

I do not know ; I seek for information upon the point.

C622. *Chairman* : I think we had better use this afternoon in getting information out of the witnesses. Will you return to the point ?

Mrs. P. K. Sen : It would not be at least a separate women's electorate.

C623. *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar* : If left to you, you might give them all the six, or more than that ?

Mrs. P. K. Sen : Quite.

C624. *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar* : I mean, in view of the fear that there may be none ?

Mrs. P. K. Sen : Yes.

(12)

Discussion in Joint Committee on Poona Pact

**Sir N. N. Sircar* : May I make a short statement which probably will shorten matters ? I claim the right to put questions, if the Committee will allow it on the Communal decision, but, as a matter of fact, I do not intend to put in any questions relating to the dispute between the Hindus and Muslims, because that does not depend upon any facts that are going to be proved by any witnesses ; but I do want to ask the witnesses to give Your Lordships the facts relating to the Poona Pact. There are two more observations I may be permitted to make as regards Sir Annepu Patro's statement as to its being mixed up, and so on, that the decision itself makes it quite clear that the result of one Province is not connected with the result in any other Province. The decision itself says that any change can be made in one Province as distinct from any other Province. As regards my friend, Mr. Zafrulla Khan's statement, I only venture to submit this : At the Round Table Conference we were trying to find out what was the greatest measure of agreement. It was open to us to say : Unless I get 100 per cent. seats for Hindus, I will not take any further part. It is no good taking up that attitude. I beg of the Committee to enter into the merits of the question.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : May I say just a word ? I am glad that this wrangle if I may use that expression, on this side is going to be confined only to the Poona Pact, and that Sir Nripendra Sircar does not propose to reopen the question of the distribution of seats between Hindus and Muslims but might I say that the sentiments expressed by Chaudhari Zafrulla Khan with regard to the attitude of the Muslims were exactly the sentiments that I have been expressing from the very beginning when I commenced to take part in the Round Table Conference, and that I, too, consented to join in the deliberations on the understanding that the Poona Pact was an accepted proposition. I do not object, of course, to Sir Nripendra Sircar putting the facts before the Committee, because I know I will also get an opportunity to rectify any errors ; but so far as my own position is

*Minutes of Evidence, Vol. II-C, 31st July 1933, p. 1356-61.

concerned, I do not think that it would be possible for me to take any further part in the Proceedings of the Committee, if, for instance, the whole question was reopened with regard to the representation of the Depressed Classes.

Sir N. N. Sircar : I beg Your Lordship's permission to hand in at this stage the following letter from myself to the Prime Minister and a cablegram from Sir Rabindranath Tagore, dated 27th July, 1933 : —

LETTER FROM SIR N. N. SIRCAR TO PRIME MINISTER

St. James Court,
Buckingham Gate,
London, S.W.I.
14th December, 1932

My Dear Prime Minister,

I am forwarding to you as requested, certain telegrams. The first telegram from 25 members of Bengal Legislative Council reads as follows :

“Representation from 25 members of Bengal Legislative Council. Poona Depressed Classes Pact made without consulting Bengal Hindus. No Depressed Classes problem in Bengal as elsewhere in India, as found on careful examination by Lothian Committee. Ambedkar and others had no direct knowledge of Bengal conditions, where, alleged Depressed Classes suffer no political disability. Poona Pact introduces revolutionary change, cutting at root of normal progress of Hindu society in Bengal. Earnestly urge necessity for modifying Poona Pact as affecting Bengal, as Lothian Committee Scheme meets Bengal situation fairly. Show this Premier :

“B. C. Chatterji, S. M. Bose, Maharaja Dinajpur, Maharaja Cosim-bazar, Rajabahadur Nashipur, Narendra Kumar Basu, Syamaprasad Mukerji, Rai Bahadur Kamini Kumar Das, Satyendra Kumar Das, Keshabchandra Banerji, Haridhan Dutt, Satischandra Mukerji, Saratchandra Mitra, Anandamohan Poddar, Satischandra, Roychowdhary, Hanumanprasad Poddar, Kishorimohan Chowdhari, Satyakinkar Sahana, Khetrāmohan Roy, Debrai Mohashi, Santisekhareshwar Roy, Saratkumar Roy, P. Banerji, Surendraaiath Law, Saileswar Singh Roy.”

2. I showed the above telegram to Dr. Ambedkar, who in his turn received telegram, copy of which reads as follows :

“Regarding Bengal. Hindu friends cable for revision of Poona Pact for Bengal. They defaulted twice, once before the Lothian Committee when they failed to give a list of Depressed Classes. Second when invited to Bombay September Conference nobody responded. Now they raise false cry, besides they are unjustifiably afraid of Namsudras appropriating all seats. Further Bengal Government depressed population figure is 103 lacs, *vide* Lothian Volume II, while we assumed for calculation of seats 75 lacs, *vide* Lothian, Poona Pact follows closely Lothian recommendations. Refer Mullick's note — Lothian Volume II. In Calcutta Thakkar found general

Hindu feeling in favour of Pact. Hence Pact approved by Cabinet can't be revised."

