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*ON THE HEREDITARY OFFICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL: 2

*(Discussion on Bill No. XII of 1928, a Bill further to amend the
Bombay Hereditary Offices Act, 1874, resumed)*

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: Sir, I am very much thankful, indeed to the non-official members of this House for the very warm and whole-hearted support which they have given to this measure. Sir, the debate has not disclosed that the opponents of this bill have made out any case against it and I do not think, therefore, that it is necessary on my part at this stage to enter into any details in reply to the objections that they have registered, All that they have done is to raise and place before this House certain matters, what we call “matters of prejudice”, something which does not touch the intrinsic merits of the bill itself. Sir, I have admitted in my opening speech that the bill has no doubt probably certain defects, as is pointed out by a few of the honourable members opposite, and I made it plain in my opening speech that I leave an open door to the select committee to make such amendments that they may desire to make. I make no objections on that score.

An Honourable Member: Amendments even of principle ?

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: Such amendments that the select Committee may want to make, even of principle; I have no objection at all. Any amendments that the select committee may desire to make.

Sardar G. N. Mujumdar: Even of principle ?

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: Yes, I would much rather leave this bill in the hands of the select committee made up of non-official members of this House than leave it to the tender mercies of the officials. That I am prepared to do. Let the fate of the bill be what it may, but I leave it to the non-official members of the select committee of this House. Sir, I do not think that this procedure is going to inconvenience the Honourable the Revenue Member. Sir, I do not wish to incorporate into this bill any allegations or accusations against the official members. But I am constrained to say this, that they have certainly not treated this subject with the same urgency and with the same importance or with the same concern with which the

*B.L.C. Debates, Vol. XXIII, pp. 791-93, dated 4th August 1928.

depressed classes have viewed this bill. I remember a resolution was placed before this House in February 1923 discussing specifically same part of the provisions of this bill. The whole of that resolution was looked upon with the utmost favour by the non-official members of that House. The Honourable the Revenue Member then induced the member in charge of the resolution to withdraw it on the express understanding that he would institute immediate enquiries into the matter. Sir, four or five years have elapsed since that date, but no enquiry has been made at all. Sir, again a resolution was moved by my predecessor in the year 1925 raising the same issue which this bill raises. Then again, the honourable mover of the resolution was induced, to withdraw the resolution by the Government on the specific understanding that they would make enquiries into this matter. But nothing has been done. I do not think that it can lie in the mouth of my honourable friend the Revenue Member, that this bill is in any way a surprise sprung upon him. The provisions of this bill, that is, the demands that the depressed classes are making in the matter of their watan, are before him for a long time. If he really wanted to arm himself with facts and figures, if he really wanted to formulate his own proposals in substitution of the proposal which I have made, I submit, Sir, that he has sufficient time on his hands to do so. He has not availed himself of that opportunity which he had. All the same, I am prepared to offer him another opportunity and I say this, that if the bill goes to the select committee, I am prepared to move that the select committee shall make this report some time in June next; so that my honourable friend will have practically nine or ten months in between to make enquiries, to appoint any separate committee he wants to do of persons whom he regards as experts. He may thereby be in a position to formulate his own proposals and come before the select committee and move them by way of amendments. I have no objection to that, and if my honourable friend accepts that, I am perfectly willing to adopt that course. It is for him to say. But, as I said at the very beginning I am prepared to leave this measure in the hands of the select committee constituted of this House. I am not prepared to leave this measure to the official side. That is, Sir, what I want to say in reply.

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