their representation fixed by that Committee. But the wrong remained unredressed at the time. The Muddiman Committee appointed in 1923 pointed out how very meagre was the representation of the Depressed Classes in the Councils and suggested a large augmentation of the same. But although here and there a member was added nothing substantial was done to remove this grievance. In their weak

condition the Depressed Classes were told to rely upon the official block for support. Experience has taught us that the official block is the friend of nobody, but of itself and that its help and friendship is determined by its own interests. I am sorry to say that during these ten years the official block took far more from the Depressed Classes than it gave to them. Be that as it may, now that this doubtful advantage of the official block is not to be available to the Depressed Classes in the future Constitution of India is it not fair that the Depressed Classes should get the same adequate representation which every other minority is getting? What is the degree of representation in the Provincial Legislatures that the Simon Commission proposes to allow to the Depressed Classes? They say "the proportion of such reserved seats (for the Depressed Classes) to the total number of seats in all the Indian general constituencies should be three quarter of the proportion of the Depressed Class population to the total population of the electoral area of the province." Now just see the representation given by the Simon Commission to the other minorities in India.

The Mohamedan minority has been allowed to retain the excessive representation which it has received under the Lucknow pact in the teeth of the strongest opposition from the Congress. In the case of the Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans, the Commission has not only given them representation according to their population but has allowed them a considerable weightage over their respective population ratios. Is this not scandalous? Is not a community suffering from severe handicaps entitled to a just if not a generous treatment? Even the Indian Central Committee dealt out justice to the Depressed Classes, and allowed them representation on the basis of their population which if admitted to be the least that is due to every minority.

21. From their inception the doors of the Central Legislature were never open to the Depressed Classes and remained closed to them even when they were reconstituted on a popular basis in 1921. It was not until the year 1926 that the Depressed Classes were favoured with one seat in the Legislative Assembly

of 150 members. The Council of State still remains closed to them. The Simon Commission has attempted to make some provision for the representation of the Depressed Classes in the Central Legislature. But its provision covers only the Legislative Assembly and does not reach the Council of States. But thankful as I am for this small mercy I have also to complain niggardly treatment that the Commission has meted out to us. You will remember the great stock taking of the Depressed Classes that took place just about the appointment of the Simon Commission and the attempt made from all quarters including the Government, to show that the Census figure of population for the Depressed Classes was higher than the actual. Even at the lowest computation the Depressed Classes according to the Simon Commission form 20% the total population of the British India. But according to the provision made by the Simon Commission for their representation in the Legislative Assembly, the Depressed Classes are destined to get no more than 8% of the total seats in that body and none in the Council of States.

22. I cannot understand this systematic undervaluation of our claims and our needs by the Simon Commission. Every one of us expected that the Simon Commission would not only be just to the Depressed Classes but it would also be generous. Nor were the reasons for such a generous treatment to the Depressed Classes wanting. I cannot understand how in the formation of a constitution the loyalty of any community can secure for it any privileges. But in so far as loyalty can in India purchase political privileges, the loyalty of the Depressed Classes has been boundless. They have loved the British not merely from principle but from passion. But the strongest plea in support of the claim of the Depressed Classes for a generous treatment lies in their most abject condition. No minority in India stands so down-trodden and yet so helpless as do the Depressed Classes. So many and so singular are their woes that they were deemed to make India unfit for home-rule. Surely a community so much sinned against must in all honesty receive the most generous treatment. The Depressed Classes have not only not received any generosity at the hands of the Simon Commission: but that they have not received even bare justice. One may well ask

what has become of the sentiments expressed by Lord Birkenhead when he moved the resolution in Parliament for the appointment of the Simon Commission. It was then said that the Depressed Classes formed a special trust and that the British people could not hand over that trust without making adequate provision for their safety. Are the Simon Commission's recommendations to be taken as the fulfilment of those magniloquent sentiments? Gentlemen, we must be careful as to how other people are treating us. I am afraid that the British choose to advertise our unfortunate conditions not with the object of removing them but only because such a course serves well as an excuse for retarding the political progress of India. In these circumstances I think it is the duty of our leaders to trouble themselves less about what the Britishers have done for us so far and to care more for what is to happen to us in future and shape our course accordingly without fear from anybody, and insist upon a just if not a generous treatment to which we are entitled by reason of our particular circumstances.

