

Government of India a statutory obligation to maintain at all times a department to deal with their problems by the addition of a section in the Government of India Act to the following effect :—

- “1. Simultaneously with the introduction of this Constitution and as part thereof there shall be created in the Government of India a Department to be in-charge of a Minister for the purpose of watching the interests of the Depressed Classes and promoting their welfare.
- “2. The Minister shall hold office so long as he retains the confidence of the Central Legislature.
- “3. It shall be the duty of the Minister in the exercise of any powers and duties conferred upon him or transferred to him by law, to take all such steps as may be desirable to secure the preparation, effectively carrying out and co-ordination of measures preventative of acts of social injustice, tyranny or oppression against the Depressed Classes and conducive to their welfare throughout India.
- “4. It shall be lawful for the Governor-General—
 - (a) to transfer to the Minister all or any powers or duties in respect of the welfare of the Depressed Classes arising from any enactment relating to education, sanitation, etc.,
 - (b) to appoint Depressed Classes welfare bureaux in each province to work under the authority of and in co-operation with the Minister.”

Condition No. VIII

DEPRESSED CLASSES AND THE CABINET

Just as it is necessary that the Depressed Classes should have the power to influence governmental action by seats in the Legislature so also it is desirable that the Depressed Classes should have the opportunity to frame the general policy of the Government. This they can do only if they can find a seat in the Cabinet. The Depressed Classes therefore claim that in common with other minorities, their moral rights to be represented in the Cabinet should be recognized. With this purpose in view the Depressed Classess propose :

That in the Instrument of Instructions an obligation shall be placed upon the Governor and the Governor-General to endeavour to secure the representation of the Depressed Classes in his Cabinet.

APPENDIX II

REPORT OF SUB-COMMITTEE No. III (MINORITIES)

These are some of the paragraphs of the Report related to the interests of Depressed Classes which have been approved by the Committee of Whole Conference on 19th January 1931

3. One of the Chief proposals brought before the Sub-Committee was the inclusion in the constitution of a declaration of fundamental rights safe-

guarding the cultural and religious life of the various communities and securing to every individual without discrimination as to race, caste, creed or sex, the free exercise of economic, social and civil rights (Dr. Ambedkar called attention to the necessity of including in the constitution sanctions for the enforcement of the fundamental rights, including a right of redress when they are violated).

4. Whilst it was generally admitted that a system of joint free electorates was in the abstract consistent with democratic principles as generally understood, and would be acceptable to the Depressed Classes after a short transitional period, provided the franchise was based on adult suffrage, the opinion was expressed that, in view of the distribution of the communities in India and of their unequal economic, social and political effectiveness, there was a real danger that under such a system the representation secured by minorities would be totally inadequate, and that this system would therefore give no communal security.

5. Claims were therefore advanced by various communities that arrangements should be made for representation and for fixed proportions of seats. It was also urged that the number of seats reserved for a minority community should in no case be less than its proportion in the population. The methods by which this could be secured were mainly three (1) nomination, (2) joint electorates with reservation of seats, and (3) separate electorates.

8. The discussion made it evident that the demand which remained as the only one which would be generally acceptable was separate electorates. The general objection to this scheme has been subject to much previous discussion in India. It involves what is very difficult problem for solution, viz. what should be the amount of communal representation in the various Provinces and in the Centre; that, if the whole, or practically the whole, of the seats in a legislature are to be assigned to communities, there will be no room for the growth of independent political opinion or of true political parties, and this problem received a serious complication by the demand of the representatives of the Depressed Classes that they should be deducted from the Hindu population and be regarded, for electoral purposes, as a separate community.

12. There was general agreement with the recommendation of Sub-Committee No. II (Provincial Constitution) that the representation on the Provincial Executives of important minority communities was a matter of the greatest practical importance for the successful working of the new constitution, and it was also agreed that on the same grounds Muhammadans should be represented on the Federal Executive (Dr. Ambedkar would add the words, "and other important minorities" after the word "Muhammadans"). On behalf of smaller minorities, a claim was put forward for their representation, either individually or collectively, on the Provincial and Federal Executives, or that, if this should be found impossible in each

Cabinet, there should be a Minister specially charged with the duty of protecting minority interests.

13. As regards the administration, it was agreed that recruitment of both Provincial and Central Services should be entrusted to P. S. Cs., with instructions to recruit the claims of various communities to fair and adequate representation in the Public Services, whilst providing for the maintenance of a proper standard of efficiency.

