

was required. Therefore I suggest that any step taken in that direction should be devolution of complete power to the Government of India, to be exercised at its discretion to go into the whole question of franchise in a certain number of years. That is a point upon which I really desire to lay some stress.

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†*Dr. Ambedkar*: It is now evident, at least to myself and some of my friends, that we shall have to record a note of dissent from certain propositions that will be placed before the Sub-Committee. Will it be permissible for us to submit to you a note of dissent on the various points, which you may be kind enough to append to the report, or will you allow us some other method?

Chairman: I do not think that up to the present any of the Sub-Committees have appended minority reports, as it were ; I think the report of the Sub-Committee has been one report, but has indicated on its face that certain members—naming them if necessary—have dissented.

Dr. Ambedkar: I should like, with your permission to point out one disadvantage which I see in that procedure. If we are not allowed to record our minute of dissent, you do not give us an opportunity to put our suggestions in a concrete form, which we should like to do if we may be allowed to do so. We are allowed the negative liberty of saying we do not agree, and that is all.

Chairman : I am not sure we cannot meet you. I think you have made your objection quite clear. What you want really is adult suffrage, and I think we have got a sentence in to indicate that certain members of our Sub-Committee—naming them—objected to this because they thought the system of adult suffrage was the only satisfactory system. That states the point.

Dr. Ambedkar: What we should do would depend on the report.

Chairman: Let us leave the difficulty until it arises, and then see if we cannot meet you. I think we can.

Fourth Sitting—1st January 1931

‡DRAFT REPORT—POINT 4

4. *Extension of the Franchise*: While it was generally held that adult suffrage was the goal which should ultimately be attained, it was agreed that the basis of the franchise could forthwith be broadened and that a large increase was desirable.

Some difference of opinion existed as to the extent to which this was

† Proceedings of the Sub-Committee No. VI (Franchise), pp. 147-48.

‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 149-50.

practicable in present circumstances, and it was realised that the Sub-Committee had not the necessary material to determine the precise limits of the advance. The Statutory Commission suggested such an increase in the number of electors as would bring that number up to ten per cent of the population. Some of our members thought that an increase to twenty-five per cent of the adult population was immediately practicable.

We recommend that an expert Franchise Commission should be appointed with instructions to provide for the immediate increase of the electorate so as to enfranchise not less than ten per cent of the total population and indeed a larger number—but not more than twenty-five per cent of the total population—if that should, on a full investigation, be found practicable and desirable.

We recommend that, in addition to providing for this increase the Commission should consider the introduction of a scheme by which all adults not entitled to a direct vote would be grouped together in primary groups of about 20, for the election of one representative member from each group, who would be entitled to vote in the Provincial elections either in the same constituencies as the directly qualified voters or in separate constituencies to be formed for them.

(Mr. Joshi, Mr. Shiva Rao, Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. Srinivasan regard these proposals as only “second best” and consider that the immediate introduction of adult suffrage is both practicable and desirable.

Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Sir P. C. Mitter and Mr. Basu do not assent to the maximum or minimum we have suggested, but desire the discretion of the Franchise Commission to be entirely unfettered.)

† Discussion on point 4 of Draft Report

Dr. Ambedkar: I beg to move an amendment to paragraph 4, namely, that in the second section, line 2, to add the following words after the word “practicable”—“with the electoral machinery available in present circumstances”. It would then read “Some difference of opinion existed as to the extent to which this was practicable with the electoral machinery available in present circumstances.”

Several Members: There are other grounds.

Dr. Ambedkar: That is my amendment. I leave it to the Chairman as the best judge to sum up the sense of the Committee, but the impression that was left upon my mind was that the majority of those who opposed universal adult suffrage as being practical politics for the immediate future did so mainly upon the ground that there was not sufficient electoral machinery in India to cope with the situation if everybody was allowed to vote.

Chairman: I do not think myself, Dr. Ambedkar, that was the sole ground on which the matter was put. It was one of the main grounds, but in

† Proceedings of the Sub-Committee No. VI (Franchise), pp. 152-54.

recording the view of the Committee I do not think we should limit ourselves to saying that that was the sole ground. For instance, the difficulty of communications, and the lack of facilities for travel, and so on, were also very much stressed.

Dr. Ambedkar: I would rather like to have it made clear in the Report.

Mr. Joshi: You might put in some such words as “practical electioneering difficulties”.

Sir Cowasji Jehangir: But there are other objections.

Mr. Joshi: We are talking of the general majority, and not of those people who do not want to vote on principle.

Chairman: I think what is already stated meets the point. After all, you and Mr. Joshi come in under the note at the end.

Dr. Ambedkar: I quite see that. Although we stand for the ideal, we may have to accept the second best, but we should like to have the second best as good as it can possibly be made. I think my point ought to be made clear, so that the expert Franchise Committee might consider it.

Chairman: I do not think that would meet the majority of the Committee. I think the majority of the Committee would rather feel that the words should not be qualified. Very well.

Now what about the next sentence beginning, “We recommend that an Expert Franchise Commission should be appointed with instructions to provide for the immediate increase of the electorate so as to enfranchise not less than ten per cent of the total population and indeed a larger number— but not more than twenty-five per cent of the total population—if that should, on a full investigation, be found practicable and desirable.”