V. Depressed Classes and *Swaraj*.

23. I think I have said all that I need say regarding the guarantees and safeguards that we must have in the future constitution of a self-governing India. That does not exhaust the topics that this meeting has to take into consideration. This meeting will never be said to have fulfilled its purpose if it omitted to formulate its opinion on the present political agitation in the country. You will remember that the Indian National Congress at its meeting held at Calcutta in December 1928 passed a Resolution, which was virtually an ultimatum to the British parliament, demanding the establishment in India of Dominion form of Government by the end of December 1929 failing which it threatened to change the goal of India from Dominion Status to complete Independence. The result of this ultimatum by the Congress was the announcement by the Viceroy that the goal of British policy in India was to give India Dominion Status. This did not satisfy the Congress, It wanted Dominion Status not as a goal but an event to be accomplished immediately and the Congress therefore when it met in December 1929 proceeded

to pass the Resolution declaring Independence as the goal of India. It is for you to declare what view you will take of the political ideal of the Indian National Congress. The demand for independence we may dismiss from our consideration. It is impracticable and in my opinion it will be disastrous in the present state of the country. It is only people cemented by the feeling of one country, one constitution and one destiny who may take the risk of being independent. No one can deny that this country is miles distant from this position. The ideal of Dominion Status seems to me superior for it has in it the substance of Independence without the attendant risks involved in complete Independence. We must therefore refuse to give our support to the ideal of Independence about the utility of which even Congressmen entertain grave doubts.

24. But what shall we say regarding the demand for Dominion Status which is the same thing as *Swaraj* or government of the people, for the people and by the people? As to this you must really think well before you decide. There can be no doubt that the advent of the British in India has been a great boon to the country. Without this providential connection it seems to me very doubtful if the intellectual awakening of India could have been as great or as fast. Without the contact of European Civilization with its basic conceptions of liberty, equality and fraternity Indian Society could never have been driven to feel the sense of shame in respect of the many social customs that have been recognized as part of its social and moral code. It is this live contact between the two civilisations which has by cruel contrast forced upon India the revaluation of its social values and the recognition of many of its social customs as so many social wrongs. This has set India as nothing could have done on the road to regeneration. Without the advent of the British, India could never have had the tremendous advantage of a common system of government and a common system of law. These are instruments of no mean potency for the welfare of any country. But their value to India is inestimable. They have prepared the soil of India for the roots of Indian nationalism to go to the depth they have gone and have also laid down the foundations of a stable Government.

Nor can it be said that they have neglected to provide the country with the best equipment of modern civilization such as currency, roads, canals, railways and the post.

25. All this is true. But the question is at what cost? There is no doubt that a kind of dwarfing or stunting of the Indian race is going on under the British rule. In the words of the late Mr. Gokhale "We must all the days of our life live in an atmosphere of inferiority, and the tallest of us must bend." No Indian can feel that upward impulse which is the source of elevation witnessed in a self-governing community. You may not appreciate the moral grounds on which the claim to *Swaraj* is made to rest and you may even be amused by it when it is urged by members of the aristocracy as one when one hears satan quoting scriptures in support of his cause. There is no doubt that the cost of the British Government in India is out of all proportion to the means of the people. It is the costliest government in the world. This again may not appeal to you and you may say that no cost is too great for the maintenance of law and order in this country. But there is one thing that I think must appeal to you and that is the poverty of the people. Is there any parallel to the poverty of the Indian people in any part of the world? In the first quarter of the 19th century when British rule in India had become an established fact there were five famines with an estimated loss of 1,000,000 lives. During the second quarter of the century there were two famines with an estimated mortality of 400,000. During the third quarter there were six famines with a recorded loss of life of 5,000,000. And during the last quarter of the century what do we find? Eighteen famines, with an estimated mortality which reaches the awful total of from 15,000,000 to 26,000,000. And this does not include the many more millions (over 6,000,000) in a single year kept alive by government doles. Gentlemen, what must be the cause of this? In plain terms the cause is the deliberate policy pursued by the British in the government of this country. The aim of the British Government all long has been to discourage the growth of trade and industry in this country. This is not an accusation which rests on mere inference. It is an admitted principle of British administration that India be so governed that she will