16. It has also been made clear that the British Government cannot with any chance of agreement impose upon the communities an electoral principle which, in some feature or other, would be met by their opposition. It was therefore plain that, failing an agreement, separate electorates with all their drawbacks and difficulties, would have to be retained as the basis of the electoral arrangements under the new constitution. From this the question of proportions would arise. Under these circumstances, the claims of the Depressed Classes will have to be considered adequately.

18. The Minorities and Depressed Classes were definite in their assertion that they would not consent to any self-governing constitution for India unless their demands were met in a reasonable manner.

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IN SUB-COMMITTEE No. VI (FRANCHISE)

Second Sitting—22nd December 1930

†*Dr. Ambedkar*: It seems to me that there are only two important questions which this Round Table Conference is going to consider. One question is whether India should have responsible Government, and the second question is to what people that Government should be responsible.

In the Plenary sessions we all joined in one chorus in demanding that India should have a responsible form of Government, and I for one, speaking on behalf of the Depressed Classes in that Plenary session, joined with my friends sitting opposite in demanding responsible Government for India. When I did so, however, I was under the impression that the Indian people who came to represent their country at this Round Table Conference were not only united in making a demand for responsible Government for India, but were also united in the view as to whom that Government should be responsible.

I am sorry to say, Sir, that I have been deluded. I find now that although some of our people would desire me and others to join them in their demand for Dominion Status, they do not join with us in demanding that the Government which will be set up under that Dominion Status shall be responsible to the people of India as a whole. I never thought there would be this division of opinion, and that I should have to stand up to defend the position we take.

Now, Sir, speaking on behalf of the Depressed Classes I cannot honestly consent to responsible Government or to Dominion Status unless I can be sure that the people for whom I speak are to have a place in that constitution. I must make that fact plain to all my friends. As an objection has been raised to the proposal for adult suffrage by some of my friends, I propose to deal with the arguments brought forward against it.

One of the arguments brought forward was that we should follow the precedent laid down in this country, that adult suffrage should be reached

† Proceedings of the Sub-Committee No. VI (Franchise), Government of India, Central Publication Branch, Calcutta, 1931, pp. 28-35.

The terms of reference to this Sub-Committee were as under:—

“On what main principles is franchise to be based for men and women.”

by stages. It is suggested that we should follow the stages adopted in this country from 1832 to 1918. Those who take their stand on the political history of enfranchisement in this country seem to think that there was some philosophical course of action thought out by the English people in devising the steps that were taken by them in enfranchising the people from 1832 onwards, that they had decided before hand that they must enfranchise only a limited number of people in 1832 that otherwise it would be philosophically wrong ; that they should take the next step only in 1867, and not in 1866 ; that they should take the next step in 1884 and not in 1867. I do not know whether those who use that argument believe that there was any philosophic belief behind that fact. But I should like to point out to my friends, those who base their arguments upon this fact, that if you read the political history of England, you will find that not only was there no philosophical belief which determined the stages that were taken by the British people, but the question of franchise was treated in this country as a mere matter of party politics : that each party tried to extend the franchise because it thought that as a political catch-word it would influence and augment that party. Perhaps that will be news to my friend who used that argument, and, I must say, always uses it with satisfaction to himself, feeling that he is placing an insuperable obstacle in our path. We will be perhaps pleased to find that one of the great steps in the political enfranchisement of the people of England was taken by a Conservative Government in this country, and not by the Liberals or the Radicals.

The second thing I should like to point out to my friend is this. Does he really mean to tell us that because the franchise in this country was limited, that, therefore, the Government produced under that franchise was a good Government, a Government the object of which was the welfare of the people and the prosperity of the masses ? Is that the inference he wants to draw from that fact ? That because the franchise was limited, that, therefore, there was no trouble, and that everybody was satisfied in this country ? Surely that is not the case. If my friend will only take the trouble of reading the life of Lord Shaftesbury, and the social and political history of England, he will certainly find that the unreformed Parliament was not a blessing to anyone.

Thirdly, I should like to point out to my friend, if he really is serious and if he really believes what he says, that the people of India ought not be given adult suffrage, because they are not fit for it, that the only alternative for him is to go back to India and not to demand Dominion Status or responsible Government, for surely, if it is the view of the gentleman who puts forward this case that the Indian people are not fit to exercise the franchise, are not fit to take upon themselves the responsibilities of Government, then I do not understand in whose name he asks for responsible Government. Is it for this class ? Is it for himself ? For whom is it ? The only argument, as I understand

in favour of responsible Government and in favour of Dominion Status, is the assumption which must constitute the basis of any such argument, that the people of India are fit to undertake the responsibility of Government. If my friend does not believe that the Indian people are capable of exercising that responsibility, then the only conclusion is that the Indian people cannot have Dominion Status and cannot have responsibility.

