D

EVIDENCE OF Dr. AMBEDKAR BEFORE THE INDIAN STATUTORY COMMISSION ON 23rd OCTOBER 1928

INDIAN STATUTORY COMMISSION, POONA*

Dated 23rd October 1928

PRESENT

ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION, OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE (EXCEPT RAJA NAWAB ALI KHAN) AND OF THE BOMBAY PROVINCIAL COMMITTEE

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (a member of the Bombay Committee) and Dr. P. G. Solanki (representing the Depressed Classes), called and examined.

Chairman : Just to remind my colleagues, the documents we should have before us are : Dr. Ambedkar's Statement on behalf of the Depressed Classes' Institute of Bombay and the Joint Memorandum of the Depressed Indian Association, Bombay, and the Servants of Somavamshi Society. Dr. Ambedkar has changed his seat, because he is acting for the moment as one of our witnesses. Dr. Ambedkar, of course, we know as a member of the Bombay Committee. I think, Dr. Solanki, you or your Association is responsible for the other document ?

Dr. Solanki : I concur in the document submitted by Dr. Ambedkar.

2. I should like you to begin, Dr. Ambedkar, by helping us as to the sort of number of depressed classes in this Presidency. Can you help us about that?

Dr. Ambedkar : I find that the depressed class population, as computed in the Memorandum submitted by the Government of Bombay is estimated at 1,478,390 as may be seen from page 3 of their Memorandum (Vol. VII).

3. Let us see. They say, "The depressed classes, which include mostly the Dheds, Mangs, Mahars and Holiyas, number, according to the Census

*Indian Satutory Commission, Vol. XVI. Selections from Memoranda and Oral Evidence, Part I, published by His Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1930, p. 52-75. This Commission is popularly known after its Chairman Sir John Simon.

of 1921, 1,478,390 approximately." What do you say about that figure?

Dr. Ambedkar : As you will see. the figure I have given on page 39 of my Memorandum is about 28 lakhs.

4. You think the number should be about 2,800,000 ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

5. How does the discrepancy arise ?

Dr. Ambedkar : The first thing I should like to say is this, that the figures given by the Government of Bombay are taken, I believe, from the Census of India, 1921, Vol. 8, Bombay Presidency, Part II, the tables starting on page 176, while the figures which I give in my memorandum are from Chapter 11 of Vol. 1 of the Census of India, 1921. These are the figures estimated by the Director of Census, who has collected the figures of the different Provinces, and his computations, which I have taken bodily, are given on page 39 of my memorandum under the heading "Population of the Depressed Classes in India", and show the figures for the different Provinces, giving the population of the depressed classes in each. Now, as we see, there is this discrepancy between the two sets of figures. These figures of course, can never be exact, neither the Provincial nor the Central figures. In fact, if the Conference will refer to the remarks of the Director of the Census of India, which I commence quoting on page 39 of my memorandum, it will be seen that, after giving the total estimated population of the depressed classes he goes on to say (page 39 of memorandum, in italics)*, "This, however, must be taken as a low and conservative estimate since it does not include (1) the full strength of the castes and tribes concerned, and (2) the tribal aborigines most recently absorbed in Hinduism, many of whom are considered impure. We may confidently place the numbers of the depressed classes, all of whom are considered impure, at something between 55 and 60 millions in India proper." Then he gives the figures for each province.

6. Would you mind if I just try to clear my own mind, not by reference to precise figures, but by contrasting two conceptions ? It is manifest that if some authorities, speaking with the precision of Census returns, give a total like 1,478,000, and other authorities, also speaking with precision, give a figure like 2,800,000, the second authorities must be including people not included by the first ?

Dr. Ambedkar : That is so, and I should, therefore, like to point out to the Conference that the provincial figures do not include certain castes which are, as a matter of fact, untouchable castes.