always remain an open market for British goods. It is this policy which has made India the land of chronic poverty. In this progressive impoverishment of the people who are those that suffer most? I am sure that of the half of the agricultural population which is admitted not to know from one half year's end to another what it is to have a full meal the Depressed Classes must form the largest part. Their abject poverty must make them ready victims of famines to which they must be paying the largest toll. If these are your people, if you are really interested in them you cannot shut your eyes or be indifferent to this heart-rending fact. Gentlemen, you cannot keep on singing the praise of a bureaucracy because it has given improved roads, constructed canals on more scientific principles, effected transportation by rail, contrived to carry letters by penny post and flash messages by lightening, has stabilized currency, regulated weights and measures, corrected the prevalent notions of theology, geography, astronomy and medicine and stopped our internal quarrels. All praise is due to this achievement in the field of law and order. But Gentlemen, we must not forget that people including the Depressed Classes do not live on law and order; what they live on is bread and butter. This inexorable law of life must make even the Depressed Classes demand a government that will help the economic prosperity of the country and thereby effect a betterment in their material life. Some of you may question that the poverty of the people is due to lack of production and may urge that it is due to unequal distribution of wealth. I would be the first to admit that the much talked of "annual tribute" which the people of this country pay to England pales away in magnitude before the heavy exactions by the landlords and capitalists of this country from the paltry and hard-earned wages of the masses who toil for them. But I cannot understand how you can expect the British Government to give relief from the crushing weight of the landlords and the capitalists? One thing we must remember that every Government however powerful suffers as pointed out by Professor Dicey from two very serious limitations. There is first of all an internal limitation which arises from the character, motives and interests of those who are in power and if the British

Government does not sympathize with the living forces operating in Indian society, is inimical to its aspirations, is apathetic to education and disfavours swadeshi, it is not because it cannot favour these things but because it is against its character, motives and interests to do so. The second consideration that limits the authority of every Government is the possibility of external resistance. Does not the Government of India realize the gravity of removing the social evils which are eating into the vitals of Indian society? Does not the Government of India realize that the landlords are squeezing the masses dry? Does not the Government of India realize that the capitalists are not giving the labourers a living wage and decent conditions of work? It does and yet it has not dared to touch any of these evils. Why? Is it because it has no legal powers to remove them? No. The reason why it does not intervene is because it is afraid that its intervention to amend the existing code of social and economic life will give rise to resistance. Of what good is such a government to anybody? Under a government paralysed between two such limitations much that goes to make life good must remain held up. We must have a government in which the men in power will give their undivided allegiance to the best interest of the country. We must have a government in which men in power knowing where obedience will end and resistance will begin will not be afraid to amend the social and economic code of life which the dictates of justice and expediency so urgently call for. This role the British Government will never be able to play. It is only a Government which is of the people, for the people and by the people, in other words, it is only the *Swaraj* Government that will make this possible.

26. Consider the question from your own narrow point of view. Before the British you were in the loathsome condition due to your Untouchability. Has the British Government done anything to remove your Untouchability? Before the British you could not draw water from the village well. Has the British Government secured you the right to the well? Before the British you could not enter the temple. Can you enter now? Before the British you were denied the entry into the Police force. Does the British Government admit you in the force? Before the British