— *Birla and Thakkar*

3. I have received two further telegrams, viz :

"Birla's cable to Ambedkar. Birla not acquainted with conditions in Bengal and has absolutely no representative character there. Poona Pact in allowing 30 seats to depressed classes in Bengal, number being equal to seats allowed to Madras cannot be justified. Question to depressed classes in Bengal is certainly not at all acute and is absolutely different from that in other Provinces. Premier's Award on this question is utmost that Bengal can accept."

"Satischandra Sen, Bijoykumar Basu, Satyendrachandra Ghosh Maulik, Amarnath Dutt, Satyendrachandra Mitra, Satyacharan Mukherjee, Satyendranath Sen, Jagadischandra Banerjee, Naba Kumar Singh Dudhuria, Bengal Non-Mahomedan Representatives present in Central Legislature."

—*Amarnath Dutt*

"Bengal, M.L.C.S who wired previously state Birla Thakkar cabled misrepresentations. Bengal Representatives not invited to Conference leading to Poona Pact. Its terms astonished Bengal. Not being agreed, according Premier's formula, settlement cannot bind Bengal. Lothian Committee made enquiries which castes are untouchable and unapproachable in Bengal. Provincial Franchise Committee consisting Hindu Mahommedans correctly answer. Report Volume 2, Mullick's Note not placed before Committee, but prepared secretly. Mullick's classification of Bengal depressed different from other Provinces covering Subarnobaniks Sahas Mahishyas admittedly outside depressed category. Also England—returned Indians, Brahmo Samaj people, even Baidyas, Kayasthas contrasted against Brahmanas. Bengal Public life free from caste consideration. High caste Hindus elected a Namasudra against Chatterjee 1923 at Madaripur. Deshbandhu disregarded orthodoxy marrying Brahmin's daughter, but his following included all high caste people. Distribution of Namasudras *vide* Calcutta Gazette fourteenth July ensures their securing 20 reserved seats. Non-Namasudras alarmed at prospect. Namasudras Rajbansis rigidly exclude other depressed castes from social communion, and have less right to represent them, than high caste people who have worked for generation for their uplift. Poona Pact introduces political division Hindu Bengal, where none hitherto existed. Show Premier."

— *Chatterjee and others*

4. I left India in August last, I have no personal knowledge relating to the Poona Pact.

5. In your "Communal decision" it was stated, "His Majesty's Government wish it to be most clearly understood that they themselves can be no parties to any negotiations which may be initiated with a view to revision of their decision and will not be prepared to give consideration to any

representation aimed at securing modification of it which is not supported by all the parties affected.”

6. Under your decision, the Hindus (including all alleged depressed classes) have been given 80 seats whereas Mahomedans get 119 seats, i.e. 50 per cent. more than Hindus. The European interests get 25 seats, viz. 10 per cent. of the total seats, while they do not form any appreciable fraction of even one per cent. of the population. Factors of position, influence, education, etc., have apparently been considered, and legitimately considered in case of Europeans—but of heads has been considered between Hindus and Mahomedans. The latter claim to constitute 54 per cent. by inclusion of infants below 21 years, for if adults are counted, Mahomedans have no appreciable majority, if at all.

7. Even if Mahomedans form 54 per cent. of the population, their getting 50 per cent. more than Hindus is explained by the fact of carving out of the special seats, 51 in number in disproportionately large share from the Hindus.

8. The nature of the Special Seats, which include 25 for Europeans, 4 for Anglo-Indians, 8 for Labour, clearly does not lend itself to the suggestion that Hindus can make up their proper share in the total from these seats.

9. I fully realise that having regard to the wording of your decision, arguments, however forcible, cannot be listened to by you, but with the best of intentions the decision operates very unfairly on Hindus—and that is all the greater reason why Bengal Hindus other than the Depressed Classes object to the whittling down of what has been given to them by your decision. I may be permitted to add that if for the sake of argument it is assumed that one community has got nearly 50 per cent. more than its share it is idle to expect that it will give up its unjustified gain from any abstract considerations of justice.

10. The matter involved relates solely to a question of fact, viz., did the people now complaining agree to the modification of your decision? The laboured argument about agreement by alleged “defaults”, it is submitted, has no force. In any case, it remains to be determined whether there has been such default, from which it can be concluded that Bengal non-depressed classes have agreed to alter your Award.

