

Untouchables. This settlement of Untouchables is usually numerically very small as compared with the Hindu village to which it is attached. Secondly, this settlement of Untouchables is economically without any resource and without any opportunity for improvement. It is invariably a settlement of landless population. Being Untouchable it could not sell anything, for nobody would buy from an Untouchable. It is wholly a population, destitute, and dependent for its livelihood upon the Hindu village. It lives by begging food or by offering its labour for a paltry wage. In this setting you can well understand why the Untouchable has remained in a degraded condition for so many centuries. As against the Hindu village, the Untouchables simply cannot offer any resistance. They are numerically small and they are economically poor. While this village system continues to exist in its present form, the Untouchables will never achieve their independence, whether social, or economic, and will never get over the inferiority complex which they have developed as a result of their state of social and economic dependence. The village system must, therefore, be broken. It is the only way that is open for the Untouchables if they really wish to emancipate themselves from the stranglehold which the Hindus have acquired over them through the village system. My suggestion is that you should insist upon a provision being made in the Constitution for the formation of new and independent villages exclusively of Untouchables at the public cost to be undertaken by the Central Government. There is a good deal of cultivable land which belongs to Government and which is unoccupied. This could be reserved for the purpose of giving effect to this scheme of new villages of Untouchables. Government could buy from private individuals out-lying vacant land and use it for the same purpose. It would not be difficult to induce the Untouchables to shift from their present habitats to these new villages and settle there as independent farmers. The process may take time. But, that does not matter. It is so vital that we must insist upon the scheme being made by the constitution itself a matter of obligation upon the Central Government.

There is one other point about which I must speak to you a few words. That is about the necessity of forming one central

all-India political organisation to act as the mouth-piece of the Untouchables of India. We have been carrying on our political activities through our provincial organizations. I find that even in provinces there is a multiplicity of political organizations. Any ambitious person who wants to parade himself as a President or a Secretary founds an association with himself as President or the Secretary. He needs do nothing more than get a printed letter paper having the name of the association and his name as President or Secretary. This is a state of anarchy which you must put a stop to at once. There is only one way by which this can be done. And that is by establishing an all-India organization with provincial branches and to abolish all existing organizations. This will give you the strength you need and enable you to work in a manner that will help you to build a united front. I hope you will take up this matter in right earnest.

I have told you what I have thought and felt regarding the problem of the Untouchables and I hope you will give it your best consideration.

Perhaps, in closing I may refer to our attitude to the war. From the beginning we have supported the war efforts. I am sure we shall continue to lend it our support. We have our political demands which, we insist, shall be satisfied. But we have given our support to the war efforts without making the satisfaction of our demands being a condition precedent. It is not that we value the satisfaction of our demands as of lesser importance than the successful conclusion of the war. We do not lay down any conditions for our support to the war because we feel that the successful issue of the war will help us better in the realization of our political demands than the loss of the war. This is a war between democracy and dictatorship - not an enlightened dictatorship but a dictatorship of the most barbarous character based not on any moral ideal but on racial arrogance. If any dictatorship needs to be destroyed, it is this vile Nazi Dictatorship. Amidst all the political dissensions that one witnesses in this country, amidst all uncertainties of the future which some feel, we are

likely to forget what a menace to our future this Nazism, if it wins, is going to be. What is more important is that its racial basis is a positive danger to Indians. If this is a correct view of the situation, it seems to me that there lies on us a very heavy duty to see that democracy does not vanish from the earth as a governing principle of human relationship. If we believe in it, then, we must both be true and loyal to it. We must not only be staunch in our faith in democracy but we must resolve to see that in whatever we do, we do not help the enemies of democracy to uproot the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. On that point I hope we are all agreed and if you agree with me, then it follows that we must strive along with other democratic countries to maintain the basis of democratic civilization. If democracy lives, we are sure to reap the fruits of it. If democracy dies, it will be our doom. On that there can be no doubt.

There is nothing more that I have to say to you on this occasion. I am happy to be in the midst of you. I shall be happy to serve you in future as I have done in the past. If we all work together and strive together, we will not fail, for our cause is the cause of justice. and the cause of humanity.

Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj, President, declared the session adjourned till 10 A. M. tomorrow and that as already announced the Subject Committee will meet at 9 p.m. to-night in the hall of the Mohan Park Hotel.