The second argument that was brought forward was that, although adult suffrage may be an ideal, it cannot be brought into effect at the present moment, because we have not the machinery to give effect to it. Now I have great sympathy with that argument, but I should like to point out that there are considerations in opposition to that view. Let us understand what the franchise does really mean. Surely the franchise does not mean a mere matter of the ballot box, does not mean a mere matter of polling booths and the placing of polling officers there. The franchise means something more vital than that. Now, Sir, as I understand it, to me the suffrage and the franchise are nothing else but the right of self-defence; it means that you will create a legislature which will have the amplest power of passing laws which will affect the life, liberty and property of the people. Surely, if that is going to be the position, if your legislature is going to have that power of affecting your life in these most vital matters, then surely every individual who is going to be subject to that legislation ought to have the power to defend himself against laws which will probably in the circumstances invade his liberty, invade his life and his property. It is not a mere question of the ballot box ; it is not a mere question of polling booths.

May I put it in a different way ? If I understand the franchise, I understand it to be the right to regulate the terms of what one might call associated life in society; that is the essence of the franchise. When you give a man the franchise, what you mean is that you give him power to regulate the terms on which he will live in relationship with other individuals in society. Now, if that is the meaning of the suffrage, surely you cannot give the higher classes, the intellectuals as they are called, or the propertied classes, the power to regulate the terms of associated life, and leave the lower classes at their mercy. They, too, must have the power to regulate the terms of associated life. Just as the capitalist must have the power, if he is to have any constitution, to dictate how he shall live on terms of associated life with the labour, surely the labour is entitled also to have the power to regulate the terms on which he shall live with his capitalist master. It cannot be a one-sided bargain ; it must not be a onesided bargain. If you understand the franchise in the right sense of the word, then it seems to me the franchise is something which must be regarded as the inherent right of every individual in the State; and if you understand that the franchise is the inherent right of every man or woman who is capable of understanding it, then surely you cannot make an inherent right of a people dependent upon the convenience of your administration.

My friend used that argument, that we must not have adult suffrage because we shall not have polling booths and polling officers. I should like to remind him of what would be the situation if he were told that he had been wronged by an individual, that he had a good case which, if he brought it to the Court would certainly succeed, but that he could not be given redress because we had not sufficient judges in the High Court. How would he like that position? Surely, if the franchise is an inherent right, and if there are administrative difficulties in the effectuation of that franchise, then the remedy is not to curtail the franchise, but the remedy is to provide the necessary machinery, so that every man or woman capable of enjoying that franchise shall be in a position to give effect to it.

Sir, it seems to me that the difficulties of administering the franchise which have been placed before us arise from two different sources. We are told that the constituencies in India are very vast; and, surely, as 'we see from the Report of the Simon Commission, they are of a most fabulous character. It is said that if you increase the number of electors in the existing constituencies, as they exist today, the whole machinery will break down. My submission to this Conference is this : Surely this difficulty can easily be met. It seems to me this difficulty can be met in this way. It seems to me that the difficulty arises largely because of the composition and strength of your Legislative Councils today ; that composition is so very limited that you cannot help having the large constituencies that you have today. It seems to me that from the standpoint of numbers the existing strength of the legislatures in the Provinces is ridiculous. Let us have the figures for a moment before our mind's eye. I find on comparison that Madras, Bengal and the United Provinces have more or less the same population as France, Great Britain and Italy. The Madras Legislative Council consists of 132 members; the Bengal Legislative Council consists of 140 members ; the United Province Legislative Council consists of 123 members. On the other hand, France has a Lower Chamber which consists of 626 members ; Great Britain has somewhere over 600, and Italy has 560 members. Take, on the other hand, Bombay and the Punjab, which are more or less on a par in the matter of population. Bombay has 114 members ; the Punjab has 94. Bombay and the Punjab are more or less equal in population to Spain; if you take the Lower Chamber in Spain, you find it consists of 417 members. I know it is not in existence now, but that is another matter. It is a matter of constitution. In France it is in existence with a large number. Then take the Central Provinces in which the Legislative Council has 73 members. I find that the population of the Central Provinces is equal to that of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia has 313 members. Assam has 53 members ; in population it is equal to Portugal, and Portugal has 146 members.

