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*ON VILLAGE PANCHAYATS BILL : 4

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: Sir, may I have a word of explanation ? I have not followed what you said. I understood you to say that at the third reading of a Bill an honourable member could not oppose the Bill on a point, if that point was not taken or if he was defeated on that point at the second reading. Am I correct ? If a point was not taken at the second reading, or if on a particular issue, at the second reading, a particular member or a minority was defeated in this House, the same minority could not oppose the third reading of the Bill on the same point. Is that it, Sir ?

The Honourable the President: No, no. The honourable member was not here when I gave my ruling when for the first time the occasion arose some days ago in this session. I shall repeat it for his benefit. The honourable member, as a constitutional lawyer, knows very well that there are three readings given to a Bill. There is the first stage of the Bill, namely, the first reading, when the principles of the Bill are discussed. After that, if the Bill is referred to a select committee, the House is in a position to criticise the Bill as it emerges out of the select committee, or if it is not referred to a select committee, at the second reading when the Bill is taken up clause by clause, changes are made. All those steps that honourable members have got to take they can take at the second reading. Now there may be other honourable members like the honourable member himself. He was not present perhaps throughout the second reading of this Bill. He now comes at the third reading. He can oppose the Bill if the features of the Bill as it passed from the first reading to the second reading have been changed at the clause by clause reading stage and he takes objection to it. Then he can oppose the third reading at the third stage, pointing to certain features which have come into existence at the second reading which are objectionable to him. That is all. Otherwise, the three stages would lose their significance. At the close of each stage, when the question is put, honourable members who _are opposed to the measure can oppose it at every stage, provided they confine themselves at the first reading to the principles, at the second reading to the details, and at the third reading to the changes in the various aspects of the Bill which have been made since and which are objectionable. That is my ruling, I do not prevent any honourable member from opposing the third reading. For instance, there was the honourable member Rao Saheb Kulkarni. He had tabled several amendments which were defeated, and he

*B.L.C. Debates, Vol. XXXVII, pp. 2197-98, dated 24th March 1933.

has opposed the third reading on those very grounds again. He said that he opposed the Bill because it does not go far enough, that he had tabled amendments which were defeated or not taken into consideration, and that he now, at the third reading, opposed it because it is not quite satisfactory from his point of view. Similarly, any honourable member, whether he has tabled any amendments or not, can oppose it at the third reading, but he must confine himself to the changes made or not made in the second reading, and not go back to the first reading and evoke the same discussion over again as regards the general principles, for which the proper time was the first reading stage.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: I suppose, Sir, your remarks are confined to the use of the arguments, and not the points. I shall put it in a different manner. Suppose, for instance, I take my own case. I oppose the Bill on certain principles. I say that the principles on which this Bill is based are wrong, and that the House by a majority carried the Bill is against me and against those honourable members who share my views. Am I not entitled to oppose the third reading of this Bill because the Bill retains the principles which I opposed at the first reading ?

The Honourable the President: No, that is my ruling. The honourable member cannot do it, and he would not be within his rights to do it, because he had opportunity to do that before the third reading.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: Going a bit further, suppose I was also defeated at the second reading of the Bill, and the House still carried the Bill with the original principles embodied in it, would I not be entitled to oppose the third reading of the Bill, on the ground that the provisions to which I am opposed are still retained in the Bill ?

The Honourable the President: No, I will stick to my ruling. He cannot do it, because he had his views laid before the House and the majority decided against him. We are now at the stage of the third reading. Otherwise, the three stages would have no significance.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: After your ruling, Sir, the only thing for the minorities who have opposed the Bill at all stages is to vote against it. Otherwise, it would be that if the majority decided that it was a good thing and the minority opposed it, the minority would have no opportunity of recording its objection.

The Honourable the President: That is perfectly right. The minority is entitled to vote against the third reading of the Bill. They can go to a division and record their vote against it. But to raise a debate on matters which have been decided at the first reading would be wrong.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: Exactly, Sir. Your proposition does not lead to the conclusion that our rights are debarred.

The Honourable the President: No, that is right.

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