

GOVERNMENT DID NOT CARE DEPRESSED CLASSES

“Dr. B. R. Ambedkar addressed a meeting at the Premabhai Hall, in Ahmedabad while halting there on 22/23 October 1938.

“He admitted that he was opposed to Gandhi in politics. It was because he had no faith in Gandhi; he did not believe that Gandhi would do good to the Depressed Classes. He said if Gandhi was sincere why should he not ask the Premiers of Bombay and C.P. to include representatives of the Depressed Classes in their ministries ? He maintained that the Congress Government of Bombay was not reducing the land revenue, nor was it prepared to tax the rich. The former Government had recommended the grant of waste lands to the Depressed Classes for cultivation, recruitment of the Depressed Classes in the police services and a certain percentage of reservation in Government Departments for the Depressed Classes. But the Congress Government did not care for them.”¹

●●

1 : Keer, Pp. 311-312.

NEED FOR UNITED POLITICAL ORGANISATION TO FIGHT COMMON OPPONENT FOREIGN IMPERIALISM

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar gave a reception to Swami Sahajanand, President of the All-India Kisan Sabha on Sunday afternoon, on 25th December 1938 when a number of Labour leaders, Radicals and Journalists were also invited.

Dr. Ambedkar declared in his speech,

“I am willing to give it in writing that the Independent Labour Party and I as its spokesman, will join the Indian National Congress in any struggle that it may start to fight the Federation.”

“I am prepared to give it in writing that if the Congress Ministers resigned office in protest against Federation, the Independent Labour Party will not take up the vacant posts and will use all its power and influence to prevent others from running the administrative machinery.”

“I fully realise that we are the most hungry dogs in India. We are the most down-trodden, poverty-stricken, oppressed people. We suffer from injustices of a type from which no other class suffers. But we shall set aside our differences with the higher classes for the moment. We shall postpone insisting on our class demands and shall join the Congress, if it decided to fight Imperialism.”

The declaration arose out of the remark made by Swami Sahajanand that all should join Congress.

He held that the Congress was an anti-Imperialist organisation, that it had traditions of struggle against Imperialism, which could be claimed by no other political party, that its name and objects were known to millions of workers and peasants all over the country and no other political organisation was known and that it could be rescued from its present leadership by building up class consciousness of the masses.

“I can understand the need for a united political organisation of all classes, of people of this country in their endeavour to fight their common opponent foreign Imperialism. I shall support the temporary liquidation of all political organisations in the event of a fight against the common foe. I shall be glad to wind up the Independent Labour Party and place my forces at the disposal of the Indian National Congress if it were to launch such a struggle.

Said Dr. Ambedkar in reply : “but what is the position to-day? The Congress is not engaged in an anti-Imperialist struggle. It is using the consitutional machinery to advance the interests of capitalists and other vested interests; it is engaged in bolstering them up by sacrificing the interests of workers and peasants.

“Its administrative activities have evoked encomiums not from the masses, but from Imperialism itself which the Congress is supposed to be fighting.

“When the Congress is thus busy exploiting even the fragmentary powers that it has secured in advancing its class interests it becomes our obvious duty to set up our own class organisation to protect our interests and to resist encroachments on our rights and liberties by Congress or any other ministries. It would be suicidal for us to join the Congress at such a stage.”

Swami Sahajanand’s main contention seemed to be that it was wrong leadership that was responsible for the present policy of the Congress, that the policy could be changed by overthrowing the present leadership and by installing the leadership of the masses, and that it had not been overthrown so far because the masses were not class-conscious.

Our main task to-day is to create class-consciousness among masses and then the present leadership would collapse automatically.

“And even if we are able to capture the Congress” said Dr. Ambedkar, “there is nothing to prevent the present leadership from forming another organisation and thus frustrating the main purpose of capturing the Congress, which is to have one political organisation in the whole country.”

To all these objections Swamiji’s reply was that it was the Congress that rousen the masses, and it was on the Congress alone that they could lay their trust and confidence.

“This nation has got to be freed from foreign domination first, and all available forces must be united for that purposes, he said, “and the Congress with all its past experiences and traditions is best able to do it.”

It was at this stage that Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, leader of the Independent Labour Party, made the statement quoted above that he and his party were prepared to join in any movement that the Congress may start to fight Federation or to end Imperialism, that his party would not accept ministries if the congress vacated then and would prevent others using the ministerial offices to buttress the constitution.

Swami Sahajanand was tremendously impressed by this declaration and said that whatever the present Congress leaders might say or do the fight against imperialism was not far off.”¹

●●

¹ The Bombay Chronicle, dated 27th December 1938.

Venue of the reception is not mentioned in the Press Report - Editors.

SEND GRIEVANCES TO ME

“The Conference, attended by about 200 persons from Aurangabad District, was held at Makaranpur, district East Khandesh on 30th December 1938 under the Presidentship of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The Conference was held there as it could not be held in the Nizam’s Domination for want of permission and it was the first Conference of its kind. The attitude of Muslims to Untouchables in the State was condemned. Dr. Ambedkar who was the principal speaker told his audience to send a list of their grievances to him and also that they should form an Independent Labour Party in the State.

Among others, the following resolutions were passed:—

1. giving Watan land to Mahars,
2. reservation of seats for Untouchables,
3. observance of “Dr. Ambedkar Day” on 14th April every year, and
4. supporting the declaration of Dr. Ambedkar of leaving the Hindu religion, as the Untouchables did not believe in *Hindu Maha Sabha*, *Arya Samaj* or the Congress.”¹

●●

¹ : Bombay Secret Abstract, dated 14th January 1939.