

one the labourers.

143. Is not it true that people who are not politically minded or trained are frequently led astray by professional leaders ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I do not know. I have never been a professional leader, so I cannot say.

144. Would not the extension of the franchise to the large majority of the uneducated section of society be fraught with danger and render it liable to abuse ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No, I do not think so.

145. Can you tell me why it is not possible to admit members of the depressed classes to our present schools and colleges without the necessity for a charge on the revenue of the Province ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Because they are hopelessly neglected under the present system.

146. Why is not. it possible to admit members of the depressed classes to our present schools and colleges without the necessity for a charge on the revenues of the Province ?

Dr. Ambedkar: You should ask those who refuse what their reason for refusal is.

147. Refusal of what ?

Dr. Ambedkar: To admit them.

148. To the colleges and schools ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

149. Do you know the Bombay Municipality has passed a rule now ?

Dr. Ambedkar: And you know also of the protest meeting which was held in Bombay.

150. There may have been a protest by one section, but the Municipality has removed all those restrictions ?

Dr. Ambedkar: It remains to be seen how far they will stick to it at the next election.

151. But they have done it, you know ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

152. *Chairman:* Might we know what is the protest meeting to which he refers ?

Dr. Ambedkar: The position is this. Hitherto the Bombay Municipality has had separate schools for the depressed classes in the City of Bombay. Now, under the scheme of compulsory primary education, the Bombay Municipality is compelled to limit the number of schools and bring together the scattered children of the depressed classes into the schools of the caste Hindus as a measure of economy. Naturally, some provision has to be made for water and other amenities for the children who attend. The question arose whether there should be a distinction in the drinking arrangements, whether the untouchables should have separate pots for drinking from the caste Hindus. The Municipality passed a resolution saying "We cannot recognise untouchability in our own schools," and they issued a circular

that there should be no distinction as to drinking pots in their schools. This protest meeting was a meeting held under the presidency of an important Hindu leader of Bombay to protest against that kind of uniform arrangement being made, as being against the Hindu religion.

153. *Mr. Premchand*: Do you know the depressed classes are employed in the weaving departments of the Ahmedabad mills ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I did not know that.

154. I can tell you they are.

Dr. Ambedkar: There again I should like to say one thing, probably they are employed exclusively. I can quite conceive of a situation where, for instance, so many looms are exclusively handed over to the depressed classes. Today there is a proposal also in certain mills that the depressed classes should take charge of the whole of the weaving department, that the millowners should hand it over to them, but you cannot have part depressed classes and part caste Hindus.

155. *Chairman*: The difficulty is the mixture ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

156. *Sir Hari Singh Gour*: What is the view of your Institute in regard to the general scheme of constitutional reform ? Have you formulated any views at all on the subject ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I may tell you this. The depressed classes as such, of course, are not very much interested in constitutional questions ; they are more interested in obtaining the guarantees and protection they require, under whatever form of Government that may come to be. Therefore, I do not think that the depressed classes as such have any definite views as to the form of Provincial Government or the form of the Central Government; but, of course, I have my own individual views as a member of the depressed classes, without these being the views of the depressed classes themselves. It is on that account that nothing is said about the constitution in my memorandum.

157. I am aware of that, and that is why I asked you that question. What are your personal views ?

Dr. Ambedkar: So far as the Provincial Government is concerned, I am in favour of Provincial autonomy.

158. Qualified or unqualified ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I think there might be some safeguards with regard to the transfer of law and order. It is not that I object to the transfer of law and order; I am in favour of the transfer; but still I should like some safeguard. I am not certain today what it should be, but there might be with advantage some safeguard in that respect Barring that, I am in favour (speaking personally) of full Provincial autonomy.

159. What about the Central Government ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I think we might start with dyarchy there.