Now, surely if you are going to cramp these vast aggregations of people into Legislative Councils which do not exceed 140 in membership, you

are bound, as a result, to have very large constituencies. Why are you afraid of increasing the numbers in the Legislature? I cannot understand it. If you are not afraid, and if you follow the parallels in other countries, then surely you can very easily reduce the size of the electorates, and thereby remove one of the difficulties that is said to exist in the matter of adult suffrage.

Then another difficulty which was pointed out was that it was said we should not have a sufficient number of polling officers. Now that difficulty to ray mind also does not seem to be of a very serious character. It seems to me that if all the college students in India could be drafted into the service of the electoral departments, this difficulty could be very easily solved. Some of my friends on the other side laugh at it, but I do not know why. I know, as a matter of fact, that in the census all college students, and school boys also, help the census department in carrying on the enumeration. If, for instance, the same system were adopted on the polling day, if all the college students were asked to help in this matter and I have not the slightest doubt that they would come to the rescue of the department, then surely we should have more polling officers than we need on the occasions of this sort.

It seems to me, therefore, that the difficulties of the situation are not insuperable. Let me point this out to my friends opposite who object to adult suffrage on this ground. It seems to me their position is of a somewhat curious character. Where a member of the British Delegation raises a difficulty, and says there are heaps of difficulties in the way of India, and, therefore, India must not have Dominion Status or responsible Government, the gentlemen sitting opposite would not allow the English gentlemen to take advantage of the difficulties; they would tell him at once: "Why, you bolster up difficulties to put down our claims. These are difficulties which surely can be met." Let me tell him that we on this side are also not prepared to allow you to take advantage of this difficulty. We say that if there are difficulties in the way of getting the power in our hands, those difficulties ought to be solved. We are not going to let you have the advantage of the situation.

Sir, so far I have dealt with the arguments which have been presented against adult suffrage. Now let me put one or two arguments which I think are in favour of adult suffrage, and which in my opinion, are more or less decisive. The first argument that I will put is this, that you cannot have in India any system of suffrage short of adult suffrage which will give equality of representation to all the castes and communities in India; there is no other system you can devise for India which will give that result. Take, for instance, the existence of constituencies. In Bengal and in the Punjab the Muhammadans form a majority of the population. You have in Sind also, as apart from Bombay, the Muhammadans in a majority. Now what is the state of the Muhammadan communities in these Provinces?

I am putting this as a feeler : My Muhammadan friends may take their stand apart from this : I am putting it as a case. What is the position of the Muhammadan communities in these Provinces under the system of franchise that we have today. The Muhammadans in Sind form something like 70 per cent of the population ; and yet, if I am not very much mistaken, their voting strength is only 49 per cent. Take, for instance, again Bengal and the Punjab; there again the Muhammadans pre-dominate in population, and yet in the voting list they are in the minority. Take again the Depressed Classes ; under the existing franchise they are nowhere at all in the electorate. I think it is a most disgraceful thing to have a franchise of this sort. You have to remember one thing : that Indian society is composed of so many castes and creeds and those castes and creeds are not related to each other in what one might call the vertical perpendicular, so that if you chop-off this mass at any particular point you get a part which is representative of all the communities in an equal degree. On the other hand, if I may put it so, they are related in such a manner that the parallel grains are, so to speak, placed horizontally one on the other, so that if you chop at any particular point you get a part which is representative of one single community only or at the most two, and the rest are not represented at all. Now surely you do not want to create a system of political Government in which only some castes and some communities will predominate. Surely you do not want to create in India a South Africa where only some people will have the vote and the rest will not. I say, if you are interested in giving every man a vote, in giving every man the political franchise, so that he may work out his destiny, then you cannot have any other system of franchise in India than that of adult suffrage.

Now, let me give you another example. As I say, I am not opposed to female suffrage, and I am very obliged to our lady colleague, Mrs. Subbarayan, for supporting us in this matter. I will go with her whole-heartedly. Let me point out one or two illustrations of what has been suggested by way of enlarging and broadening the franchise. It is suggested that there should be a franchise of literacy. I do not propose to call it a fancy franchise, but let me tell you what will be the effect of it. The effect of it would be this : that some communities would have their voting strength almost doubled, while other communities would stand where they are. Literacy in India is so unevenly distributed, that some communities would have all the increase of the franchise added to their stock, while other communities would remain where they are. Surely you do not want to create that sort of situation.