7. May we put it like this ? See if I have it correct, and if I have not please tell me. I have been studying it as well as I can, although I have been looking forward to your help and that of Dr. Solanki. In one sense of the term, by "Depressed Classes" you might mean untouchables in the sense of persons who are Hindus, but who are denied access to the Hindu temples,

**See* para. 7, Quotation paragraph 193 at pages 436-37 of this book.

might you not ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

8. In another sense you might include in the "Depressed Classes" not only those people whom I have described, but also the criminal tribes, the hill tribes and other people who no doubt are very low in the scale, but who are not, perhaps, in the narrower sense untouchables from the point of view of the Hindus hierarchy ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Quite.

9. Is not that a possible view ?

Dr. Ambedkar : That is a possible view.

10. Is not that the real explanation of why in some connections you get a certain figure for the depressed classes, meaning untouchables, persons who are refused admission to the Hindu temples, whereas on the other hand you sometimes get a bigger figure which would include these criminal and hill tribes ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I do not think that is so in this case, because the figures I have given seem to have reference to the depressed classes as distinct from the hill tribes and the criminal tribes.

11. Let me point this out to you. I have before me these three figures. I have got a figure of 1,478,000 odd for untouchables taken from the Census of 1921, and made up of these Mahars, Dheds and other people. Then I have a long list of criminal tribes and so on, which adds up to 589,000—just over half a million. Then I have a third list of aboriginals and hill tribes—Bhils, and people of that sort—and they add up to another million. If you were to add the aboriginal and criminal tribes in with the first figure, you would get a total approximately like the larger figure you give of 2,800,000 ?

Dr. Ambedkar : The quotation I reproduce on page 39 of my memorandum from the remarks of the Directors of the Census gives me the impression that his figures are strictly for the depressed classes. My feeling is that the figures computed by the Director of the Census and referred to by him in the paragraph which I quote on page 39 of my memorandum are figures which apply only to the depressed classes.

12. ..... I see that the Director of the Census of India for 1921 says this : "It has been usual in recent years to speak of a certain section of the community as the 'Depressed Classes'—so far as I am aware the term has no final definition, nor is it certain exactly whom it covers." Then he refers to some educational criticisms. That is the passage you mean ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, and "The total population classed according to these lists as depressed amounted to 31 million persons or 19 per cent. of the Hindu and tribal population of British India." That remark would appear to exclude the tribal people from the depressed classes.

13. I do not know. Anyhow, that is one possible explanation, and I think you agree a possible explanation is that the smaller figure is the figure of untouchables in the sense I have tried to define. I think you agree

that is a possible view. It is manifest that for many purposes those interested in trying to promote the advancement and elevation of those who are most depressed may very well include in their survey a wider number of persons, including the criminal and hill tribes. That is a possibility ?

Dr. Ambedkar : It is a possibility.

14. I should like to suggest to you another possible view. I do not know if it qualifies it. On page 39 of your document you point out, quite accurately, I think, that if you add the provincial figures together you get something like 55 to 60 millions in India proper ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

15. "India proper" there, I think, would include the Indian States?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, I thought of that, but I would point out one thing. He seems to exclude the Indian States, because he gives a separate figure for Baroda.

16. Perhaps he mentions one or two of the larger ones ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Probably. Qualification of the figures.

17. We do not, of course, want to spend too long on the statistical point, because, after all, whether the right figure to take is 1½ million or 2 millions or *2½* millions, it is obvious, it is a very large number of people, and they are people who deserve our very special consideration ?

Dr. Ambedkar : One point I wish to mention is this, that the figures from which the provincial figures are computed are in the table which deals only with the principal Indian castes. It is not an exhaustive table, and I find by going over the different castes which are mentioned in this table that it does not give any figures whatsoever for ten castes, which are undoubtedly castes. They are not included in the principal Indian castes.