160. As regards adult suffrage, I suppose you are in favour of adult male and female suffrage ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

161. Do you think that is a practical proposition ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Very practical.

162. Do you think the masses have attained any degree of political consciousness, so as to be able to use that political suffrage with any advantage to their own community ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Speaking only on behalf of the depressed classes. I emphatically maintain that the depressed classes will exercise their vote in a most intelligent manner, speaking for the Bombay Presidency. Having regard to the fact that the canker of untouchability is before their minds every minute of their lives, and having regard to their being alive to the fact that political power is the only solvent of this difficulty, I emphatically maintain that the depressed class voter would be an intelligent voter.

163. Do not you think that, following the example of other countries, those who pay no taxes, having a political existence and possessing political power, will tax those who are already oppressed with heavy taxes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I think that should be so. I do not see anything wrong in it.

164. You see no wrong in the exploitation of the tax paying community ? Is this your own opinion or the opinion of the Institute which you represent ?

Dr. Ambedkar: My own opinion. The Institute has said nothing about it here.

165. Do you think you reflect the general opinion of your Institute in conveying this view to the Commission ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I think that would be the view of all poor communities.

* * * * *

167. *Sir Hari Singh Gour:* In answer to the Chairman, you said the depressed classes must be regarded as a distinct community, a community distinct from the Hindu community. Do you apply that only for electoral purposes, or for all purposes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: They are distinct for all purposes, as a matter of fact

168. Would you class the depressed classes as real Hindus ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I do not care about the nomenclature. It does not matter whether I call myself a Hindu or a non-Hindu, as long as I am outside the pale of the Hindu community.

* * * * *

170. It makes all the difference in the world. If you were outside the pale of Hinduism you would not be subject to Hindu law. You could not, for instance, contract a marriage under the Act 30 of 1923, which has completely abolished all castes so far as the marriage law is concerned between a Hindu and a Mahar, touchable and untouchable. Now, if you go out of that community, out of that social system, and call yourself a non-Hindu, you will be outside the pale of Hindu law to that extent ?

Dr. Ambedkar: It might be.

171. Then by what law would you be governed ?

Dr. Ambedkar: We are governed by the Hindu law, just as, for instance, the Khojas, who are Mahomedans, prefer to be governed by Hindu law so far as the devolution of property is concerned.

172. And you are under the Act 30 of 1923 ; you are under Hindu law ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I do not know what the depressed classes would think about marriage.

173. Would you kindly turn to your memorandum ? You say at page 39, and you also repeated it today in answer to my friend Mr. Kikabhai, “the standing of the community must mean its power to protect itself in the social struggle. That power would obviously depend upon the educational and economic status of the community.”

Dr. Ambedkar: Quite.

174. It follows from the recognition of the principle that the lower the standing of a community, the greater electoral advantage it must get over the rest. Do you adduce this last sentence as a logical deduction from the premises, from the previous two sentences ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

175. You regard that as a logical deduction ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, quite.

176. I wish to draw your attention to the fact that you say :

“In addition to the demand for adequate representation, the Sabha feels that it must also demand the inclusion of clauses in the constitution of the country.” Now, amongst these clauses you find things like this mentioned:

“the right of every depressed class to the appointment of a special inspector of police from amongst themselves” ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

177. Do you expect that an Act of Parliament should contain a clause to this effect, that the depressed classes in India shall have an inspector of police in every district from amongst themselves ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I really do not see anything strange in that

178. Supposing there was a provision to that effect relating to all communities (because if you have got certain constitutional guarantees it follows by necessary implication that other communities have an equal right), then you parcel out all the official posts and you parcel out all the other things amongst the various communities, and that is the constitution that you foresee for India ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I do not know that. I am only speaking for the depressed classes. May I just make one thing clear ?

179. May I just complete my sentence ? That is a contingency that does not arouse any apprehension in your mind ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Just let me explain before you go further. I think we must be very careful in using the word “minority”. I do not think simply because a community happens to be a community composed of small numbers it is therefore necessarily a minority for political purposes.

A minority which is oppressed, or whose rights are denied or the majority, would be a minority that would be fit for consideration for political purposes.