Therefore my submission is, that if this Conference and the members who are assembled round this table are true to their creed, believe that India must have responsible Government, and that Government must be responsible to the people, then I submit there is no alternative to adult suffrage.

Then, Sir, there is one more consideration that I would like to point

out, that seems to me to be a most decisive consideration in this matter. We all of us know that the question of joint versus separate electorate is a most thorny question; it seems to me to be a very crucial question. May I point out to this Conference that, at least in my opinion, the question of joint versus separate electorates is inextricably bound up with the question of franchise. You will not ask any minority in India, you will not compel any minority in India, and you will not get the consent of any minority in India, to agree to joint electorates unless that minority has adult suffrage. I am not going to place myself under the thumb and authority of any majority Government, unless I am certain that I can exercise in the elections electoral power which is commensurate with my social power. Unless I know that every man and every woman in the Depressed Class community will be able to exercise the vote and to determine the destiny of the candidate who is going to represent the mass of people in the country, I certainly am not going to consent to joint electorates; certainly not. I am not going to place myself in a minority position; I am not going to allow the majority to select my candidate. No, under no circumstances. And I think what is true of my minority may also be true of the Muhammadans. I do not wish to say something that I shall have to say in another Committee, but the point is so relevant that I cannot help making a reference. You cannot in fairness ask the Muhammadans of Bengal or the Punjab to accept joint electorates unless you place them in a majority in the electorate. You cannot deny the franchise to the Muhammadans, make a minority of them in the electoral power, and then say, "Come along and have a joint electorate".

The decisiveness of this fact was acknowledged by the Nehru Committee and by three members of the Indian Central Committee.

Let me, before I conclude, make one or two remarks to my friends who will not give us adult suffrage. I made it plain at the beginning of my speech that we make the question of the grant of responsible Government to India not entirely dependent on this question. Although I know that my friend and I are only two in a Conference of 80 or 90, we represent 43 millions of people.

Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao: Would Dr. Ambedkar accept the proposal of Lord Zetland?

Dr. Ambedkar: We might accept the principle. But may I say that I am receiving hundreds of letters and telegrams on the subject I have brought forward. It is a crucial thing.

Sir P. C. Mitter: What about the Central Legislature? Does he want adult suffrage, and what size does he want the Legislature to be?

Dr. Ambedkar: That will be a question to be decided later on. The Central Legislature, I think, ought to consist of 500 members.

Sir P. C. Mitter: And adult suffrage also?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

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†*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* All these suggestions, I may say so with due respect to the Begum, emanate from the feeling that the franchise is the foundation of the representation in the Councils. That is so in all countries.

But where we have introduced the principle of weightage for communities, that principle does not hold good.

Colonel Gidney: I will now make a concrete suggestion, and my concrete suggestion is this, that in adopting the scheme suggested by Lord Zetland we should go in for direct and for indirect election. So far as direct election is concerned, I suggest there should be no further broadening of the franchise, and that the present franchise should remain as it is.

Dr. Ambedkar: No.

Colonel Gidney: That is all right.

Sir Cowasji Jehangir: That should return a certain number of representatives to the Legislature, both for urban and for rural constituencies. A large number of the population will remain without the direct vote, and for that whole block of the population the franchise should be broadened. It should be on the basis of 25 per cent of the adult population, and they should return their representatives by the indirect system of election both in rural and urban areas. I make no distinction between the two. That will bring in industrial labour as well as agricultural labour.

Dr. Ambedkar: It will not bring in anything of the sort.

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‡*Dr. Ambedkar:* Sir, this morning I said what I need say regarding the question of franchise ; but, without prejudice of what I have stated this morning, I should like to examine the suggestions which are put forward before this Committee for the purpose of extending the franchise. I take it that this Committee is agreed that the ideal is adult suffrage. Some of us think that it ought to be realised immediately ; the rest of our friends think that it ought to be evolved by stages. We have therefore put before us two concrete suggestions. One suggestion is that we should adopt the system of instalment and increase the suffrage by a graduated scheme of 25 per cent addition to the existing voting list, say at an interval of a certain number of years. We have on the other hand the suggestion of our noble friend the Marquess of Zetland in which also effect is sought to be given to some realisation of this ideal of adult suffrage.