18. What I was going to suggest, if it was agreeable to you both, was this. You have called attention to the main considerations with regard to the figures and, without fixing absolutely the right figures, I think it would be well to get rid of this figures point as quickly as possible and then we can get to the question of considering the position and treatment of these classes ; otherwise we may occupy a long time on arithmetic. I have asked what I want to put about it, and I am quite prepared to take it that if you apply a narrower test you may get a figure of 1½ millions, but that with a wider test you will get a figure of between 2 and 3 millions. I accept that from you, as I follow it ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, with this qualification, that the Bombay figures do not include ten of the castes.

Chairman : We want to get to the real point, which is their representation. Is there anyone who wants to occupy time on this statistical point ? Are you content, Mr. Rajah, that we should take it the figures are something of that sort ?

Rao Bahadur Rajah : Which figures ?

Chairman : Do not you think we might proceed with the really important question, which is their representation, leaving it like this, that in the Bombay

Presidency the Census of 1921 gives a figure of 1½ millions, but it would appear that those are the depressed classes in the narrower sense I have mentioned, the untouchables from the point of view of religion, but that, as Dr. Ambedkar has pointed out, the official figures really show, if you take a rather wider but perfectly legitimate view, that the true figure may be between 2 and 3 millions. Is not that fair ?

Rao Bahadur Rajah: Yes, that is right.

Chairman : Does anybody want to add anything about that ?

19. *Colonel Lane Fox :* On which figure are the two memoranda which we have received based ? In each memorandum you ask for special representation for the depressed classes. You ask for adult suffrage in one memorandum, and you ask for special recruitment for the army and navy and so on. It is obvious it is a bigger thing if you ask for it for the aborigines and criminal tribes and so on. Are these privileges asked for the bigger figure or for the smaller ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I ask for them for the depressed classes.

20. For the aborigines and criminal classes also ?

Dr. Ambedkar : No. I do not think it would be possible to allow them the privilege of adult suffrage.

21. But you quote the bigger figure ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I am not accepting altogether the fact that the figure which I have given in my memorandum covers the aborigines and the hill tribes. I still hold to the view that on a fair computation the figure I have given is largely the figure for the depressed classes I admit only the possibility of the other view.

Chairman : There is only one thing I might add. Sir Arthur Froom may be able to confirm it. I notice the Muddiman Committee (Reforms Enquiry Committee, 1925) in the table subjoined to para. 64 of their Report, give the figure at 2,800,000.

22. *Sir Hari Singh Gour :* Dr. Ambedkar, would you regard "depressed classes" and "untouchables" as synonymous terms ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

23. In asking for special representation for the depressed classes you confine yourselves to the untouchables ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

24. You say that some aborigines are not untouchables'?

Dr. Ambedkar : In some parts they may be. I do not propose to speak on their behalf.

25. They are not untouchables. The criminal tribes are not untouchables ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Some of them are.

26. Some, but as a tribe they are not ?

Dr. Ambedkar : The criminal tribes have so little social intercourse with the rest of the Hindus that there is no basis for any definite opinion on that point, but if they did have such intercourse I think they would be regarded as untouchables.

27. There are certain classes which stand midway between touchability and untouchability ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I would rather say they were lower down than the untouchables.

28. No, higher up in the social ladder there is a class which is semi-untouchable ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I cannot say. My point is this, that with respect to the criminal tribes we have no data for forming an opinion as to whether they are untouchable or not, because there is very little intercourse between the main body of Hindus and the criminal tribes.

29. Leave out of account the criminal tribes and aborigines ; I am now dealing with the untouchables. Among the untouchables themselves there are degrees ; there are certain among them who may be regarded as only semi-untouchable ?

Dr. Ambedkar : (Both witnesses) No.

30. I will give you an example. What is the position of the Chambhar ?

Dr. Ambedkar : He is entirely untouchable.

31. As much as the Mahar ?

Dr. Ambedkar ; Yes.

32. Are you certain of that ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, if you apply this test of common water, or of entering a temple.

33. No, by untouchability I mean whose touch will pollute a high caste Hindu ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Well, you can take entering a temple or taking water as a test.