Subjects Committee's Sitzings

July 18, 1942

The Subjects Committee of the Third All-India Depressed Classes Conference, consisting of all the delegates, met at 9 p.m. in the hall of the Mohan Park Hotel, with the President, Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj in the Chair and discussed the draft resolutions. After a session lasting for four hours, the Subjects Committee unanimously agreed upon the resolutions to be placed before the open session of the Conference.

Open Session**Second Day***July 19, 1942*

The Third Session of the All-India Depressed Classes Conference re-assembled at 10 a.m. with Rao Bhadur N. Shivraj in the Chair.

The proceedings commenced with the singing of songs specially composed and sung by several members of the Conference.

Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj said,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I want to announce that the Subjects Committee has agreed to place in this Conference five resolutions. Resolutions I to IV will be moved first as one proposition and Resolution V will be moved next. I now call upon Mr. B. K. Gaikwad, M.L.A. Nasik (Bombay) to move the first four resolutions.

While moving Resolutions Mr. B. K. Gaikwad said, Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, the resolutions I am asked to move which read as follows :

Resolution No I : Cripps Proposals Unacceptable

This Conference declares that the proposals of His Majesty's Government relating to constitutional changes sent out with Sir Strafford Cripps are utterly unacceptable to the Scheduled Castes. In the opinion of this Conference these proposals were nothing but a betrayal of the interests of the Scheduled Castes and a breach of the assurance given by His Excellency the Viceroy in his declaration of 8th August 1940 on behalf of His Majesty's Government that a constitution which had not the consent of the Scheduled Castes would not be imposed upon them.

Protest Against Cripps Proposals

This Conference places on record its most emphatic protest against His Majesty's Government agreeing to the demand made by the Congress that the new Constitution be framed by a Constituent Assembly and also against the proposal of safeguarding the interests of the Scheduled Castes by a

treaty between the new Indian National Government and the Government of His Majesty in Great Britain.

Resolution No. II : Constitution Demanded

This Conference declares that no constitution will be acceptable to the Scheduled Castes unless,

(1) it has the consent of the Scheduled Castes,

(2) it recognizes the fact that the Scheduled Castes are a distinct, separate and important element in the national life of India, and

(3) contains within itself provisions which will give to the Scheduled Castes a real sense of security under the new constitution and which are set out in the following resolutions.

Resolution No. III : Provisions in New Constitution

For creating this sense of security in the Scheduled Castes, this Conference demands that the following provisions shall be made in the new constitution.

Provisions in Provincial Budgets for Scheduled Castes Advance

(1) That, in the budget of every Provincial Government an annual sum, as may be determined upon by agreement be set apart for promoting primary education among the children of the Scheduled Castes and another annual sum for promoting advanced education among them and such sums shall be declared to be the first charge on the revenues of the Province.

Representation in Executive Government

(2) That, provision shall be made by law securing representation to the Scheduled Castes in all executive Governments, Central and Provincial, the proportion of which shall be determined in accordance with their number, their needs and their importance.

Representation in Public Services

(3) That, provision shall be made by law for securing representation to the Scheduled Castes in the Public Services, the proportion of which shall be fixed in accordance with their

numbers, their needs and their importance. This Conference insists that in the case of security services such as Judiciary, Police and Revenue, provision shall be made that the proportion fixed for the Scheduled Castes shall, subject to the rule of minimum qualification, be realized within a period of ten years.

Representation by Statute in all Legislatures and Local Bodies

(4) That, provision shall be made by law for guaranteeing to the Scheduled Castes representation in all legislatures and local bodies in accordance with their number, needs and importance.

Separate Electorate

(5) That, provision shall be made by law whereby the representation of the Scheduled Castes in all legislatures and local bodies be made by the method of Separate Electorates.

Representation on Public Service Commissions

(6) That, provision shall be made by law for the representation of the Scheduled Castes on all Public Service Commissions, Central and Provincial.

Resolution No. IV : Change in Village System

That, so long as the Scheduled Castes continue to live on the outskirts of the village, with no source of livelihood and in small numbers as compared to the Hindus, they will continue to remain Untouchables and subject to the tyranny and oppression of the Hindus and will not be able to enjoy free and full life. For the protection of the Scheduled Castes from the tyranny and oppression of the caste Hindus, to enable them to develop to their fullest manhood, to give them economic, and social security as also to pave the way for the removal of Untouchability, this Conference has after long and mature deliberation come to the conclusion that a radical change must be made in the village system now prevalent in India and which is the parent of all ills from which the Scheduled Castes are suffering for so many centuries at the hands of the Hindus. Realising the necessity of

these changes this Conference holds that alongwith the Constitutional changes in the system of Government there must be a change in the village system now prevalent made along the following lines :

Separate Villages

(1) The Constitution should provide for the transfer of the Scheduled Castes from their present habitation and constitute separate Scheduled Castes villages, away from and independent of the Hindu villages.