Now, comparing the two, I cannot help saying that I have a partiality for the suggestion of the noble Lord, although, as I say, I hold strongly that we must have undiluted adult suffrage. If it were a mere matter of choice between the two, I should certainly like to have a system which immediately lays the foundation of adult suffrage in preference to a system

† Proceedings of the Sub-Committee No. VI (Franchise), pp. 68-69.

‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

which gives some sort of suffrage to only a class of the people and postpones the fact of self-Government to a large mass for a time to come. But, having said that, I cannot, as I say, give whole-hearted support to the suggestion, because I find there are certain difficulties. But, because I think that probably the noble Marquess will come to our help in meeting the difficulties which some of us feel, I propose to make one or two observations. One thing I see : that if this system of indirect elections by groups is adopted, it seems to me the Depressed Classes probably will not fare better under that system. I say that for this reason : the Depressed Classes are scattered throughout India in small numbers in every village ; their life is practically dominated on all sides by powerful bodies of villagers who hold over them social and economic sway. It is possible, and I think it is also probable, that when this indirect election comes to be applied to them, such an amount of pressure may be applied by the village community on the Depressed Classes that, in exercising their vote, so to say, in the primary election, they may be compelled to select people who may not be their best representatives. That is a fear which I certainly have.

Another thing which I find is that if this system is to be adopted in preference to the graduated system of extending the vote by instalments, I do not understand why we should confine this to the propertied class or to any other Class ; I do not see why we should not extend the system in such a manner that adult suffrage should become the foundation of the system.

A Member: That is the intention.

Dr. Ambedkar : I am glad to hear that. With regard to the difficulties that have been suggested, that this would complicate the matter of separate electorates, I do not think it will, because with indirect election you can still maintain separate registers for such communities as may desire to have them. I do not think that will create any difficulty in the matter.

But, as I say, we cannot, for instance, give support to this principle unless we know really how this principle is going to work in practice, unless we know all the details about it. My concrete suggestion, therefore, is that this Committee should appoint a small Sub-Committee in order to consider this system and to report upon it, so that we may be better able, with full knowledge and information, to recommend this to a Franchise Committee that may hereafter be left to work out the system. It seems to me in its raw form, if the noble Lord will excuse my using that expression, it is somewhat difficult, and it is too much of a large order for anyone of us—speaking, at any rate, for myself to give out support to this principle.

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†*Mr. Basu:* But is it necessary to put a maximum figure at all, because the Franchise Committee will be there, they will have to consider it and go into details. I think we should put the minimum figure ; that is all that is required. As regards the maximum, they may decide as to what

† Proceedings of the Sub-Committee No. VI (Franchis), pp. 74-75.

the maximum should be.

Dr. Ambedkar : I should like to make the observation with regard to the first paragraph in your summarisation. I should like to have it stated in the paragraph which you have drawn up that the opinion of the Committee was that the extension of the franchise should be limited by considerations of administration and machinery. That was the only limitation that we thought should be put in.

Sir C. Setalvad : It is not merely administration ; there are other considerations as well.

Mrs. Subbarayan : What is practicable ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Practical means machinery. I mean the Committee might find that it was practicable with the present machinery that 50 per cent of the population should be enfranchised.

Mr. Zajrullah Khan : Do you mean 50 per cent of the total population ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

Mr. Zajrullah Khan : That would be slightly more than universal adult franchise.

Chairman : It is suggested that we should leave out the maximum. The whole thing is conditional on the expert Committee finding it practicable and desirable ; so that we need not have a maximum. Let us leave out the maximum. Does anyone wish me to read it again?

Mr. K. T. Paul : If you leave out 25 per cent, if it weakens our statement I would not agree to it.

Chairman : It does not weaken it.

Mr. Chintamani : Very often in these matters when a minimum is stated it comes to be a maximum in actual practice. If we indicate the figure 10 per cent in our Report, it will show the Franchise Committee that is appointed that we should be contented if they secure a maximum of 10 per cent. Those of us who mentioned the figure of 25 per cent did so as a sort of unsatisfactory compromise between the present position and adult franchise. I, for one, shall not be happy if you take it out.

Mr. Foot : Mr. Chintamani mentioned 25 per cent of the adult population ?

Mr. Chintamani : Of the total population.

Mr. Foot : I beg your pardon.

Mr. Joshi : Sir, I am very sorry to say that you should not put down in the Report that the suggestion is a unanimous one, because I for one would not agree to it, and I reserve to myself the right of re-opening the question of adult suffrage in the full Conference.