Chairman: After all, we are engaged here primarily in a constitutional and political inquiry. Social customs and deep-rooted religious traditions are not things which are likely to be removed between night and morning by any commission; that is obvious enough. It really comes to this, that in one sense the depressed classes meaning the untouchables, will be those classes who are denied all access to Hindu temples, and who, it is suggested, are deprived very often of the use of schools, of dharmashalas and things of that sort. In addition to those, speaking politically and constitutionally, we shall all agree there are others, not very advanced in the scale of civilisation, such as Sir Hari Singh Gour has referred to—criminal tribes, hill tribes and so on—who are also inhabitants of India and as such demand our attention.

Sir Hari Singh Gour: The Hindus are divided into four castes. The Sudras cannot get into the temples . .....

Chairman: I think we all appreciate that. However, we are not engaged in making laws for the Hindu religion, but in considering the structure of the constitution of British India, which is a very different thing.

34. Taking that figure, what is it that you want to represent as the proper way in which the constitution of India, and more particularly the

constitution of the Bombay Presidency, should deal with these people ?

Dr. Ambedkar : The first thing I would like to submit is that we claim that we must be treated as a distinct minority, separate from the Hindu community. Our minority character has been hitherto concealed by our inclusion in the Hindu community, but as a matter of fact there is really no link between the depressed classes and the Hindu community. The first point, therefore, I would stress before the Conference is that we must be regarded as a distinct and independent minority. Secondly, I should like to submit that the depressed classes minority needs far greater political protection than any other minority in British India, for the simple reason that it is educationally very backward, that it is economically poor, socially enslaved, and suffers from certain grave political disabilities, from which no other community suffers. Then I would submit that, as a matter of demand for our political protection, we claim representation on the same basis as the Mahomedan minority. We claim reserved seats if accompanied by adult franchise.

35. And if there is no adult franchise ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Then we would ask for separate electorates. Further, we would like to have certain safeguards either in the constitution, if it is possible, or else in the way of advice in the instrument to the Governor regarding the education of the depressed classes and their entry into the public services.

36. May we just ask Dr. Solanki if he agrees in those points ?

Dr. Solanki: I agree with all the points.

37. Then we may take it that that is the view of both you gentlemen ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

38. Would it be convenient if I asked a question of two on these points as we go ? You claim that the depressed class, although included within Hinduism in a sense, should none the less be regarded from the point of view of the constitution as a distinct and separate community from others who are within Hinduism ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

39. Is that on the ground that in your view the depressed classes cannot expect to have their interests satisfactorily represented by the higher ranks of Hinduism ?

Dr. Ambedkar: That is one ground, but a matter of fact, really we cannot be deemed to be part of the Hindu community.

40. You come, I believe from an earlier set of inhabitants of this continent ?

Dr. Ambedkar : That is one view, I think.

41. It is supposed — we will not go into details — that you are pre-Aryan ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Well, I do not know. That is a view.

* * * * *

43. I only ask you the question because there are some very distinguished Hindu public men — I do not mention any names — who have undoubtedly exhibited a good deal of interest in the case of the depressed classes. There is no question about that ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, there is a great deal of public talk.

44. I know ; but, at any rate, that is your view : You say you must be regarded as a distinct and separate community from the constitutional point of view ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

45. As regards representation, I notice that whether there is adult franchise, or whether there is not adult franchise, you seem to be abandoning any idea of nomination, you want election ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

46. Is that the view of both of you ?

Dr. Solanki : Yes.

47. That means, of course, that you have to make a list of voters ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

48. And you have to make sure that the man who comes to vote is the man on the list, and nobody else ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

49. Could you give me an estimate at all, Dr. Ambedkar, of what percentage of the population whom you call the depressed classes can read ?

Dr. Ambedkar : In a separate memorandum which I have submitted to the Commission on education in the Bombay Presidency I gave the figures.

50. I am afraid it is a very small proportion ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Quite.

51. After all, one of the complaints that are made is that they have not had as free access to schools as more fortunate people ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Quite so.