11. It is submitted that the matter is too important to be dealt with on the footing, that the telegram of Birla and Thakkar represent facts correctly—facts which have been disputed. Nor does any agreement follow, even if these facts are taken to be substantially correct.

12. In the interest of the party aggrieved, an enquiry as to the fact of the non-depressed classes in Bengal being parties to, or being bound by the Poona Pact, should be made—whether through the Government of India or Bengal, or any other responsible and neutral Agency, is a matter of detail.

I am forwarding a copy of this letter to Dr. Ambedkar for information

As I have to leave England very soon, any acknowledgment of, or reply to this representation may be kindly directed to be forwarded to —

Mr. Narendra Kumar Basu, M.L.C.,
Bar Association, High Court, Calcutta.

Yours truly,
(Signed) N. N. SIRCAR,
Member,

Indian Round Table Conference.

CABLEGRAM FROM SIR RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Dated 27th July, 1933

To Sir N. N. Sircar,

I remember to have sent a cable to the Prime Minister requesting him not to delay in accepting the proposal about Communal Award submitted to him by Mahatmaji. At that moment a situation had been created which was extremely painful not affording us the least time or peace of mind to enable us to think quietly about the possible consequences of the Poona Pact which had been effected before my arrival when Sapru and Jayakar had already left with the help of members among whom there was not a single responsible representative from Bengal. Upon the immediate settlement of this question Mahatmaji's life depended and the intolerable anxiety caused by such a crisis drove me precipitately to a commitment which I now realise as a wrong done against our country's permanent interest. Never having experience in political dealings while entertaining a great love for Mahatmaji and a complete faith in his wisdom in Indian politics I dared not wait for further consideration not heeding that justice had been sacrificed in case of Bengal. I have not the least doubt now that such an injustice will continue to cause mischief for all parties concerned keeping alive the spirit of communal conflict in our Province in an intense form making peaceful government perpetually difficult.

— RABINDRANATH TAGORE

LETTER AND ENCLOSURES FROM DR. AMBEDKAR
TO THE PRIME MINISTER

Imperial Hotel,
Russell Square,
London, W.C.I.
5th January, 1933

My Dear Prime Minister,

Sir N. N. Sircar has been good enough to send me a copy of the letter, dated 19th December, 1932, which he addressed to you just before his departure for India, in which he has laid before you for your consideration certain telegrams received by him from the Caste Hindus of Bengal protesting against the application of the terms of the Poona Settlement between the Caste Hindus and the Depressed Classes of Bengal on the ground that the Bengal Caste Hindus were not represented at the Settlement.

I had also received telegrams on behalf of the other side. Of these I had shown to Sir N. N. Sircar one which had come from Messrs. Thakkar and Birla, who had acted on behalf of Mr. Gandhi in the course of the negotiations that resulted in the Poona Settlement and the text of which has been quoted by him in his letter. I did not, however, like to trouble you with them, firstly because His Majesty's Government, having accepted the Poona Settlement, the matter, in my opinion, was closed, and secondly because I was assured by Sir N. N. Sircar that he would do nothing more than forward the telegrams received by him for your information. But as Sir N. N. Sircar has not contented merely with forwarding the telegrams, but has urged that "the laboured argument about agreement by alleged default" used by Messrs. Thakkar and Birla in their telegram has no force and has ended with a plea "that any enquiry as to the fact of the non-depressed classes in Bengal being parties to, or being bound by the Poona Pact should be made through the Government of India, Bengal or any other responsible and neutral agency," I feel called upon to place my views on the question raised by him.

My first submission is that assuming that the Bengal Hindus were not represented at the Poona Settlement it cannot for that reason alone make it inapplicable to Bengal. Paragraph 4 of the Communal Decision of His Majesty's Government under which they had provided for an agreement settlement to supersede the terms of their award did not, in my opinion, stipulate that in respect of an alternative scheme for the whole of British India—and the Poona Settlement, it must be remembered, was for the whole of British India—Caste and Depressed—province for province was a necessary condition for its acceptance. Indeed, I go further and say that such a stipulation is not postulated in the Communal Decision even for a settlement in respect of a single province. According to my reading of paragraph 4 all that is stipulated is that His Majesty's Government should be satisfied that the communities who are concerned are mutually agreed upon a practicable alternative scheme. Taking my stand on this interpretation of paragraph 4, I venture to say that the absence of the representatives of Bengal Caste Hindus cannot derogate from the applicability of the Poona Settlement to Bengal. If the contrary interpretation were true it would then be open to the Depressed Classes of Punjab, U.P. and Bihar and Orissa to repudiate the Poona Settlement, for they were not represented at all.