you were not allowed to serve in the military. Is that career now open to you? Gentlemen, to none of these questions you can give an affirmative answer. Those who have held so much power over the country for such a long time must have done some good. But there is certainly no fundamental attention in your position. So far as you are concerned the British Government has accepted the arrangements as it found them and has preserved them faithfully in the manner of the Chinese tailor who, when given an old coat as a pattern, produced with pride an exact replica, rents, patches and all. Your wrongs have remained as open sores and they have not been righted and I say that the British Government actuated with the best of motives and principles will always remain powerless to effect any change so far as your particular grievances are concerned. No body can remove your grievances as well as you can and you cannot remove them unless you get political power in your own hands. No share of this political power can come to you so long as the British Government remains as it is. It is only in a *Swaraj* constitution that you stand any chance of getting the political power into your own hands without which you cannot bring salvation to your people. I know that to the majority of our people *Swaraj* is a weird apparition. It is very natural that it should be so. It recalls to their mind the tyrannies and oppressions and injustices practised upon them by their fellow countrymen and they fear that under *Swaraj* these violations may recur. But, Gentlemen, if you will for one moment forget the past and visualize the *Swaraj* of the future with its wholesome devices to protect masses from Classes you will find that far from being a weird apparition it is going to be a system of government in which you yourselves stand the chance, other things being equal, of being amongst those who will be installed as the political sovereigns of this country. Do not be obsessed by the past. Do not be swayed by fear or favour from any quarters in making your decision. Consult your best interests and I am sure you will accept *Swaraj* as your goal.

27. If you accept this view then you cannot approve of the recommendations of the Simon Commission with regard to the future government of India. I cannot enter into a detailed

examination of the Report of the Commission. Time will not permit me to do that. I will content myself withdrawing your attention to the degree of responsibility that the Commission seeks to introduce in the government of the country. In the Central Government the Commission does not make any fundamental change in the position of the Executive. The Executive there, is to remain as irresponsible as it is. In the Provinces there is an attempt to make the Executive responsible to the Legislature. But this is made subject to the emergency powers of the Governor who by virtue of it may appoint to the Provincial Executive persons who are not responsible to the Provincial Legislature and may take over charge of any department. Gentlemen, I propose to make only one comment upon this scheme of the Simon Commission. It seems to me that there are two ways of approaching the problem. One is how much power to give to the Indian Legislatures, Central and Provincial, over their Executives. The other is how much power the Executive in India, Central or Provincial, must be allowed to retain as against their respective Legislatures. Of the two modes of approach the one adopted by the Simon Commission is the first. It seems to me that when the Legislatures are fully representative of all the interests concerned the right mode of approach is the second and not the first. If I am right then the conclusion is to introduce responsibility in every sphere except where its introduction is not for the present feasible. I know of no reason why the Provincial Executive should not be made fully responsible. Nor does it seem to me difficult to introduce responsibility in the Central Government except in matters pertaining to the Military and Foreign affairs.

28. Some of us may say that Delhi is yet far off and that the Depressed Classes should confine themselves to the question of responsibility in the Provinces. To them I wish to suggest that in formulating their views upon the question of responsibility in the Central or the Provincial Executive they will bear two things in mind. One is that the welfare of the country including that of the Depressed Classes is more intimately and more extensively bound up with the Central Government than it is with the Provincial Government. Therefore to a very

large extent the prosperity of the people of this country will depend upon how well and how easily the Central mill will grind. How well it will grind will depend upon to what extent it will move in sympathy with the Legislature. From this point of view we cannot be indifferent to the question of responsibility in the Central Government if you are anxious to see a rapid advance in the moral and material condition of the people. But there is another consideration which points in the same direction. The Provincial Executive will always remain an important agent of the Central Government in the maintenance of law and order. The two must have their mandates from the same source if they are to work in harmony. Otherwise there will be serious conflict between the two. A Provincial Executive responsible to the Provincial Legislature cannot possibly take its orders from a Central Government which is subject not to the Central Legislature but to the Secretary of State. And in this conflict the administration of the country may be completely paralysed in times of emergency. You cannot therefore introduce responsibility in the Provincial Executive without at the same time introducing some degree of responsibility in the Central Executive whether you like it or not.

VI. Depressed Classes And Civil Disobedience.

29. Gentlemen, even if we support the ideal of Dominion Status with safeguards does it necessarily follow that we must join the Civil Disobedience Movement started in this country by Mahatma Gandhi in March last ? This is a question about which you shall have to make your position plain. The movement is condemned as you are aware by all moderate opinion as being unconstitutional. That argument I must confess does not appeal to me. What would you say if the orthodox classes were to tell you that your temple entry movement is an unconstitutional movement? That instead of direct action your proper method is by petitions to the orthodox classes, suits in Court of Law and attempts to alter the Law ? Would you be satisfied with such limitations upon your resources in your battle for freedom against the orthodoxy ? It seems to me that you can insist upon the use of constitutional means only if there