52. So it would mean, would it not, if it was done by election, that it would almost entirely have to be done by people voting who could not themselves understand the ballot paper ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes. That is true of the majority of voters even today.

53. True. Now, would you tell me how many reserved seats in the Bombay Presidency you would suggest classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: In the scheme that I have prepared I say out of 140 we claim 22 seats.

54. What you suggest is that if the total number of members of the Bombay Council, all elected, was 140, then you think that the body for which you wish to speak should have 22 elective seats ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

55. And supposing, to take your other alternative, there is no adult franchise, then you are asking for separate electorates. Do you still want 22 seats ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

56. The only other thing I will ask you is this. I think Mr. Rajah probably will be glad to put a few questions himself to bring out the social condition. At present I think, in the Bombay Legislative Council there are two members, are there not, who are nominated to represent the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar : That is so.

57. You yourself being one of them ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

58. And Dr. Solanki being the other ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

59. Was that based on the Southborough Committee's Report ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, I believe so.

60. I believe you gave evidence before the Southborough Committee ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

61. I have been reading your evidence before that Committee, and I was looking to see how many members you said there were of the depressed classes. I think you point out in your memorandum, in a note at the bottom of page 39, that the figure of the depressed classes given by the Southborough Committee for the Bombay Presidency was 5,77,000 ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

62. I think your view is that, that was an error ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, a very large error.

63. Can you tell me, as a matter of fact, how they arrived at it ? Do you know at all ?

Dr. Ambedkar : They simply took, I think, a small table with regard to castes which cause pollution.

64. It was taking a still narrower definition of what constituted the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

65. *Mr. Hartshorn:* I notice in this note you say, after referring to the figure of the Southborough Committee of 5,77,000. "According to the authority relied upon by the Southborough Committee, the population of the depressed classes in the Bombay Presidency in 1911 was 2,145,000".

Dr. Ambedkar : In the Census.

66. That is the authority they relied upon ? That was what I wanted to know.

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes. The authority gave two different figures on two different pages, if I remember correctly. On one page they gave the smaller figure, and they took that up, and as soon as the Report of the Southborough Committee was published we protested against this estimate to the Government of Bombay.

67. *Chairman:* I think it is quite clear what the 2,100,000 was. It was the result of adding together in the Census of 1921 the figure given for the untouchables, which as I have said, was 1,478,000, and the figure given

for the criminal tribes, which was something like 623,000. Adding those two together, you would get the 2,100,000 ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

68. And it was leaving out the aboriginal and hill tribes. It must have been ?

Dr. Ambedkar ; Yes.

69. *Mr. Miller :* I should like to ask about the position in some of the Indian States. In Baroda and one other State, I think, where some special facilities are shown, are those special facilities anything beyond education facilities ?

Dr. Ambedkar : No, nothing beyond that.

70. Could you obtain service with the State ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I should think it would be very difficult.

71. You are particularly anxious to get appointments in the public service ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, decidedly.

72. Why is that so ?

Dr. Ambedkar : On that point I should like to say this, that our experience so far as the administration of the law is concerned is very bitter. I wish to say most emphatically that in many cases the law is administered to the disadvantage of the depressed class man. I would like to give a concrete case of what actually happened in one of the districts, without, of course, mentioning names. The Bombay Government annually lets out its forest lands for cultivation to the villages on certain stated terms. Now we discovered that in the allotment of those forest lands the depressed class man, who was often a landless labourer or with very little land, and who was clamouring for some sort of economic stability, never came in for a share. The Mamlatdars, who were really in charge of distributing the lands, showed absolute favouritism to the caste Hindu as against the depressed class man. Last year in one district we organised and sent a deputation to the Assistant Deputy Collector of that district, placing before him our grievances with respect to these forest lands. He issued a circular to the Mamlatdars saying that the applications from the depressed classes should be considered. Now, some of the Mamlatdars, to show they were acting up to the circular, did give some lands to the depressed classes. But we found that they rather fooled us, if I may say so. What they did was, on paper they allotted a very large amount of land to the depressed classes and a very small amount of land to the caste Hindus, but when we came to see actually what was allotted to us we found that the land allotted to the depressed classes was all rocky and unfit for cultivation and the depressed class people would not take it for anything, and the land allotted to the caste Hindus though small, was all rich and fertile. Now I think that is a most fragrant abuse of the administrative power which is entrusted to the officials, and I personally attach far more importance to good administration of law than to more efficient administration of law.

