

therefore obvious that there is no way of earning a living which is open to the Untouchables so long as they live as a dependent part of the Hindu village. This economic dependence has also other consequences besides the condition of poverty and degradation which proceeds from it. The Hindu has a code of life, which is part of his religion. This code of life gives him many privileges and heaps upon the Untouchable many indignities which are incompatible with the sanctity of human life. By the New Life Movement which has taken hold of the Untouchables, the Untouchables all over India are fighting against the indignities and injustices which the Hindus in the name of their religion have heaped upon them. A perpetual war is going on every day in every village between the Hindus and the Untouchables. It does not see the light of the day. The Hindu Press is not prepared to advertise it lest it should injure the cause of their freedom in the eyes of the world. The silent struggle is however a fact. Under the village system the Untouchable has found himself greatly handicapped in his struggle for free and honourable life. It is a contest between the economically and socially strong Hindus and an economically poor and socially small group of Untouchables. That the Hindus most often succeed in pulling down Untouchables is largely due to many causes. The Hindu has the Police and the Magistracy on his side. In a quarrel between the Untouchables and the Hindus the Untouchables will never get protection from the Police or justice from the Magistrate. The Police and the Magistracy are Hindus, and they love their class more than their duty. But the chief weapon in the armoury of the Hindus is economic power which they possess over the poor Untouchables living in the village. The economic processes by which the Hindus can hold down the Untouchables in their struggle for equality are well described in the Report made by a Committee appointed by the Government of Bombay in 1928 to investigate into the grievances of the Depressed Classes* and from which the following extracts are made. It illuminates the situation in a manner so simple that even foreigners who do not know the mysteries of the Hindu social system may understand what tyranny the Hindus can practise upon the

*Before The Government of India Act 1935 the Untouchables were generally described as the Depressed Classes. The Act calls them Scheduled Castes.

Untouchables. The committee said :-

“Although we have recommended various remedies to secure to the Depressed Classes their rights to all public utilities we fear that there will be difficulties in the way of their exercising them for a long time to come. The first difficulty is the fear of open violence against them by the orthodox classes. It must be noted that the Depressed Classes form a small minority in every village, opposed to which is a great majority of the orthodox who are bent on protecting their interests and dignity from any supposed invasion by the Depressed Classes at any cost. The danger of prosecution by the Police has put a limitation upon the use of violence by the orthodox classes and consequently such cases are rare.

“The second difficulty arises from the economic position in which the Depressed Classes are found today. The Depressed Classes have no economic independence in most parts of the Presidency. Some cultivate the lands of the orthodox classes as their tenants at will. Others live on their earnings as farm labourers employed by the orthodox classes and the rest subsist on the food or grain given to them by the orthodox classes in lieu of service rendered to them as village servants. We have heard of numerous instances where the orthodox classes have used their economic power as a weapon against those Depressed Classes in their villages, when the latter have dared to exercise their rights, and have evicted them from their land, and stopped their employment and discontinued their remuneration as village servants. This boycott is often planned on such an extensive scale as to include the prevention of the Depressed Classes from using the commonly used paths and the stoppage of sale of the necessities of life by the village Bania. According to the evidence, sometimes small causes suffice for the proclamation of a social boycott against the Depressed Classes. Frequently it follows on the exercise by the Depressed Classes of their right to the use of the common well, but cases have been by no means rare where a stringent boycott has been proclaimed simply because a Depressed Class man has put on the sacred thread, has bought a piece of land, has put on good clothes or ornaments, or has carried a marriage procession with the bride-groom on the horse through the public street.”

This demand for separate settlements is a new demand which has been put forth by the Untouchables for the first time. It is not possible to say as yet as to what attitude the Hindus will take to this demand. But there is no doubt that this is the most vital demand made by the Untouchables, and I am sure that whatever may happen with regard to the other demands they are not likely to

yield on this. The Hindus are prone to think that they and the Untouchables are joined together by the will of God as the Bible says the husband is joined to his wife and they will say in the language of the Bible that those whom God is pleased to join let no man put asunder. The Untouchables are determined to repudiate any such view of their relations with the Hindus. They want the link to be broken and a complete divorce from the Hindus effected without delay.