is an accepted constitution in existence. But where there is no such constitution, few will be inclined to listen to the gospel of constitutional means. Such a view cannot be strange even to the British mind. For after all, was not the Ulster movement a movement of Civil Disobedience? And did not the best of British politicians support and participate in it? The question is not whether the movement of Civil Disobedience is right or wrong. The question is whether it is opportune and consistent with the safety and security of our interests. I am opposed to the Civil Disobedience Movement because I am convinced that it is extremely inopportune. With all the evils inherent in imperialism the British Empire in India does leave some scope for the advancement of the Indian people. I am not alone in holding such a view. It is the view of Mahatma Gandhi who proclaims that treason against the established Government in India is his bounden duty. Not only has that been the spirit of the British Empire but genuine effort was made in 1920 to translate that spirit into a reality by the introduction of responsibility in the Provinces with a view to the progressive realisation of the ideal of self-government in India. Perhaps the reality fell too short of the ideal. Perhaps the realization of the ideal was proceeding at too slow a pace. But can it be said that there was a going back upon that policy? If there was a going back, one could understand the opportuneness of Civil Disobedience. But far from that being the case the goal was defined afresh in unmistakable terms in the Viceregal pronouncement to be that of Dominion Status and a Round Table Conference came to be offered to the Indians to discuss the ways and means of an early realization of that ideal. True enough the announcement has short-comings in it, from the point of view of those who stand for immediate Dominion Status. But that was hardly a reason for the Congress to reject the offer of Round Table Conference. The fight for undertaking and understanding of one sort or another with the Viceroy or the British Cabinet, seems to me a needless if not a useless fight. For undertaking or no undertaking, if the voice of India could be united in making the demand for Dominion Status it should never fail to produce its effect upon the British Parliament. At any rate nothing could

have been lost if the Congress had accepted the Round Table Conference. Its failure would entail nothing but the postponement of Civil Disobedience by a year and would be of positive value to the Congress. For, it must disillusion all and sundry who rightly or wrongly live in-faith. Taking all things into consideration I cannot help saying that the Congress has committed a great blunder in starting the Civil Disobedience Movement at this juncture and in rejecting the method of peaceful negotiations provided by the Round Table Conference.

30. Another reason why I cannot support the Civil Disobedience Movement is this. I do not think it is compatible with the safety and security of our interests. The Civil Disobedience Movement is a movement of mass action. It is a movement the essence of which is coercion. It is a method of stampede and if carried out on a sufficiently large scale it is bound to effect a revolution. A revolution, bloody or bloodless, it makes no difference, is a method of change which is most uncertain in its issue and in which the danger of confusion and disaster in the process is very great. We have before us the famous example of the French Revolution started for the ostensible purpose of establishing democracy resulting in the establishment of autocracy. Revolutions are often inevitable. All the same we must not forget the vast difference that separates a revolution from real social change. A revolution transfers political power from one party to another, just as conquest transfers it from one nation or race to another. I am sure we cannot be satisfied with an empty change of this sort. What we want is a transfer of power accompanied by such a distribution of that power that the result will be a real social change in the relative strength of the forces operating in society. This is a matter which needs adjustment. The future of the Depressed Classes entirely depends upon such adjustments being recognized and implemented. The problem in India is not to make a Government. Nor is it to give freedom. The problem is to form a free Government. And to quote Burke again "To make a Government requires no great prudence. Settle the seat of power; teach obedience; and the work is done. To give freedom is still more easy. It is not necessary to guide; it only requires

to let go the rein. But to form a free Government, that is, to temper together these opposite elements of liberty and restraint in one consistent whole requires much thought and deep reflection". For, it is a matter of nice adjustments which I am sure will not be possible in a stampede of the sort involved in the method of Civil Disobedience.

31. These are the reasons, Gentlemen, why I think that the Depressed Classes should not support the movement of Civil Disobedience. They will do well to avail themselves of the method of peaceful negotiations offered by the Round Table Conference. They should make the most of it by insisting upon adequate representation of the Depressed Classes at the Conference through men in whose ability and integrity they repose full trust.