73. *Chairman:* I imagine that the application of what you have told us, which is interesting, to our present inquiry is really this — because, of course, it is no part of the function of this Commission to interfere in day-by-day administration ?

Dr. Ambedkar : No.

74. You are using it as an argument to support your view that the depressed classes should have a full representation ?

Dr. Ambedkar : In the services.

75. That is your point ?

Dr. Ambedkar: That is my point. I will give some instances of what happens in judicial courts actually in this Presidency. I happened to defend a depressed class man in one of the courts, and, to my great surprise, I found that the man had to stand outside the court behind a little window, outside the wall, and he would not come in simply because, he said, "It is all right so far as you are concerned, but after you have left there will be terrible social ostracism if I enter the court"

76. It was the client who did not want to come in ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Who dare not come in.

77. What sort of social ostracism had he in mind ?

Dr. Ambedkar : The social ostracism would be that if he went back to the village there would be the boycott of the shop-keepers; nobody would sell him grain. The villagers would stop his dues as a village servant. He would not be allowed to come into the village. The depressed class people always live on the border of the village, not in the centre or in the midst

78. Your point would be that he was timid about coming into court on this occasion because he thought that afterwards the other people of the village, not his own lot but the others, the caste people, would regard him as having pushed himself in where he should not go ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Certainly—having exceeded the bounds of his social status.

79. That is a single case, is it ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I have had that experience but I think that the existence of a circular of the Bombay High Court to the effect that the depressed classes must be allowed entry in the courts indicates that that is often the case. There must be some reason for that circular.

80. *Mr. Miller:* The only other question, I want to ask is this. If you got these 22 seats in the Council do you think you could bring forward 22 suitable men ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, I think so.

81. *Khan Sahib Abdul Latif :* Would you please enlighten the members of the Conference as to the fate of the minorities in the Bombay Council, when the official bloc is withdrawn for certain reasons ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I quite see that the fate of the minorities would be precarious. It has been precarious.

82. Did the honourable Minister belonging to the advanced class show

any consideration to the project, or the feelings of Mahomedans, non-Brahmins, or depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar : No, not at all.

83. Do the minor communities stand any chance of getting through any legislation in the Bombay Legislative Council, or get any chance to move it?

Dr. Ambedkar : Their chances would be almost nil.

* * * * *

98. *Sardar Mujumdar:* Is it not a fact that different kinds of castes among the depressed classes are known as the depressed classes ; that is to say, there are different kinds of castes even among the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, of course.

99. Can you give me approximately the number of those castes ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I think you will find them in the Census, the different castes enumerated as untouchables.

100. Can you give me any idea of the number of different castes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: About a dozen or so. The Census gives it.

101. How many castes are included in the depressed classes in Bombay ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Almost all the castes.

102. Then the members of the different castes are members of your organisation ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Quite ; it is a general body inclusive of all the depressed classes.

103. So that among the depressed classes are included ail those ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

104. Have you taken into consideration the claims of the Bhils and Wadias and other persons ?

Dr. Ambedkar : No.

105. What do you say about the protection of those minorities ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I think that they also should be allowed some protection by representation.

106. Do you not think that even among the backward classes there are certain communities, who are in a minority ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

106A. Then has the present constitution any provision to protect their interest ?

Chairman: Are these castes to which you refer refused admission to the Hindu temples ?

Sardar Mujumdar: No, they are allowed to go into them.