Dr. Ambedkar: I have an amendment on page 3. Instead of the words “but not” I should like to have the words “and even substituted”.

Chairman: Many of us felt, and I am one of them, that an immediate increase of twenty-five per cent was straining it somewhat, and I do not think we should be asked to strain it further. Again, you come in under your reservation, Dr. Ambedkar.

Dr. Ambedkar: My second amendment is to strike out the words “and desirable”. This matter, whatever increase is desirable or not, is really one which must be decided by this Committee. It cannot be decided by the Expert Franchise Commission. That Commission is to be appointed to devise ways and means to carry into effect the decisions we take. How much increase is desirable is certainly a matter which cannot be left to the competence of the new Franchise Commission. From that point of view I think it is necessary to drop these words.

Chairman: It is very difficult to separate what is practicable and what is desirable. “Practicable” is an elastic word. It may be a very difficult thing to achieve or it may be a comparatively easy thing to achieve; but it may be possible of achievement and therefore you will say it is practicable. In considering the desirability, you can hardly shut out of your mind the

extent to which the thing is practicable. The two must come in together to a certain extent.

Dr. Ambedkar: We have decided that in our opinion an extension which covers twenty-five per cent of the population is desirable,

Chairman: You use such an elastic word as “practicable”. That is the difficulty I feel. You cannot put the two words in completely water-tight compartments. What is practicable must react on what is desirable, and you use a very elastic word. I think it would be wiser to keep both there. We give a clear view of our indication by saying at the very outset that we look forward to adult suffrage as an ideal.

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†*Chairman:* We had better take it line by line. Will anybody interrupt if they have an amendment to propose : “We recommend that, in addition to providing for this increase, the Commission should consider the introduction of a scheme by which all adults not entitled to a direct vote would be grouped together in primary groups of about 20,”—then it is proposed to insert “or in some other suitable manner”.

Is there any objection?

—“for the election of one representative member from each group, who would be entitled to vote in the Provincial elections either in the same constituencies as the directly qualified voters or in separate constituencies to be formed for them”.

“(Mr. Joshi, Mr. Shiva Rao, Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. Srinivasan regard these proposals as only ‘second best’ and consider that the immediate introduction of adult suffrage is both practicable and desirable.)”

Dr. Ambedkar: I should like to say that Mr. K. T. Paul was also of the same opinion as ourselves.

Chairman: That will be noted.

Mr. Joshi: I propose that instead of the words “second best” the words “quite inadequate” should be substituted.

Chairman: That is really a matter for you gentlemen. If you prefer those words “quite inadequate” instead of the words “second best”, that is a matter for you really. So it will read : “Mr. Joshi, Mr. Shiva Rao, Dr. Ambedkar, Mr. Srinivasan and Mr. K. T. Paul regard these proposals as quite inadequate and consider that the immediate introduction of adult suffrage is both practicable and desirable.”

Mr. Jadhav: My name also should be added to that list.

Chairman: A note will be made of that. Then it goes on : “Sir Cowasji Jehangir, P. C. Mitter, and Mr. Basu do not assent to the maximum or minimum we have suggested, but desire the discretion of the Franchise Commission to be entirely unfettered.” Obviously that is a matter for them to say what they want.

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† Proceedings of the Sub-Committee No. VI (Franchise), p. 159.

†*Chairman* : The minor communities are really protected, not so much by the number of voters as by the number of representatives they have, whether they have separate electorates or whether they have joint electorates with reservation. That is in the main their protection.

But in order to try to get a conclusion could not we say this, instead of using the words “each community”—Mr. Chintamani put it to me—“We desire that the Franchise Commission in making their proposal should bear in mind that the ideal system would as nearly as possible give the major communities a voting strength in proportion,” and so on. I think that would do.

Sir C. Jehangir: “The two major communities.”

Chairman : His point is, he does not want to confine himself to the major communities, but he wants to put it in this way that he is only recommending with regard to the major communities ; the Minor communities are not the subject matter of the recommendation at all. Cannot you meet him on that ?

Sir C. Jehangir: It is too dangerous. When you talk about separate electorate, we have no separate electorates and we do not want them.

Dr. Ambedkar : It means this, that in order to maintain the advantage of having a large existing electorate the suffrage should not be extended to the majority of the people. That is what it comes to, that in order that Sir Cowasji Jehangir should maintain the existing ratio of his population to the electoral strength the other people in the country should not be on the electoral strength.

Sir C. Jehangir: All I mean is that the smaller community should not be jeopardised.

Dr. Ambedkar: Your position is bound to be jeopardised in any lowering of the franchise, and if you feel that proportionately to the other voters your position goes down, then your safety lies either in trusting to the majority or in asking for separate electorates. But you cannot say : “Because we will be thrown down, we will sink, therefore other communities should not be given it.” It comes to nothing else but that.

Sir C. Jehangir: I do not say that.

Chairman : I am afraid that we will have to take our conclusion. Bear in mind, if you will, that we are agreeing to adult suffrage as an ideal. We have passed that part of the report. I have suggested the words “would as nearly as possible give at least major communities”.