VII. Organisation of the Depressed Classes.

32. I am warned by many of my friends that this attitude of neutrality is going to cost very dearly to the Depressed Classes; that the Depressed Classes must ally themselves either with the British Government or with the Indian National Congress. I have considered the question over and over again and I feel convinced that the safety of the Depressed Classes lies in being independent of both. As I have stated I cannot oppose Dominion Status for India because I feel convinced that the British Government will never be able to solve our problem. But I cannot understand how by joining the Congress we can be any nearer to its solution. It is said that the Congress does not recognize Untouchability and that it is the only organisation which stands for the masses. Under the auspices of Mahatma Gandhi the Congress has no doubt passed a resolution condemning Untouchability. But what has the Congress done to give effect to it? The Congress in order to carry out its programme had prescribed a Khadder franchise for its membership. Why did not the Congress prescribe the removal of Untouchability as a franchise for its membership? Such a franchise would have been easily workable. A touchable had only to keep in his house an Untouchable either as a servant or as a student to satisfy the requirements of such a franchise. What is the effort made by Mahatma Gandhi to remove Untouchability? Great as has been his moral support he has

contrived to translate very little of it into practice, having regard to his personal influence and his pecuniary resources. Every year he goes on a tour to make collections for his Spinners. Has he ever set out on a crusade against Untouchability? Not one hundredth part of what he spends on the Charakha is spent by him for this cause. You all know how Mahatma Gandhi went on a three weeks' fast to bring about unity between Hindus and Muslims. Has Mahatma Gandhi fasted even for a day to bring about a more charitable feeling between the touchables and the Untouchables? If these things had been done, one could have accepted the Congress platform. But we have not only no evidence of a genuine effort on the part of the Congress to remove the stigma of Untouchability; but we know that Swami Shradhanand had to leave the Congress in disgust because he found the Congress unwilling to do anything more than make a show in the matter. If one were to judge the colour of the Congress by its resolutions one will be slow to accept that the Congress stands for the masses. Its economic resolutions reflect the interests of the higher and the middle classes. Its commercial resolutions concern only the trader and the manufacturer, and the working man is severely left out. A body that stands for 1s.4d ratio and against 1s.6d. must forfeit its claim to be the guardian of the masses. The inclusion of the Salt Tax in the campaign of Civil Disobedience cannot give a different face to the Congress. The fulminations against the Salt Tax are welcome aids to political agitation. But just as the test of the pudding lies in the eating of it so also the true test of the Salt Tax campaign lies in the readiness to shift the burden by a substitute such as will cut the classes and spare the masses. Time alone can show the genuineness behind it. But I have no doubt that when the time for test comes many a Congressman will be in the camp of the classes and not of the masses. That the Congress should be lukewarm and apathetic to the masses is only inevitable. For, it represents a nationalist movement and is not a political party. As such its programme and policy must be a hodge-podge. It must be obvious to every one that when a body is constrained to take account of all and sundry it can take account of some only in name and that in case of conflict

it must leave the weakest to its fate. I do not see therefore how we can expect the Congress to take up our cause and be our partisan when such a course is bound to antagonise it with our opponents without whose support it must cease to subsist.

33. Those of us who are anxious to serve the Congress believe that the Congress will remove our Untouchability after the attainment of *Swaraj* as a reward for our services. If we don't do service to it now we shall be pilloried later on for our default. I need hardly make the comment that gratuitous services are rarely rewarded. But what I am most anxious to point out is that serve the Congress as much as we may, after *Swaraj*, we shall be searching in vain to find the Congress. We shall then have to depend upon our own resources. For, the Congress having accomplished its purpose will have vanished in to thin air with the advent of *Swaraj*. And the "Great Beast" to use the expression of Hamilton with which we will be confronted will be the people of this country with their passions and prejudices in full swing. I am afraid that even Mahatma Gandhi to whom we are asked to leave all our woes for redress will find himself unable to protect us against it, assuming that his span of life will be much longer than is allowed by nature to the ordinary mortals of this land.