My second submission is that it is really not necessary to proceed on the assumption that the Bengal Caste Hindus were not represented as is alleged by the signatories to the telegram forwarded to you by Sir N. N. Sircar. I know for a fact they were represented and the statement of Messrs. Thakkar and Birla in their telegram that the Bengal Hindus did not respond to the invitation sent to them—a statement on the basis of which Sir N. N. Sircar has founded his plea for an enquiry is incorrect. What is more important to bear in mind is that these representatives of

Bengal were not merely present as silent spectators, they were active participants in the negotiations. I very well remember one of them came to me in Bombay accompanied by a Bengal Depressed Class youth of the Raja Party and had a private conference with me for nearly an hour and a half in the course of which he urged me to come to terms with the Caste Hindus on the basis of joint electorates. It is, therefore, quite untrue to say that the Bengal Caste Hindus were not represented, and the inaccuracy in the statement of Messrs. Thakkar and Birla must be attributed to the impossibility of keeping in touch with all the details of the negotiations which, having regard to the momentous character of issues involved, is quite excusable. I am sorry I am not in a position to give you the name of the Bengal Caste Hindu gentleman who had this conference with me. But I will let you have his name immediately after my return to India.

There is therefore no case for reopening the Poona Settlement on behalf of the Caste Hindus of Bengal. As for the Depressed Classes, their spokesman, Mr. M. B. Mullick, has cabled to me that they accept the Poona Pact. His telegram and the telegram of Messrs. Thakkar and Birla are enclosed herewith in original for your information. I am leaving for India next week. Any further communication which you may wish to have with me in connection with this matter may be sent to my address in Bombay, which I give below for ready reference.

Yours truly,

(Signed) B. R. AMBEDKAR.

Address :

Damodar Hall, Parel,
Bombay-12 (India).

COPY OF TELEGRAM DATED 1ST DECEMBER, 1932

1774. Delhi. 118.29.2020.

DLT Doctor Ambedkar, India Office, London.

Regarding Bengal Hindu friends cable for revision, Poona Pact for Bengal they defaulted twice one before Lothian Committee when they failed to give list of Depressed Castes second when invited to Bombay September Conference nobody responded now they raise false cry besides they are unjustifiably afraid of Namsudras appropriating all seats further Bengal Government depressed population figure is 103 lacs *vide* Lothian volume two page 263 while we assumed for calculation of seats 75 lacs *vide* Lothian Poona Pact follows closely Lothian recommendations refer Mullick's note Lothian volume two page 251 in Calcutta Thakkar found general Hindu feeling in favour of Pact hence Pact approved by Cabinet can't be revised.

— BIRLA AND THAKKAR

COPY OF TELEGRAM DATED 26TH DECEMBER, 1932

WLT Ambedkar, Indian Conference, London.

Bengal Depressed Classes accept Poona Settlement so do Hindus Council
Hindus representation *malafide* perverse.—MULLICK.

(13)

**Dr. B. S. Moonje, Mr. B. C. Chatterjee, Mr. J. Bannerjee,
Mr. G. A. Gavai, Rai Saheb Meherchand Khanna, Mr. R. M.
Deshmukh, Mr. Bhai Parmanand and Pandit Nanak Chand, on
behalf of the Hindu Mahasabha**

*8813. *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar* : I just want to ask one or two questions of Dr. Moonje, to start with. Dr. Moonje, you have been asked certain questions by Sir Nripendra Sircar about the meeting that was called by Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya in Bombay to discuss what could be done with regard to the question that was raised by the fast of Mahatma Gandhi. I just want to ask you one or two questions in order to bring out the details. You were present at the first conference which took place in Bombay under the presidency of Pandit Malviya on 19th September 1932.

Dr. Moonje : Yes.

8814. *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar* : At that meeting, as you know, a small Sub-Committee was appointed ?

Dr. Moonje : Yes.

8815. *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar* : Consisting of the representatives of the Depressed Classes and of the caste-Hindus, including Mr. Jayakar, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and others ?

Dr. Moonje : Yes.

8816. *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar* : That Sub-Committee went over to Poona to discuss the question ?

Dr. Moonje : Yes.

8817. *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar* : Because they thought it would be very desirable to be near Mahatma Gandhi when the matter was being discussed. The Poona Pact was arrived at Poona as a result of the deliberations of the Sub-Committee, in agreement with Mahatma Gandhi ?

Dr. Moonje : Yes.

8818. *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar* : Then the main Hindu Committee which had appointed this Sub-Committee met again in Bombay on the 25th September ?

Dr. Moonje : It may be. I was not present

8819. *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar* : At that meeting the Pact was put to the vote and passed : is that not so ?

Dr. Moonje : I am glad that Dr. Ambedkar has given me an opportunity of explaining all the details.

8820. *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar* : Do you know that of your own knowledge ?

Dr. Moonje : I can give the details which I, personally, know.

*Minutes of Evidence, Vol. II-C, 31st July 1933, pp. 1425-34.