

I WILL STAND BY YOU

“Bombay, Tuesday

The Assurance that he would strive his utmost for bettering the standard of living of the working class in this country was given by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, member for labour, Government of India, speaking at a tea party given in his honour by the President and members of the National Seamen's Union of India at the Taj Mahal Hotel on Tuesday the 21st July 1942 in the evening.

Dr. Ambedkar said that the Government which he joined was principally constituted for the purpose of helping the war and it was not reconstituted Government in the sense it had a programme for the reconstruction of economic and social life of the country.

Referring to the position of Indian Seamen, Dr. Ambedkar said that Indian Seamen were going to be one of the most important sections among India's labour population. With an enormous sea coast, the greatest need of India was a navy and the position of Indian Seamen in India's navy and Indian mercantile marine would be indeed great.

Mr. A. H. Mirza and Khan Sahib M. E. Serang of the National Seamen's Union, referred to some of the grievances of Indian Seamen such as the absence of any manning scale, fixing of the working hours on the board ships and also the lack of provision for compensation for Seamen in case of death by natural causes. They referred to the services rendered by Indian Seamen in this war that no less than 20,000 Indian Seamen were on the high seas and urged the ratification of the conclusions of the International Maritime Conference of 1936.

Among those present at the party were Sir Sultan Chinoy, Mr. Oscar H. Brown, Chief Presidency Magistrate, Mr. R. Mathalone, Dr. and Mrs. J. A. Collaco, Dr. M. R. A. Baig, Sheriff of Bombay, and officials of the shipping Companies.”¹

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¹: The Bombay Chronicle, 22nd July 1942.