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***ON THE BOMBAY UNIVERSITY ACT AMENDMENT BILL : 4**

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: Sir, I rise to support this amendment. If I had agreed with the views which my honourable friend Mr. Munshi holds on university reforms and the functions of the university, I would certainly not have risen to support this amendment. But I find that both as a person who takes an interest in university reform and as one coming from the backward communities I am in fundamental disagreement with my honourable friend Mr. Munshi. Sir, my honourable friend Mr. Munshi seems to hold that the University is merely a body for the purpose of making statutes and regulations, that it is a body which is merely concerned with holding examinations, and with providing post-graduate courses in University Departments of Education to be started under this Bill. Sir, I think that that is a very narrow view of the University. One of the fundamental functions of the University, as I understand it, is to provide facilities for bringing the highest education to the doors of the needy and the poor. I do not think that any University in any civilised country can justify its existence if it merely deals with the problems of examinations and the granting of degrees. Now, if it is the duty of a modern university to provide facilities for the highest education to the backward communities, I think it will be accepted as a corollary that the backward communities should have some control in the University affairs. Sir, I look upon the University primarily as a machinery, whereby educational facilities are provided to all those who are intellectually capable of using those facilities to the best advantage, but who cannot avail themselves of those facilities for want of funds or for other handicaps in life. Now, Sir, it is said that the University is primarily a concern of the intelligentsia and of the educated classes, and that as the University is to function properly it is necessary that it should be controlled by what are called the educated classes. I would accept that principle, if the educated classes who are going to control the University possessed what we called social virtues. If they, for instance, sympathised with the aspirations of the lower classes, if they

*B.L.C. Debates, Vol. XXI, pp. 414-16, dated 5th October 1927. This speech was in support of the amendment to the Bombay University Bill moved by Mr. Noor Mohmed to raise the number of nominated senators from 40 to 50.

recognised that the lower classes had rights, if they recognised that those rights must be respected, then probably we, coming from the backward communities, might well entrust our destinies to what are called the advance communities. But, Sir, for centuries we have had the bitterest experience of the rule of what are called the higher and the educated classes, Sir, I think it is hardly to the credit of the advanced classes that there should exist in this country a large part of the population which is known as the criminal tribes. It is certainly not to their credit that there should exist in this country a population which is regarded untouchable. Surely, they could have raised the status of the depressed classes, they could have raised the status of the criminal classes. They could have brought their culture to us and made us equal to them, if they had only the desire to do so. But they have never done so in the past and do not mean to do anything in that direction in future. By their callous neglect of us and by their active hostility to our progress they have convinced us that they are really our enemies. There is no doubt that it is their desire to keep us where we are. I do not wish to refer to the debate that has gone on for the last few days. But there is not the slightest doubt about the fact that the opposition benches which looked upon Government as their enemy sided with it now with the sole object of defeating us on this vital question. There is no other excuse for their conduct except that they wanted to defeat the claims of the backward communities for representation through nomination. It is for that reason that they have joined Government whom they opposed in season and out of season. Sir, can we have any trust in an intelligentsia so narrow, so illiberal in its views.

My honourable friend, Mr. Munshi said that if it had been a question of division of any material benefits he would probably consent to the introduction of communal representation on the Senate. But I wish to remind him that the backward classes have come to realise that after all education is the greatest material benefit for which they can fight. We may forego material benefits, we may forego material benefits of civilization, but we cannot forego our right and opportunity to reap the benefit of the highest education to the fullest extent. That is the importance of this question from the point of view of the backward classes who have just realized that without education their existence is not safe. It is for this reason that the fight for increase of seats is being made.

There is another point to which I wish to refer. It has been stated several times that since the principals in the different colleges have been given separate representation it will not be necessary to increase the number of nominated seats, because, if the principals had not been given direct representation on the University, Government would have been obliged to use at least 10 seats to make for them. And that as separate provision has now been made for them the whole number of 40 seats will go to the backward classes. Now, Sir, I submit that it is for that very reason that the number of the nominated seats should be increased for ensuring adequate

representation of the backward classes. It can never be guaranteed to us that the principals of different colleges who have got direct representation as a result of the amendment of the honourable member Mr. Hamill would necessarily be friends of the backward communities. I have had sufficient experience of these principals, and I am sure that those who will be elected to the Senate will be from the upper classes and they will never come to the rescue of the backward classes who are clamouring for education. If the Honourable Minister had added 10 seats more to the strength of the upper classes in the Senate he should come to the rescue of the backward communities and equalize the balance. That can be done only by adding 10 more seats to the seats that have already been provided in the bill. Sir, we have expressed our fears and our doubts. I think it is only fair that in a matter like this, where the feelings of the backward communities are so high and where they think that their interest will not be safeguarded unless they get representation on the Senate, Government should consider whether it is proper that Government should use its official force to put the backward classes at the mercy of the upper classes. I think it would be wise and I appeal to the Honourable the Leader of the House to leave this question to the free vote of this House. Let the House decide in any way it likes best. With these remarks I support the amendment.

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