Settlement Commissions

(2) For the Settlement of the Scheduled Castes in new villages, a provision shall be made in the Constitution for the establishment of a Settlement Commission.

Land for Scheduled Castes

(3) All Government land which is cultivable and which is not occupied shall be handed over to the Commission to be held in trust for the purpose of making new settlements of the Scheduled Castes.

Acquisition of New Land

(4) The Commission shall be empowered to purchase new land under the Land Acquisition Act from private owners to complete the scheme of settlement of the Scheduled Castes.

Central Government to provide Minimum of Five Crores Per Annum

(5) The Constitution shall provide that the Central Government shall grant to the Settlement Commission minimum sum of Rupees five crores per annum to enable the Commission to carry out their duty in this behalf."

Mr. President, these resolutions are really the sheet-anchor of our movement. They have been so clearly worded that it needs no long speech from me to commend them to you. The first Resolution condemns the action of the Government in announcing the Cripps Proposals which are detrimental to the

interests of the Scheduled Castes. Resolutions II, III & IV lay down the provisions absolutely necessary in the future Constitution for the political, economic and social welfare of the Scheduled Castes. We have no faith in the high sounding promises of the caste Hindus. How can one trust persons, who went against the Poona Pact before its ink was dry ? It will be the blackest day in the history of the world, if the destinies of the millions of the Depressed Classes of India were to be entrusted to such communities as are thirsting to stop the progress so far made by the Scheduled Castes. These resolutions are our *Magna Charta* and each member of the Depressed Classes must be prepared even to make the extreme sacrifice to achieve the objects laid down in it. Even now our people in the villages are treated no better than slaves, but when our destinies will be handed over into the hands of the caste Hindus, we can picture and imagine what our fate will be. It is, therefore, the duty of every individual of our community to support these resolutions. With these few words, I strongly commend these resolutions for your acceptance.

Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj asked Mr. Rai Saheb Shamlal of Allahabad to second the Resolution.

Rai Saheb Shamlal said,

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to second the resolution moved by my friend, Mr. B. K. Gaikwad of Nasik. I have been a social worker of the Depressed Classes for nearly three decades. It has been our greatest drawback in not having a chartered programme of our ultimate aims and objects. This drawback will now be removed by the Resolution just moved. When the Cripps Proposals were disclosed at Delhi, Dr. Ambedkar lost no time in inviting to Delhi leaders of the Scheduled Castes from all over India. After we met there, we unanimously decided on the rejection of the proposals which were entirely one sided and were calculated to cause immense harm to all the Depressed Classes. It is unnecessary for me to inflict a long speech in telling you what are our drawbacks and what disabilities we are suffering from. Each one of us suffers these daily and mentioning them here will be considered redundant. The

resolution is for the good of the present generation and the generations to come and deserves unanimous acceptance. I can assure the Conference on behalf of the Province from which I am coming of our hearty support in carrying out the mandate. With these few words I second the Resolution and commend it for your acceptance.

The resolution was supported by the following delegates:

- (1) Mr. Gopal Singh, M. B. E., M. L. A. (Punjab).
- (2) Mr. N. N. Das, M. A., B. L. (Calcutta).
- (3) Mr. R. R. Bhole, B. A., L L. B., M. L. A.,
(Poona, Bombay),
- (4) Mr. A. D. Roy, B. A., M. L. C. (Jessore, Bengal).
- (5) Mr. P. M. Patani, (Ahmedabad, Gujarat)
- (6) Mr. Mangilal, (Rajputana).
- (7) Mr. H. L. Kosare, B. A., (Nagpur)
- (8) Mr. B. H. Varale, M.L.A. (Karnatak, Bombay).

The resolutions, having been proposed, duly seconded and supported, the President put them to vote. As there was none to disapprove these resolutions, he declared the resolutions unanimously carried.

President, Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj then called upon Mr. D. G. Jadhav, B. A., L. L. B., M. L. A., Jalgaon (Bombay) to move the second part of the resolution *viz.* Section V of the resolution.