Chairman: This morning we are really considering the case of untouchables, and persons who are quite outside the Hindu temple scheme. I do not think we can go into the question of the backward classes, who would be admitted to the Hindu temples.

Sardar Mujumdar: What I submit is that there are various minorities

even amongst the backward classes. We are not concerned with the question of suitability; we are here to safeguard the interests of all the minorities.

Chairman: Certainly.

Sardar Mujumdar: It was from that point of view that I asked the question.

Chairman: Let me relieve you at once. India is full of minorities, and you have mentioned some of them; but this morning we are considering the body of people called the depressed classes.

Sardar Mujumdar: Very well, Sir.

107. *Syed Miran Muhammad Shah:* You have just said that you want representation in proportion to what the Mahomedans get ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

108. Do you want them because Mahomedans get them ? Do you see any justice in that ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I see justice in that, I do not quite accept the principle of representation of minorities according to population of the legislature as though it was a museum in which we have only to keep so many specimens of so many communities. A Legislative Council is more than a museum, it is a place where, for instance, social battles have to be fought, privileges have to be destroyed, and rights have to be won. Now, if that is the conception of a Legislative Council, I do not think it at all in the fitness of things to confine the minority to proportional representation according to population, that means you are condemning a minority to be perpetually a minority without the power necessary to influence the actions in the majority.

109. Would you be satisfied if the franchise was reduced to local boards in the rural areas ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Well, I would really insist upon adult suffrage. The lower the franchise the better, on that principle I would accept any lowering, out I certainly would not say I would be content with that.

110. Would you then extend adult suffrage to the aboriginal tribes and to the criminal and hill tribes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, I think so.

111. You would?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

112. Or would you like to exclude them and give them nomination and yourselves adult suffrage ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I will say one thing. With regard to the criminal tribes, it might not be a good thing to give them adult suffrage, because by occupation they are a people who have more the interest of their own particular community in their mind, and they are not very particular as regards the means whereby they earn their living; but I do not think there is any harm in giving aborigines the right to vote.

113. They should be given the right to vote, or should their interests be

protected by nomination ?

Dr. Ambedkar: They should be protected somehow ; I do not much mind how. My feeling is that every man is intelligent enough to understand exactly what he wants. Literacy has not much bearing on this point; a man may be illiterate, none the less he may be very intelligent

114. Do not you think that this separate representation will lead to communal tension ? It is stated that communal tension is due to separate representation and separate electorates. Is that your belief ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Even assuming it does lead to tension I do not see how you can get rid of it. Whether it does lead to tension is questionable, but I do not see in any case how you can get rid of it, having regard to the fact that society is divided into classes and communities.

115. Do not you think it is the root cause of dissension ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I do not think so, but I do say this; as a result of communal representation, the leaders of the communities are less prone to compromise than they would otherwise be. That is my feeling, but I do not think it leads to communal riots, which are due, I think, to something very different

116. *Syed Miran Muhammad Shah:* Would you not suggest that by taking away the official bloc, non-officials may be nominated in order ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I do not want nomination.

117. *Major Attlee:* Are there members of the depressed classes working in industry, in the cotton mills and so on ?

Dr. Ambedkar: All of them. The depressed class men are all labourers.

118. You have not got my point; I am talking of industry. You have members of the depressed classes who work in villages, for the most part in certain occupations. But are there large numbers of the depressed classes engaged in industry ?

Dr. Ambedkar: A very large number.

119.You would have a very large number in a place like Bombay City?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

120. Do they cease in any degree to be untouchable ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No, I should like to point out this. The depressed class man is entirely kept out of the weaving department, the most paying department. He can only enter departments like the throstle department and others.

121. Why?

Dr. Ambedkar: On account of untouchability.

122. When he is working there he is working alongside people of all castes?

Dr. Ambedkar: Not quite. The departments are discriminated according to castes. One department is entirely manned by the depressed classes;

another—say the weaving department—by Mahomedans and caste Hindus.