180. Wherever you have these minorities in other countries, there is provision made, there is sometimes a minister for the protection of minorities. Have you thought about that ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

181. Supposing we gave you the protection—the protection might be given in any form, and if I may say so ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I am sorry to interrupt you—I do find that the new constitutions that have been framed after the peace for the various European countries composing the bulk of the Slavonic nations very largely embody this principle. I have devoted some special attention to this subject, if you will permit me to say so.

182. *Lord Burnham:* And carried out ?

Dr. Ambedkar: And made part of the Constitution.

183. And carried out in practice too?

Dr. Ambedkar: Carried out in practice ; and the point is this, that if a minority feels that the guarantee has not been fulfilled, it has the right of appeal to the League of Nations.

* * * * *

186. I am not quarrelling with the principle ?

Dr. Ambedkar: And I may say I am not very particular about the form.

187. If the details of the scheme which you have adumbrated were to be introduced into the constitution of 'this country, would it not lead to a perpetual class war ?

Dr. Ambedkar: It might, but that would depend upon the attitude of the majority.

188. Therefore you would not, as a sagacious statesman ?

Dr. Ambedkar: If you will permit me to say so, all these things, though I insist upon them, I admit to be provisions of a transitory character. I do contemplate and I do desire, the time when India shall be one ; and I believe that a time will come when, for instance, all these things will not be necessary ; but all that would depend upon the attitude of the majority towards the minority.

* * * * *

198. Now, you mentioned a case that you conducted on behalf of a member of the depressed class, who, from fear of social ostracism, stood outside near the window. What district was it ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Khandesh district.

199. Ordinary Magistrate's Court ?

Dr. Ambedkar: The stipendiary Magistrate's Court.

200. What caste was the Magistrate ?

Dr. Ambedkar: A Hindu.

201. He did not object to the accused coming into the court ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No. I say the accused himself would not come in.

202. The accused himself was terrorised by the past acts of the Hindus ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

203. The fear had been engendered in the minds of the depressed classes on account of the oppression of the caste Hindus that he would not get a square deal thereafter if he was to trench upon the limited rights which he had been given by the caste Hindus ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

204. *Sir Hari Singh Gour:* I think you will admit, Dr. Ambedkar, that during the last few years there has been a forward movement in the way of removing untouchability and removing all disqualifications from the path of the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

205. I admit that the reforms have not been commensurate with your desires and mind, but at the same time, we have to recognise that there is a growing feeling that there must be a consolidation of the Hindu people by removing all these barriers that stand between the caste and the non-caste Hindus. You recognise that ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, there are speeches from the platform.

206. There are positive actions ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Speaking for my part of the country, the Bombay Presidency, I would rather hesitate to accept your proposition.

207. Therefore, I will give you examples. Every year, for instance, wherever there is a caste and no-caste society, Hindus hold annual dinners, and they all sit together for the purpose of making one class of people accustomed to the other class of people ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I am not aware of it in this Presidency.

208. I have attended several of them.

Dr. Ambedkar: In this Presidency?

Sir Hari Singh Gour: No, in Nagpur.

209. There is no such movement here ? *Dr. Ambedkar:* No.

210. But you admit that there is recognition of the fact that oppression and untouchability must go, and that every effort to suggest anything in that way receives sympathetic consideration from the caste Hindus, and particularly from the Reformers ?

Dr. Ambedkar. I would hesitate, again, to answer that.

Chairman: Would you agree, in order to get this witness's view of the facts, that I should ask two or three questions on your line ? *Sir Hari Singh Gour:* Yes Sir, certainly.

211. *Chairman:* Mr. Rajah would be, in many ways, the best person to do it, but I wish you would tell us your own view. Compare twenty years ago with now in the Bombay Presidency. How many years, if I may ask, have you been here ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Five or six years.

212. You have, of course, taken an interest in your own community since long before that ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

213. You can look back twenty years and give us some ideal ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

214. Let me take two or three things. First of all I imagine that there is no change at all so far as regards the admission of the depressed classes to the interior of a Hindu temple. That, of course, is a matter of religious practice and teaching. I do not criticise it, but there is no change at all ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No, there is no change at all in that respect.