Resolution-Mr. D. G. Jadhav

Mr. D. G. Jadhav, moving the resolution said,

“Mr. President, brother delegates, ladies and gentlemen,
the Resolution that I have the honour to move for your acceptance reads as follows :

Resolution V: Establishment of All - India Scheduled Castes Federation

This Conference is of opinion that the time has arrived for the establishment of a Central Political Organization for carrying on the political movement of the Scheduled Castes. This Conference, therefore, resolves to establish the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation as the Central Political Organization of the Scheduled Castes of India and appeals to all local political organizations of the Scheduled Castes to merge into this Central Organization and to work through it. For the execution of this purpose, this Conference authorises the President to form a Committee with himself as the Chairman to frame a constitution for the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation. The Committee will submit the report to a provisional council consisting of the following on whose approval the constitution shall become operative :

Bengal	:	Mr.	R. L. Biswas
		”	A. D. Roy
		”	R. S. Dhusia
		”	B. C. Mandal
Bombay	:	Mr.	D. G. Jadhav
		”	P. N. Rajbhoj
		”	B. K. Gaikwad
Punjab	:	Mr.	Gopal Singh
		”	Seth Kisandas
C. P. & Berar	:	Mr.	R. V. Kawade
		”	K. H. Shendre
		”	H. L. Kosare

United Provinces :

Rai Saheb Shamlal

Rai Saheb Ramsahai

Dr. Nandlal Jaiswal

Mr. Badriprasad Balmiki

Babu Tilakchand

Ladies and gentlemen, the resolution which I commend for your acceptance will, I am sure, appeal to all and may be safely expected to have your unanimous support. None needs being told that union is strength. These are the days of collective pressure and unless we put forth our whole strength under one organization we cannot expect to survive the onslaughts from other greater communities. We all know that the caste Hindus are very strongly organised under the Congress, and the Muslims under their League. Knowing these facts, if we do not combine under one Federation, our opponents will take advantage of the disunity amongst us and play one faction against another. Thus, while we shall be fully occupied with petty quarrels amongst ourselves, the world will be told that there is no such thing as separate entity of the Depressed Classes. We would have no opportunity left for giving fight to our opponents and thus the disunity amongst ourselves will be the cause of our downfall. One can very well imagine the worst dissabilities awaiting for us, should we be surrendered to the good will of the caste Hindus ?

This resolution demands that all provincial organizations should merge into and work under one Central Organization. In times of war political parties in the belligerent nations forget their existence and work together to face the common enemy. We must take lesson in time for our fight is no less than a war of our existence. I am sure every one of us would prefer to die than live like a slave. Why not, then, follow the old adage that ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. Unite now before it is too late and prevent the ills that stare you in the face. After the ills take charge of you it will be too late to cure. It is possible that some amongst us may fear the loss of

self-importance by placing themselves under one leadership but I put it to you whether the loss of importance of few persons is greater than the loss to be sustained by the millions. I appeal to you not only to accept the resolution unanimously but to lose no time in bringing together all the different local organization under one central banner. I do not mean to say that there exists any important organizations which are not with us. All that I mean to convey is that even the few, unimportant though they may be, should not remain aloof from our organization. With these few words, I commend this resolution for your acceptance.

Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj then called upon Rai Sahib N. C. Dhusya from Bengal to second the resolution.

Accordingly Rai Saheb N. C. Dhusya Seconded the resolution.

The resolution was supported by :

- (1) Mr. P. N. Rajbhoj, Poona (Bombay)
- (2) " Mangilal, (Rajputana)
- (3) " B. C. Mandal, B.A., (Calcutta)
- (4) " Badriprasad Valmiki, Allahabad (U.P.)
- (5) " P. L. K. Talib, M.A., LL.B., (Lucknow, U.P.)
- (6) " P. J. Roham, M.L.A., Ahmednagar (Bombay).

Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj said, "As Resolution No. V has been proposed, duly seconded and supported, I now put it to vote. All those who are in favour of the resolution will signify their assent by raising their hands (all seem to have raised their hands). All those who are against the resolution will signify their disapproval by raising their hands. I find no one is against the resolution. I declare that the resolution is carried unanimously."