123. Do they take part in the trade unions ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, they are beginning to do so.

124. With members of the classes above the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

125. I wanted to get this point from you. You put forward a claim for representation of the depressed classes on the basis of numbers. Now, we have claims put forward on a different basis altogether; on, say, the labour basis. You get a cross-division in that way, because a man can be a depressed class man and he can also be a labourer ?

Dr. Ambedkar: He is usually, if not always, a labourer.

126. That is rather a play on words, is not it ? I am speaking of capital and labour, of labour in big- industries, not of the ordinary un-organised labour. I am speaking of organised labour. How are you going to get over the difficulty ? If you are going to have representation by social status in one case and by industry in another, you are going to get a cross-division. How will you get over that ?

Dr. Ambedkar: There will be some provision for organised labour, and the majority of the depressed classes are labourers.

127. *Mr. Hartshorn:* I think, Dr. Ambedkar, you have made it pretty clear that you are in favour of adult suffrage. You say on page 41 of your memorandum, however, "The Sabha would, however, be content if the franchise for the Legislative Council is fixed at the same level as that for the Taluka Local Board in the rural parts and Rs. 3 rental per month in the urban parts of the Presidency." Have you formed any opinion, or are any statistics available to enable us to know to what extent the franchise would be extended on that qualification ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I may tell you that I am myself shaky about that statement. I do not mind admitting that. Such information as I have been able to gather from the depressed classes in the mofussils, however, leads me to believe that the existing taluka local franchise does produce a certain number of voters from the depressed classes.

128. I was not quite thinking of that. Could you tell us the increase in the number of persons who would become voters in the Bombay Presidency if this qualification rather than the present one were adopted ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I do not think I can give you any very definite information on this point.

129. May I revert to a question put to you by Major Attlee ? I gather the depressed classes work in the factories in isolation ?

Dr. Ambedkar: In isolation, yes.

130. They have their own shed and their own department ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Their own department; there are no sheds.

131. Whatever it is, they are separated from the other workers in the factory ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I would rather put it in this way, that certain

departments are exclusively assigned to the depressed classes and certain departments are departments into which they are not allowed to enter.

132. Certain kinds of occupations are forbidden to them ?

Dr. Ambedkar: In the mills, yes.

133. I think you said they are not allowed to go into the weaving department ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

134. If they became members of the same trade union, would the workers in the weaving department decline to allow them in ?

Dr. Ambedkar: They would decline to allow them in. If I may mention one thing, in the recent Bombay strike this matter was brought up prominently by me. I said to the members of the union that if they did not recognise the right of the depressed classes to work all the departments, I would rather dissuade the depressed classes from taking part in the strike. They afterwards consented, most reluctantly, to include this as one of their demands, and when they presented this to the millowners, the millowners very rightly snubbed them and said that if this was an injustice, they certainly were not responsible for it.

135. It is not altogether merely a case of the employers wanting to get cheap labour and confining certain departments to the depressed classes for economic reasons ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No, it is untouchability.

136. Would there be anything of this in the situation ? The better-paid Indian, say, declines to allow the untouchable to come into his department for fear that the effect of their lower wages would be to depress wages in his department ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No. There is no distinction on the basis of wages.

137. That does not come into it at all ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No, not at all.

138. It is merely a question of untouchability ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Quite so.

139. *Mr. Cadogan:* They can be members of the trade union ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

140. *Mr. Premchand:* Can you give me a strict definition of the classes who will be on a special register of the electorate as the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Castes which cause pollution.

141. Is the principle that the lower the standing of a community the greater the electoral advantage it should command over others, justifiable ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

142. If all minorities are granted additional seats, what then will constitute the majority ?

Dr. Ambedkar: If minorities put together make up a majority there is no majority and the question does not arise. There may be class distinctions among the minorities. I can quite conceive the Mahomedans in the Bombay Presidency being divided into two groups, one favouring the capitalists and