215. What I want to know is this. Let us take two or three definite things in this Presidency. In the country districts, you have told us that as a rule the depressed classes, the untouchables, live in a place for themselves. Of course, we have seen it many times. Sometimes they live in a corner of the village, if it happens to be a Hindu village, and sometimes in a hamlet of their own. Now is there any change in the last twenty years as regards their living among the general communities ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No change.

216. We saw some of the villages the other day. We understand some of them can draw water from the river, but I suppose there are other villages that rely on wells ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Even in the case of rivers they can take water only from a portion of the river. A point on the river is appointed for them.

217. That is to say, the depressed classes will draw water at a point lower down than the caste Hindus ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

218. Now let us take the case of villages that rely on wells. It is not uncommon ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No, not uncommon.

219. I am anxious to know and I hope you will tell me quite frankly, is there in that respect any improvement in the last twenty years ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No.

220. Your attention has been called to the fact that there have been resolutions passed on this subject ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, only resolutions.

221. It is suggested that untouchability sometimes goes to such a length that the actual contact with the man (or sometimes his shadow itself) is regarded socially by those of the higher castes as a pollution ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

222. Is there an improvement in that respect ?

Dr. Ambedkar: There is an improvement in that respect.

223. I am glad to hear that. That is, whereas 20 years ago a caste Hindu who found himself in close contact with an untouchable would possibly think it his religious duty to purify himself, it is not viewed with so much

strictness now ; is that correct ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

224. Then, of course, as compared with twenty years ago I imagine that there are some members of the depressed classes who have in fact risen very much in the professional scale. Twenty years ago were there depressed classes who were practising at the Bar in Bombay ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No.

225. How many members of the depressed classes practise at the Bar now ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I am the only man.

226. I think we were told yesterday that in the list of voters for the Sardars and Inamdars there were two members of the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Only one. His position is different. His jagir was granted by the Peshwas for the services rendered on the battlefield. His title was not given by the British Government.

227. What one notices is that in India there is gradually being introduced the motor bus connecting the town with the village and I see them going along the road. Are those public vehicles open to the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Not in villages. There are a great many villages where the depressed classes are not allowed to travel in these buses

228. Who prevents them ?

Dr. Ambedkar: The driver would not take them.

229. One would expect the driver to take anybody who pays. Why does he not take them ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Because if he takes them the other people will not come into his car. For instance, the barber here would not shave my head even though I offer him a rupee.

230. *Rao Saheb Patil:* According to law the driver would be prosecuted if he refuses to take any passenger ?

Dr. Ambedkar: That can be evaded by saying that all seats are booked.

231. Are matters improving in that respect ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, they are improving; but still there are numerous cases where the depressed classes would not be allowed to enter into these buses.

232. Let us take the depressed classes who are employed in the mills in Bombay. Some of them go in trams, I suppose. Do you suggest that they are not allowed to use the trams ?

Dr. Ambedkar: There was a case two years ago where a Bhungi was not allowed to board a tram.

233. When you speak of the case two years ago it suggests to me that it is rather exceptional than a rule ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I have seen, for instance, when I was travelling by the B.B. & C.I. Railway hundreds of cases where the passengers obstructed the depressed classes coming into the compartments.

234. *Sir Hari Singh Gour:* With regard to the case of the Bhungi which you mentioned, are you sure if he was not properly attired and therefore he was not allowed to get into the tram ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I do not know about that.

235. Before a man gets into the tram he is not asked to which caste he belongs ; they only ask him whether he has got the fare, is it not ?

Dr. Ambedkar: But people can easily recognise him.

236. That is on account of his dress ?

Dr. Ambedkar: But he will be dealt with very badly when once he is recognised to belong to the depressed classes.

237. Apart from the question of caste there is also the question of costume ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, but some of the members of the depressed class are very well dressed.

238. In the Bombay Presidency you have no such thing as to consider it a pollution to walk in the shadow of a depressed class member ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, it exists in some parts of the Konkan and in Kathiawad.