Concluding Address by Dr. Ambedkar

Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj then requested Dr. B. R. Ambedkar to speak as promised by him.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar who spoke this time in Marathi, said :

Friends, during the last ten years the political movement has taken great strides. Still I am sure the resolutions which you have passed today mark the beginning of a new era so far as the Untouchables are concerned. As you know, I am taking up from tomorrow the duties of my new office. I, therefore, consider it to be my duty to render to you an account of my stewardship during the past twenty years, (Dr. Ambedkar here repeated in Marathi the account of the political, economic and social progress made by the Depressed Classes during the past twenty years.)

I must tell you that between the condition of the Muslims and the Untouchables there is a substantial difference, although both are known as minority communities. The Muslim Community is very rich as compared to our Community. They were rulers in this Country till the British came. They have, thus, superior status behind them and then progress is decidedly far in advance of us. We had been oppressed for centuries. Our economic condition is one of extreme poverty. We cannot simply compare ourselves with the Muslims on the ground of population alone. We have to work up ourselves from the beginning relying entirely on our own efforts. We have to raise our Community. Due to my new appointment the responsibility for shouldering the task now rests upon others. I have no love for office. I am quite alright as I was. I do not consider that there is any difference between “the Hon’ble Dr. Ambedkar” and the simple “Dr. Ambedkar”. What I consider most important with regard to my appointment is that a convention is now established that there should be a seat for the representative of the Depressed Classes on the Executive Council of the Governor General. This is death-blow to Brahminism. Therein lies the importance of my appointment. It was not in the interest of Brahminism to have such a convention at all. I consider this a great victory for the Untouchables.

There are many people who are not well disposed towards me. I am by nature given to live alone and spend my time in reading. Many people consider this nature of mine as an indication that I do not treat the people properly and avoid them. I assure you that I do not mean any insult to any one. My time is limited. I have to do many things and I have no assistance.

Many Hindus look upon me as their enemy. They complain that I speak hard to injure their feelings. I know I have kind heart and I have many friends even among Brahmins. But even a kind hearted man has to speak the truth. When he sees his kith and kin being treated worst than dogs and their future progress blocked by all means, how can they expect me to treat them kindly as though they have done nothing. I try to suppress my feelings and treat my opponents with honour but guilty conscience feels the pinch, although my treatment to my opponents is never unkind.

I am definitely of opinion that in this Country political rights must be shared between the Hindus, the Musalmans and the Depressed Classes. The Depressed Classes must by law have a proper share in the Government of the Country along with the Hindus and the Musalmans. The future constitution can only work if it rests on these three pillars. To achieve this, you must all come together under one flag and have only organization. If we have not so far achieved the position in the Constitution which is due to us, it is because we have not been united. If you all unite and work under one organization, I have no doubt that you will reach the position you are entitled to.

Congress is a big organization and its influence is spread far and wide. Some naturally ask why this is so, and why our organization is not so spread. There are two things at the command of the Congress. The Congress have the whole Press of India behind it. It gets full publicity. We can get no publicity from the nationalist Hindu Press. Secondly, the Congress has money at its command. You will remember that the Congress collected a fund of one crore of rupees. This large fund forms the secret of its success. But for the work of our Community I have never asked for funds. What progress and organization we have achieved we have done so without the help

of any funds at all. I must, however, tell you that it is very necessary to collect funds to build up our organization and without funds our Community will not be able to march forward and to keep pace with the other already well-organized communities.

In public life mistakes do occur, but these should not discourage us. Through errors only we can find out our weaknesses and put them right.

I am very happy to note your decision today to have one organization for the whole of India. You must now in each Province establish its branches and you must see that all the existing organizations are merged in this one All-India Federation.

It is my great desire that there should be buildings of our organization not only in each Province but in each town to serve as a centre of office and activity. Last night, I was talking to Mr. Dashrath Patil of Bela (Nagpur). I told him to purchase a piece of land and erect a building in Nagpur for our organization. You can do that with a sum of rupees twenty to twenty-five thousand. If you will do this and invite me to lay the foundation stone of such a building at Nagpur, it shall give me the greatest pleasure to accept your invitation. (At this stage Mr. Sitaram Hadke presented a purse of rupees two hundred and fifty on behalf of Bhankheda Basti, Nagpur.) Dr. Ambedkar accepted the purse and made it over to Mr. Dashrath Patil to apply it for the building fund.

Mr. R. V. Kawade, General Secretary, expressed the thanks. Thereafter, the President declared the Session as dissolved.¹

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¹: Report of Depressed Classes Conference. Nagpur Sessions-July 1942.