34. If I am right in the view I have taken then it follows that we must shape our course for ourselves and by ourselves. I can quite appreciate the nervousness of those of us who fear to take such a course. They smell danger in being independent of both the Government and the Congress. This is a confession of our weakness, and I agree, that for the Depressed Classes to be independent and yet be without the power to make themselves reckoned with is not a happy situation. But what I like to ask is what is the advantage in being dependent either upon the Government or the Congress ? Merely to make yourselves agreeable to any party that happens to be powerful without caring whether you are reckoned with or not is the way of the beggar and amounts to an ignominious surrender which no respectable people ought to tolerate. The question before the Depressed Classes is how they can make themselves into a

force that will be counted by all others, so that their views and their interests will prevail on all occasions. The Depressed Classes movement seems to me to suffer from two grave lacunae. First of all, there is no such thing as a public opinion of the Depressed Classes and secondly, there is no means for a concerted action by the Depressed Classes as a whole. It seems to me that the real reason why our grievances have remained unredressed is because we have remained dumb for ages and have not cared to ventilate them. We cannot with justice blame the Government or the reformers for our condition. We must admit that the voiceless state in which we have chosen to remain imposes its responsibility upon them without giving them a clear guidance or a strong backing. I have been anxiously considering as to why the resolutions that we pass at our meetings, the representations that we make to Government, and the demands that we make on our behalf do not receive the same serious consideration at the hands of the powers that be as they do in the case of other communities. And it has been borne in upon me that we are ineffective because we are still provincial in our actions. The demands made in any one Province do not receive the support and backing of other Provinces when they certainly would if they were put forth by a central organization. I think it is high time that the Depressed Classes be stirred themselves and formed an All-India Organisation which would give voice to their opinions and provide them with the machinery for concerted action. There has come into existence for the last two or three years a body known as the "All-India Depressed Classes Association". It is an open secret that the Association is a body which has only office-bearers but no members. That is certainly the case of its branch in my Province. Such a bogus, make-believe organisation cannot be of any service to the Depressed Classes. You must have an organisation which will be a live institution, which will express the true sentiments of the Depressed Classes and will gather in its fold the true workers of the community with its net-work spread over the whole of the country. It will be a great service, if this meeting were to appoint a small committee to draft the constitution of such an organisation as I have referred to. It is great consideration and it should be made good without delay.

VIII. Uplift of the Depressed Classes.

35. Gentlemen, I have insisted, at more length than perhaps I need have done, upon the necessity of our securing political power. But I must now take this opportunity to emphasize that political power cannot be a panacea for the ills of the Depressed Classes. Their salvation lies in their social elevation. The Depressed Classes must be cleansed of their evil habits. They must be improved of their bad ways of living. By a change in their mode of life they must be made fit for respect and friendship. They must be educated. Mere knowledge of the three “R”s will be quite insufficient for the great heights that many of them must reach in order that the whole community may along with them rise in the general estimation. There is great necessity to disturb their pathetic contentment and to instil into them that divine discontent which is the spring of all self-elevation. And last but by no means least in importance, is the necessity to encourage and energize the Depressed Classes so that they will shed all their fears and begin to exercise their rights of humanity in common with the rest. These results will not follow the advent of political power in our hands. We must recognize that, that is only a means to an end. I am uttering this warning because I wish to avoid the fatal mistake involved in the supposition that because a few from amongst the Depressed Classes will be taking their seats as members of the Legislatures, that thereby the Depressed Classes will cease to be depressed. All this, is the work of social uplift. It must be undertaken by organisations of Depressed Classes modelled on the Servants of India Society of the late Mr. Gokhale or the Servants of the People Society of the late Lala Lajpatrai.

Conclusion.

36. Gentlemen, I regret I have worried you with a speech which I must admit is inordinately long. But I have felt that though brevity should always be the aim, yet on occasions of this sort where people unaccustomed to politics meet for the first time to decide most fateful issues it would be desirable to place before them all sides of the question. My excuse for

this long speech lies in my desire to give you the fullest guidance I can. I hope that this meeting of ours will not be the last and that it will mark the beginning of a great movement which will result in the emancipation of our people and the establishment of such a state of society in this country of ours in which one man will have one value in all domains of life political, social and economic.

I thank you once more, both for the honour and the hearing you have bestowed upon me.” ¹

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