239. It is on the wane ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

240. With regard to the Ambalal Sarlal School in Ahmedabad, has not his sister started the school for depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: That is the only honourable exception.

241. Is not the school maintained for the depressed classes from public funds ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I do not know that, but I know that that lady is taking interest in the elevation of the depressed classes.

242. *Chairman:* I understand it is an exceptional case ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, it is quite an exceptional case.

243. *Dr. Suhrawardy:* In view of the instances of social ostracism and tyranny which you have just stated, do you not think that in a general election members of your community will be frightened out of the polling booths ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, it may happen.

244. Also there is the further apprehension that the high caste-Hindus may refuse to come and participate in the elections where the untouchables go to record their votes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: They might; it is very difficult to say what might happen. We have cases, for instance, where the caste-Hindu members of district boards have left the premises because the depressed class members have claimed to sit at the table.

245. Do you not think that, in view of this state of affairs, it will be better for you to have a separate electorate because in practice it will mean a separate electorate even if you reserve your seats in a general electorates ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

246. *Rao Bahadur Rajah*: With reference to the question put by my friend, Sir Hari Singh Gour, regarding the costume of the depressed classes, did the barber refuse to shave your head because you were not well dressed ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No; it is because I belong to the depressed class.

247. Not on account of the dress you were wearing ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No.

248. With regard to another question put by another member of the Committee, may I ask you whether it is easy for a depressed class member in a village to file a suit against the owner of a bus because he has refused to take him ?

Dr. Ambedkar: It is not possible.

249. I understand that you have been taking very much interest in the uplift of the depressed classes. What has been your experience during your propaganda as to the help you receive in this work from the higher classes ? Do they help you to impress upon the depressed classes the need for greater sanitation, hygiene and such like things ?

Dr. Ambedkar: My experience, unfortunately, is rather very bitter in this matter. The depressed classes have been dubbed to be unfit for association because of certain unclean habits. That is the allegation of the upper classes. That is to say, they eat the meat of the dead animals and they are not clean, and so on. In this Presidency during the last two years I started a campaign to purify the depressed classes, so to say, and to persuade them to give up some of their dirty habits. But, to my great misfortune, I found the whole caste-Hindu population up against me when in a matter like this I expected the utmost co-operation from them. But when I began to analyse the basis of their opposition I found that they insisted upon the depressed class people doing the unclean things because giving up doing these things meant that the depressed classes were exceeding their social status and rivalling the upper class. For instance, in the Colaba and Ratnagiri districts the whole of the Mahar population have given up the eating of the meat of dead animals, but the tyranny and social oppression that is going on against them is simply unspeakable; there is a complete economic and social boycott. The lands they had been cultivating for years past have been taken away from them by their caste-Hindu landlords. Every sort of pressure, social and economic, has been brought to bear upon the depressed classes in order to compel them to resume their dirty habits. The officials, who are all caste-Hindus, give no protection to the depressed classes, whose condition has really become pitiable, and all this because they sought to give up their dirty habits. Instead of getting co-operation I find that the members of the upper classes are up against me, and they say "these evil habits of the depressed classes are all insignia of their inferiority and they must remain."

250. The other day we heard a witness say that there is not a single depressed class member on the sanitary boards. If what you have said

just now with regard to the higher castes is true, is there any good in the depressed class members, being on these boards so far as their sanitary improvement is concerned ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I think the depressed class people ought to be represented on every local authority.

251. You told us just now that in the courts in this Presidency witnesses belonging to the depressed classes have no access. I want to be clear on that point. Do you mean to say that the members of the depressed class are not admitted into some of the courts ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

252. And I understand you to say that in a case the man did not dare go into the court, is that so ?

Dr. Ambedkar: The thing is the depressed class man is looked upon by the caste people as having a particular station in life, he exceeds that station in life when he enters the court, and if he exceeded that station in life they would begin to harass him. The man, if he exceeded the social limits, would subsequently suffer at the hands of the caste people. My protection in that particular case was only temporary protection and he knew it would cease as soon as the case was over.

