

26

***ON LOCAL BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL : 2**

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: Sir, I would like to ask whether the mover of the amendment has voted in this division, if you can tell from the report that has been submitted to you ?

The Honourable Mr. B. G. Kher: May I know whether it is the right of any honourable member to know in what particular way a person has voted?

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: The reason why divisions are called is because not only the House but the public at large should know how members have voted.

The Honourable the Speaker: I cannot be expected to read the list of all members who have voted, just for the information of one honourable member.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: This House is entitled to know on which side the honourable mover of the amendment has voted, because I think I may say that the House is entitled to know whether any particular member has abused the process of this House.

The Honourable the Speaker: I think that, in the light of what has fallen from the honourable member Dr. Ambedkar, before I give out the name, I must clarify the position and it is this ; that the mover of the amendment, Mr. Phadake, moved his amendment from the point of view of abolition of separate electorates for the Muhammadan community. The same amendment was tabled by the honourable member Mr. Chundrigar with the object of doing away with the option which the Bill proposes to give to the Muhammadan community keeping intact the separate electorates. So, in this particular instance what has happened is that though the amendments in form and wording, of both these honourable members have been the same, the object of each was different It was only an accident that the honourable member Mr. Phadake's amendment came to be taken up for discussion and therefore the honourable member Mr. Chundrigar was not able to move his amendment. If the honourable member Mr. Chundrigar's amendment had been moved, the honourable member Mr. Phadake's amendment would not have been moved, and perhaps the difficulty which

*B.L.A. Debates, Vol. 2, pp. 501-02, dated 22nd January 1938.

the honourable member Mr. Phadake might be deemed to have been placed in at present, might have been felt by the honourable member Mr. Chundrigar. So, with this explanation, I think I shall say, on referring to the division list, whether the honourable member Mr. Phadake has voted at all and, if so, whether he has voted for the Ayes or for the Noes.

Mr. Ismail I. Chundrigar: May I clear a possible misunderstanding, Sir? It is not correct to say that I did not move my amendment. As a matter of fact, Sir, you ruled that it was not necessary for me to move my amendment as an amendment in the same words was already moved by the honourable member Mr. Phadake.

The Honourable the Speaker: I did not intend to say that the honourable member Mr. Chundrigar declined to move or that he was not anxious to move his amendment. Not that. He was anxious to move; but it has been the practice in this House that when the same motion is moved by a number of members, only one moves it for the sake of convenience; not that Mr. Chundrigar declined to move it.

Now, I find that the honourable member Mr. Phadake, the mover of the amendment, I again repeat, with the object of the abolition of separate electorates, and having found that his first amendment was lost and that separate electorates do continue, has voted against the amendment.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: I would like to ask one more question and ask your ruling in the matter, whether it is open to a member of the House, who has moved an amendment, to vote against it.

The Honourable the Speaker: I think the point to my mind is obvious. It is always open to a person to change his mind up to the last (Laughter).

*

*

*

*

*

†*Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (Bombay City):* I am very sorry, but I think I cannot help saying that this is a matter on which the wishes of this group ought to have prevailed with Government. Nobody would have been hurt, the interests of the country would not have been injured if the amendment moved by my honourable friend Mr. Gaikwad had been accepted. In view of the fact that Government wishes to use its majority in a tyrannical manner, I am afraid we must show our dissatisfaction by walking out in a body and not participating further in the day's proceedings.

The Honourable Mr. B. G. Kher: I hope the honourable member (Dr. Ambedkar) will give me an opportunity of saying a few words.

It is a very sad commentary that feeling in this country, where even the slightest question of caste or creed is concerned, is so very touchy. As the honourable the Leader of the Independent Labour Party knows, since a long time an attempt has been made to take away from currency in our language the words "Asprishya", because the very idea is a reminder of the most painful associations, of what has been universally now admitted to be a stain on Hinduism. I quite agree with the honourable member Mr. Gaikwad

†B.L.A. Debates, Vol. 2, pp. 510-12, dated 22nd January 1938.

that by merely changing the name we will not achieve this object. The present section is an attempt in that direction. To remove the question of untouchability. We tried an alternative expression; we wanted to say "Parishishta Varga". But "Parishishta Varga" is the translation of the English expression "Scheduled class", and we thought that "Parishishta Varga" would be a very inappropriate expression to introduce into the Marathi language. If instead of using the English expression "Scheduled Classes", we wanted to have a synonym for that expression, we had to accept this expression "Parishishta Varga" as the only alternative to denote what class was meant. I can quite understand, feeling as they do, that they do not like any attempt to differentiate them from the rest of the Hindus, but even for the purpose of legislation, to achieve this result even for bettering the condition of this class, we have to designate them as apart from the other Hindus—we may call them Asprishya or by any other name, and the fewer the expressions we use to differentiate and classify as different such a large body of Hindus the better; but I know that since the last 4 or 5 years the word "Harijan" has now gained a currency in the whole if not in the whole of the country, at least in many parts of the country. This is an attempt to substitute a word for the expression "scheduled class" which ought to have met with the approval of the honourable member, the Leader of the Independent Labour Party. It is extremely unfortunate that he does not look at this question in that light, but if he suggests an alternative which is suitable for the expression "scheduled class", I do expect it will be possible to spare his feelings. In the alternative, I do appeal to him, at any rate, to read into this section no desire to hurt the feelings of a large class of people, who are unfortunately known as "untouchables", but merely a desire to recognise an expression which has, for such a long time, gained currency would appeal to him not to see in the word "Harijan" and in the definition, an attempt to cast any reflection on his community.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: Sir, as you have ruled that this is not an occasion for making speeches, I will not make any speech. All that I will say is this that I am not in a position to suggest any better name, but I must say that the name "Harijan" has now become practically equivalent to the term "Asprishya"; beyond that there is nothing remaining in that name, and I would think that if the Honourable the Prime Minister had felt in the same way in which we feel that the word "Harijan" has now become identical with the expression "scheduled class" then it was his duty, for the moment, to have withdrawn that word, and later on he could have discussed the matter with us with a view to find out some alternative term. His arguments, however, have not carried any conviction to us. I will, therefore, leave the Hall.

(Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and other members of the Independent Labour Party then walked out of the House.)