Dr. Ambedkar : That is my position too.

Mr. Joshi : It should be put down in the Report.

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†*Dr. Ambedkar* : It would be a second best, provided we knew it was going to work. (Universal adult suffrage.)

† Proceedings of the Sub-Committee No. VI (Franchise), pp. 76-78.

Chairman: Subject to that, are the rest of the Committee agreed?

Sir C. Jehangir: I cannot agree to this figure, 25 per cent until we have the whole of the facts before us.

Chairman: We are suggesting that an expert Franchise Committee be set up.

Sir P. C. Mitter: Before we fully know the facts it would not be right for us to commit ourselves.

Chairman: It would not do for us to hand over our job to the expert Franchise Committee. We are in the unfortunate position of having to make some recommendation, and we cannot say that we recommend merely that somebody else should take over our job.

Sir P. C. Mitter: I am expressing only my own personal opinion. I suggest to the Franchise Committee that there should be an increase, as large an increase as possible, and I would not have objected to 10 or 20 or 50 per cent. If I know all the facts before hand on which to base an opinion.

Chairman: Would you like, Sir Provash, to put in such qualification as you desire, to the effect that any recommendation both as to maximum and minimum should be entirely subject to the discretion of the Franchise Committee? I feel that we ought to give that Committee some guidance. However, we have got near enough now, and we will take an opportunity of speaking with you about this afterwards.

Mr. Chintamani: I do not know, Sir, whether you will agree to what I am about to suggest, but there is also before us an important proposal that the Franchise Committee should be asked to devise such qualifications as will ensure, as far as possible, the same proportion of voters to population in the different communities. This was proposed by the Simon Commission, and it has been supported by several local Governments. Could that be considered new? If the Franchise Committee find it not possible they will reject it.

Chairman: I think it comes under the next head, namely, "general basis of franchise, (i) Should the franchise qualifications be the same for all communities in the same area?" I call your attention to those words "in the same area". Do not let us embark now on the subject of women's suffrage or anything of that sort.

Sir P. C. Mitter: I thought from what you ruled that the special interests and communal interests came under the Minorities Committee.

Chairman: We shall very likely know more about that after tomorrow. For the moment we are discussing the general basis of the franchise, and whether the qualifications should be the same for all communities.

Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao: You said that you would speak to the Prime Minister and let us know whether this matter came within the province of our Committee or of the other.

Dr. Ambedkar: I should like to make one proposal. Although the question of universal adult suffrage has been pointed out by certain members

of this Committee to be for the present not possible or practicable, it seems to me that it may be possible to have, at any rate, adult suffrage for the Depressed Classes. There is no reason why, for instance, all communities should have the same franchise—in fact, there may even be cases which we find in the practical affairs of life, that in order to reach equality of status, we may have to adopt, so to speak, methods of inequality. In the matter of treating the richer class as against the poorer, for example, we do enact certain special measures for the benefit of the latter. We tax the richer class at a higher rate than the poorer, the object being that the principle of ability to pay the tax may be realised in practice. I think that the same consideration might be applied to the Depressed Classes. If the object of the Committee is that all communities should be represented in equal proportion in the electorate, there is no reason why one class of people may not be treated differently from another class of people if a different sort of treatment is the only means available for the purpose. It seems to me that if, for instance, adult suffrage were applied to the Depressed Class and not to other communities, but other communities had a system such as Lord Zetland has suggested, it would not be in reality any difference at all, and it would not put any great pressure on the electoral machinery available in the Provinces, having regard to the peculiar position of the Depressed Classes, and having regard also to the consensus of opinion that no other system of franchise would give them the vote and without the vote there would be no solicitude expressed for them by any candidate who stands for the Legislature at the present time. I think that the Committee would not do any great harm if it recognised the application of this principle to the Depressed Classes.

Third Sitting—30th December 1930

†*Chairman:* We are now discussing the question of the educational qualification. I may just remind you that the second conclusion to which we came was this: “We recommend that in any given area the franchise qualification should be the same for all communities, but we desire that the Expert Franchise Committee, in making their proposals, should bear in mind that the ideal system would as nearly as possible give each community a voting strength proportional to its population and this Committee should so contrive their franchise as so far as practicable to bring about this result.” I am afraid that is rather a counsel of perfection, but at the same time the only way in which we can possibly expect them to carry that out is if we give them a certain latitude; that is manifest. Therefore, in considering all these questions of educational qualifications and so on, you have to remember that unless you authorise the Franchise Committee

† Proceedings of the Sub-Committee No. VI (Franchise), p. 94.

to take these into account, you are restricting and not enlarging their possibility of action.