253. If you had not been there and if he attempted to go into the court, what would have happened to him ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I think the same thing would have happened to me when I tried to enter a temple in Bombay.

254. Coming to medical relief, will you kindly enlighten us as to the kind of medical relief the depressed class men are getting ?

Dr. Ambedkar: They are not allowed entry into the dispensary, unless the case is a very very serious one; such as, for instance, the non-admission would bring the officer's conduct to the notice of the higher authorities. Ordinarily the medicine is dispensed out

255. *Chairman:* I suppose you are talking of dispensaries in the mofussil ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, Government dispensaries.

256. They are, of course, in the department of the Minister of Medical Administration ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

257. I imagine that the regulations of the Minister provide that these dispensaries are open to everybody who goes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

258. But you say that in the mofussil in fact it does not work out like that ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No.

Dr. Solanki: The Hindu medical man who is orthodox always takes objection to examine a man belonging to the depressed classes. There have been instances in Gujarat where the men have actually died from the want of medical relief. I know of instances where doctors have actually

refused even to touch the patient when he was suffering from pneumonia. The doctor would hand over the thermometer to a Mahomedan who does not know how to hold the thermometer and the Mahomedan would hand over the thermometer to the patient. This is a fact and it has happened.

259. What is important, I think, as I said before and I may repeat it, is to get a true picture. The thing may happen occasionally. I want to know whether what you are describing is quite an exceptional thing due to some particular doctor's objection or whether you think it is an everyday happening ?

Dr. Solanki: Doctors who are orthodox do it.

260. The difficulty about this thing is that the objection that is taken by the medical man is an objection based on his own religious views ?

Dr. Solanki: Yes.

261. *Rao Bahadur Rajah:* Have these facts been brought to the notice of the authorities concerned ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

262. What was the action they took ?

Dr. Ambedkar: The reply the Minister gave was that we had better depend on persuasion; that was the word he used.

Chairman: Would you do this for us, Rao Bahadur ? One hears of different aspects of this and I want to know the facts. What is the position about the depressed class children in the ordinary public schools in this province ? Would you ask the witness about that for me ?

263. *Rao Bahadur Rajah:* Will you kindly enlighten us as to the attitude of the schoolmasters or the Education Department or the managers of schools towards the children of the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: There is a circular issued by Dr. Paranjpye when he was Minister of Education in this Presidency to the effect that children of depressed classes should be admitted in all schools. But our experience is that circular has not been carried out at all. It is true that in the report of the Director of Public Instruction it is stated that that circular has been carried into effect; but I beg to differ from that view. It is not a correct statement of facts as they exist today. There is an incident here at Poona which took place only a few days ago, at Deoo, where the children of the depressed classes were refused admission and when they insisted on it the village proclaimed social boycott against the depressed classes.

264. *Chairman :* The memorandum refers to that report ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, that is not a correct statement of facts as I said. I beg to differ from that

265. *Rao Bahadur Rajah:* I understood from Mr. Griffith that in his view there are reasons why the depressed classes could not be taken into the police department as the duties of the police involved house searches and arrests. Supposing, for the sake of argument, that is true, would there be similar objection to the recruitment of the depressed class members to other subordinate and provincial services ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Find that there are so many objections raised.

266. You are a member of the Local Legislative Council ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

267. What is your experience as regards the attitude of the higher caste members of the local Council towards your community ?

Dr. Ambedkar: One cannot say it is favourable to the depressed classes.

268. What is the attitude of the Government towards the members of your community in your Provinces ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Very apathetic.

269. I suppose you have got honorary bench magistrates' courts in this Presidency. Are there any members of the depressed classes on these boards ?