First of all I will put it to the Committee that the words should remain as they are “give, if possible, each community”. Who is against that ?

A note will be taken that Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Colonel Gidney and Sardar Ujjal Singh dissent from the latter part.

Dr. Ambedkar: If you want to place it before the Franchise Committee we should still like to say that in our view the principle of adult suffrage

† Proceedings of the Sub-Committee No. VI (Franchise), pp. 171-72.

should be applied to the Depressed Classes.

Chairman: We have got that already.

Mr. Foot: Otherwise you would put an *addendum* to each paragraph.

Chairman: We cannot have that every time.

Mr. Jadhav: Brahmins and non-Brahmins and different communities in Bombay, Depressed Classes and all should be added.

Chairman: We cannot go into that.

(Dr. Ambedkar insists for recording his dissent from para. 13.)

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†*Mr. Foot:* There is only one point In view of the general objection based upon the claim for adult suffrage, need you have a note following each paragraph? Would not there be a general note at the end embodying the objection taken by Mr. Joshi and his colleagues?

Chairman: I think that would be better for you, I quite understand your position.

Dr. Ambedkar: I leave it to you.

Chairman: If I may say so, I think it might make you appear to be in rather a false position if, for instance, you appeared to be objecting to the women's vote.

Dr. Ambedkar: We have very good ground for doing that. We are quite prepared, in our minds, and we can meet whatever objection may be raised on that ground. We have no theoretical objection to women.

Mr. Jadhav: The maximum of 25 per cent will be taken up by women, and then there will be no necessity of any other lowering of the franchise.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE CONFERENCE

‡Summary of the Report submitted by Sub-Committee No. VI (Franchise)—16th January 1931

(Some of the paragraphs related to Dr. Ambedkar's proposals)

The Sub-Committee recommended *vide*:

Para. 4: (1) that an expert Franchise Commission should be appointed with instructions to provide for the immediate increase of the electorate so as to enfranchise not less than 10 per cent of the total population and indeed a larger number—but not more than 25 per cent of the total population—if that should, on a full investigation, be found practicable and desirable,

(2) that in addition to providing for this increase, the commission should consider the introduction of a scheme by which all adults not entitled to a direct vote would be grouped together in primary groups of

† Proceedings of the Sub-Committee No. VI (Franchise), pp. 175-76.

‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 178-79.

about 20 or in some other suitable manner, for the election of one representative member from each group, who would be entitled to vote in the Provincial elections either in the same constituencies as the directly qualified voters or in separate constituencies to be formed for them.

(Mr. Joshi, Mr. Shiva Rao, Dr. Ambedkar, Mr. Srinivasan, Mr. K. T. Paul and Mr. Jadhav regard these proposals as quite inadequate and consider that the immediate introduction of adult suffrage is both practicable and desirable.)

Para. 7: The Sub-Committee was of opinion that the Franchise Commission should consider the possibility of framing a suitable educational qualification as an additional qualification for the franchise.

Para. 8: The Sub-Committee agreed that the existing Military Service qualification should be retained and recommended that the Franchise Commission should consider the extension of this qualification so as to include service in the Auxiliary and Territorial Forces.

Para. 9: The Sub-Committee agreed that special qualifications should be prescribed for women and recommended that the Franchise Commission should devote special attention to this question in the light of all the evidence available including the recommendation of the Statutory Commission and the suggestion made in the Sub-Committee that the age-limit mentioned in the proposals of the Statutory Commission should be lowered from 25 to 21.

(Mr. Joshi, Mr. Shiva Rao, Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. Srinivasan dissent from the proposals in paragraphs 7, 8 and 9.)

13. The Sub-Committee considered it inadvisable to lay down any programme of automatic extension of the franchise. It preferred that it should be left to each Provincial Legislature to extend its franchise at its discretion, after a lapse of 10 years from the date of the introduction of the new constitution.

(Mr. Joshi, Mr. Shiva Rao, Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. Srinivasan considered that a preference of automatic extension of the franchise should be laid down.)

[No comments by Dr. Ambedkar in the discussion. Comments in Committee of the Whole Conference (16th January 1931) on Report of Sub-Committee No. VI (Franchise) by Mr. N. M. Joshi.]

Mr. Joshi: I want to make one point clear, on paragraph 9. It is said that Mr. Joshi, Mr. Shiva Rao, Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. Srinivasan dissent from the proposals in paragraphs 7, 8 and 9. I want it to be noted that we are not against the claims of women for some kind of qualification being created for them. Unfortunately, we had to take up the attitude which we did in the Committee, on account of the fact that the Committee fixed a certain limit to the total number of voters, being created, and in these circumstances it became our duty to protect the interests of the unenfranchised because if we accept the principle of giving votes to the

wives of those who are enfranchised, the limit of enfranchising those who had not the franchise is bound to be higher. On account of the special and difficult position in which we were placed we had to take up the attitude of not giving votes to the wives of those who are already enfranchised and thus depriving the unenfranchised of their rights. We are not against removing the disqualification of sex.

Chairman: Paragraph 9 noted