Dr. Ambedkar: I should like, if I may, to ask one question with regard to the conclusion which you, Sir, have read out, and at which you said the Sub-Committee had arrived. Does that conclusion imply that the Franchise Committee will have the liberty to consider a variety of franchises for different communities, to arrive at the result that the voting strength shall be proportional to the strength of those communities ?

Chairman: I do not think that is it. We have to give guidance to the Franchise Committee ; they will fill in the details. We are, as it were, the architects, and they are the masons and builders.

Dr. Ambedkar: I understand that, but what I should like to know is whether that conclusion gives liberty to the Franchise Committee to have a different franchise for the different communities with the object of securing equality.

Chairman: No. The first sentence says that we recommend that in any given area the franchise qualification should be the same for all communities. We will now proceed with our discussion on the educational qualification.

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†*Mr. Jadhav :* Would any Legislative Council have the power to go back after ten years and restrict the franchise? Some of them might wish to do that.

Chairman : Their powers would be powers of extension, not of diminution.

Dr. Ambedkar: I should like to say a word on this subject, without prejudice to the position we have taken all along. It seems to me that as compared with the alternatives which have been suggested, one by Mr. Joshi that there should be some law providing for automatic extension, and the other, the main proposal, that the matter should be left to the sweet will of the Legislatures, the recommendations made by the Simon Commission seems to me to be better and to be more readily acceptable from my point of view. It might be much better, as I say, to have some authority which will investigate at the end of a definite period exactly what has been the result of the working of the franchise up to that period. That body will be able to see what disparity there has been as between the different provinces. That body will be able to see what is the machinery existing at the end of the ten years, in order to cope with the elections if the franchise were to be altered, and that body, being impartial itself, will be able to deal with the rights of the mass of the people much more readily, in a much more just and equitable way, than the class-conscious people who may be installed as a result of the limited franchise which we are introducing today. For these reasons it seems to me that the proposals of the Simon Commission are better than the alternatives.

Sir Cowasji Jehangir: Who is to set that up ?

† Proceedings of the Sub-Committee No. VI (Franchise), pp. 138-39.

Dr. Ambedkar : Just as Parliament in the Act suggested that there should be a Public Service Commission, so it could be suggested that there should be the appointment of a Committee.

Sir Cowasji Jehangir: By the Central Government ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

Chairman: I think I know enough now to draft a Report on this subject, but I should like to know what is your view—not that we shall here and now recommend that any Expert Franchise Committee or any other Committee should be set up after 15 years, say, but in view of possibility that one Province might extend its franchise much more generously than another, so that the whole thing might get out of step, ought we to contemplate the possibility of anybody being constituted to look into the matter then, to try and adjust things, or shall we merely content ourselves with leaving things to the Provinces, or ought we to follow Dr. Ambedkar's idea of a Committee ? We need not say that it has to come into being, or when it is to come into being, but that it might function if it came into being.

Mr. Basu : At any period when the Central Government desired to appoint a Committee.

Chairman: We will not say how it is to be appointed, but what do you say about the possibility of appointing such a body ?

Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao : I think the Government of India should set up such a body, not that Parliament should set up such a body.

Dr. Ambedkar: What difference does it make?

Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao: We are leaving great freedom in all these matters. I would like to eliminate parliamentary control. I should like to know what the proposal is. If you say that after a number of years it shall be competent for the Government of India to appoint a Committee to look into this question in the whole of the Provinces, I shall have no objection, but if it is a question of Parliament going into this question again in ten years, I object to it entirely. I have no objection to the Committee being appointed by which the franchise will be extended, but I should like that power vested entirely in the Government of India and to be exercised at its discretion whenever there is necessity for such a thing within a certain number of years, or after a certain number of years.

Dr. Ambedkar: How has it any bearing on the functions of this Sub-Committee whether this Committee is appointed by Parliament or by the Government of India?

Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao: We are devoluting authority to India from Parliament, because in 1919 when this question came up before the Parliamentary Committee, I and several others with me contended that there should be devolution of questions like this to authorities in India ; and because such a step was not taken, we are now confronted with the accumulated complaints about franchise which are now being investigated and they could not be investigated because parliamentary permission