Dr. Ambedkar: There are none and we are trying to get some on the bench of magistrates, but without effect. Perhaps it might be interesting to the Conference if I read in this connection a letter written by the Collector of the Khandesh district to a member of the depressed classes when he applied for an appointment on the bench. This letter also gives the reasons why he should not be appointed to the place, and it reads thus :

"The Collector has every sympathy with the aspirations of the depressed classes and is glad to recognise and appreciate Mr. Medhe's good work in the various fields of public activities ; but in his opinion time has not yet come when a member of the depressed classes can be given a seat on the bench of magistrates, and, until the Government makes some pronouncement favourable to the aspiration of the depressed classes in this Presidency he must regretfully express his inability to recommend such an appointment" This letter is dated 25th September 1928.

270. I am sure you will agree with me that appointments to these bodies have nothing to do with the progress of the communities ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Nothing.

271. The sole consideration should be whether the individual candidate can discharge his duties with a sense of responsibility ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

272. *Lord Burnham:* I understood you to say that of all the methods to protect the interests of the depressed classes, you preferred the universal suffrage ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I would rather say adequate representation in the Legislative Council.

273. I understand you to say you were in favour of universal suffrage ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

274. If you have not got that you go in for separate electorates ? Supposing you cannot get either, are you still in favour of the principle of nomination ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No. I would insist on our representative being elected.

275. If you cannot get the election on the terms proposed, you would prefer adult franchise ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

276. *Chairman:* You have spoken of your strong preference for the representation of the depressed classes being secured by the method of election. Are you satisfied, supposing the method was the method of election, that the result would be that you will get elected those who were really the best spokesmen for the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I believe so.

277. You do not feel anxious that influences which were really against the interests of the depressed classes will get to work ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I admit that and that is why I want adult suffrage.

278. You think that the influence will cease because of the adult suffrage ?

Dr. Ambedkar: That will be counterbalanced.

279. Supposing that a member of the depressed classes has the necessary qualification, does he vote in a general constituency ?

Dr. Ambedkar: He does.

280. Taking your case you will have a qualification to vote in some general constituency ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes ; I vote for the University constituency as also my friend.

281. How does the position stand about the paying of taxes ? A suggestion was made that depressed classes do not pay the taxes. Of course, it follows that, as regards the Customs duties and other indirect taxes which may raise the price of the articles, I suppose the depressed classes will have to pay the increased price like anybody else ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes. Also the depressed class men, particularly the Mahar community, is always in possession of some land of ordinary tenure or watan tenure at any rate, and they pay what is called the judi, that is the assessment, as anybody else.

282. I suppose that a good many Mahars follow the occupation of waiters in private service ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, very few. But they mainly work in industries in the cities.

283. Take, for instance, a European private house or a club, they employ Mahars ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

284. Are those people qualified to vote in a general constituency or not?

Dr. Ambedkar: That will depend on the pitch of franchise.

285. As a rule the waiters would not have any qualification ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, under the existing circumstances.

286. *Sardar Mujumdar:* Are you aware that saints from the depressed

classes are revered by all classes, and high-class persons bow down before them as much as before such saints from higher classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: There is only one case so far as I know.

287. But do they do so ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, as they do the Mahomedan Pir.

288. Are you aware that untouchability is not observed in the Warkari Panth, i.e. the devotees of the God Vithoba at Pandharpur ?

Dr. Ambedkar: That is entirely incorrect.

289. Do you agree that there is a vast change during the last 25 years in the treatment accorded to the depressed classes, that the educated higher classes are trying to remove this evil of untouchability and mix with them quite freely and that there is a gradual change in the condition of the depressed classes and in the treatment accorded to them by the general educated public ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, it is so, though the sympathy is only in words and is seldom translated into action.

290. Are you aware that in almost all villages the depressed class people are provided with wells meant only for their own use ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No.

291. Are there not such wells ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Not in every village.

292. Who are the depressed classes ? Will you please name the castes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: There is the census.

293. Do inter-marriages take place between the Mang and the Mahar castes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No, the caste Hindus have spread their poison to the rest.

294. Do they dine together ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, now-a-days. The movement for consolidation is going on and there is now a case of inter-marriage between a Mang and a Mahar.

295. Are there not two Inamdars in my constituency who belong to the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I do not know.

