

BE MEN OF STERLING CHARACTER

For the first time since the Government Inquiry Committee on Labour Strike on November 7 last began its sittings a direct attack on the nature of evidence that is being led before it was made by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Leader of the Independent Labour Party. The occasion was the annual parade of the Volunteer Corps of the Party, held on Sunday, the 8th January 1939, morning on the Kamagar Maidan when over 2,500 volunteers turned up smartly dressed and over 20,000 members and followers of the Party thronged the ground to witness the function.

On this occasion Dr. Ambedkar said,

“I shall not go into details of the evidence that is being led before the Committee at present because the Committee is still sitting and the procedure is in a sense ‘*sub judice*’. But I must show to the world the nature and traditions of the volunteer corps of the Independent Labour Party against which foul and venomous charges are being made day after day by all sorts of witnesses before the Committee.”

I shall quote only to instances when fulsome praise was showered on the Volunteer Corps, not by our friends and sympathisers, but by the Congress bosses.

After quoting the tributes paid by Hon. Mr. Kher and Sardar Patel to his volunteers, Dr. Ambedkar said:

“Further, most of our volunteers and men have served in the military for a number of years. They are no lawless illbehaved rabble out for hooliganism and mischief. They realise their responsibilities and believe in disciplined behaviour. Are these the men who will indulge in the kind of infamous activity attributed to them by the witnesses ? ”

Addressing the volunteers direct Dr. Ambedkar said :

“This volunteer corps was born in the struggle started for the assertion of human rights by the Depressed Classes which culminated in the Mahad *Satyagraha*.”

“For the proper discharge of that duty you have to be men of sterling character to whom the rest of society will look to as models of humanity.”

“You must remember that you are not a crowd or a mob. You are a battalion. And the difference between the two is obvious. A handful of well-trained, well-disciplined men like you are able to control a crowd of thousands. That is the essence of the difference “between you and an ordinary crowd.”

“Dr. Ambedkar wound up with a fervent appeal to other young men to join the corps and to increase its strength.”

On behalf of the General Officer Commanding of the Volunteer Corps Mr. D. V. Pradhan expressed the hope that they would be able to open branches of the Corps in other provinces in India in the same manner that they had done in various parts of the province of Bombay.¹

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¹: Bombay Chronicle, dated 10th January 1939.