The only questions that arise are those of the cost it will involve in and time it will take. As to cost, the Untouchables say it should be financed by Government. It will no doubt fall for the most part on the Hindus. But there is no reason why the Hindus should not bear the same. The Hindus own everything. They own the land in this country. They control trade, and they also own the State. Every source of revenue and profit is controlled by them. Other communities and particularly the Untouchables are just hewers of wood and drawers of water. The social system helps the Hindus to have a monopoly of everything. There is no reason why they should not be asked to pay the cost of this scheme when they practically own the country.

As to time, it matters very little even if the transplantation of the Untouchables to new settlements takes 20 years. Those who have been the bounden slaves of the Hindus for a thousand years may well be happy with the prospect of getting their freedom by the end of 20 years.

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CHAPTER IX

CASTE AND CONSTITUTION

It might well be asked why should such questions as are raised by these demands of the Untouchables find a place in the Constitution? Nowhere in the world have the makers of constitution been compelled to deal with such matters. This is an important question and I admit that an answer is required on the part of those who raise such questions and insist that they are of constitutional importance. The answer to this question is to my mind quite obvious. It is the character of the Indian Society which invests this question with constitutional importance. It is the Caste system and the Religious system of the Hindus which is solely responsible for this. This short statement may not suffice to give an adequate explanation to foreigners of the social and political repercussions of the Hindu Caste and Religious systems. But it is equally true that in the brief compass of this paper it is impossible to deal exhaustively with the repercussion of the caste system on the constitution. I would refer for a full and complete exposition of the subject to my book on the Annihilation of Castes which I wrote some time ago. For I believe it will shed sufficient light on the social and economical ramification of the Caste and Religious system of the Hindus. In this Paper I will content myself with making the following general observations. In framing a constitution the Social structure must always be kept in mind. The political structure must be related to the social structure. The operation of the social forces is not confined to the social field. They pervade the political field also. This is the view point of the Untouchables and I am sure this is incontrovertible. The Hindus are quite conscious of this argument and also of its strength. But what they do is to deny that the structure of the Hindu Society is in any way different from the structure of European society. They attempt to meet the argument by saying that there is no difference between the Caste system of the Hindus and the Class system in Western Society. This is of course palpably false and discloses a gross ignorance both of the Caste system as well as of the Class system. The Caste system is a system which is infested with the spirit of isolation and in fact it makes isolation of one Caste from

another a matter of virtue. There is isolation in the Class system but it does not make isolation a virtue nor does it prohibit social intercourse. The Class system it is true produces groups. But they are not akin to Caste groups. The groups in the Class System are only non-social while the Castes in the Caste system are in their mutual relations definitely and positively anti-social. If this analysis is true then there can be no denying the fact that the social structure of Hindu Society is different and consequently its political structure must be different. What the Untouchables are asking, to put it in general terms, is a proper correlation of means to ends. End may be the same. But because the end is the same it does not follow that the means must also be the same. Indeed ends may remain the same and yet means must vary according to time and circumstances. Those who are true to their ends must admit this fact and must agree to adopt different means if they wish that the end they have in view is not stultified.

In this connection there is another thing which I would like to mention. As I have said, it is the Caste basis of Hindu society which requires that its political structure should be different and suited to its social structure. There are people who admit this but argue that caste can be abolished from Hindu society. I deny that. Those who advocate such a view think that caste is an institution like a Club or a Municipality or a County Council. This is a gross error. Caste is Religion, and religion is anything but an institution. It may be institutionalized but it is not the same as the institution in which it is embedded. Religion is an influence or force suffused through the life of each individual moulding his character, determining his actions and reactions, his likes and dislikes. These likes and dislikes, actions and reactions are not institutions which can be lopped off. They are forces and influences which can be dealt with by controlling them or counteracting them. If the social forces are to be prevented from contaminating politics and perverting it to the aggrandizement of the few and the degradation of the many then it follows that the political structure must be so framed that it will contain mechanisms which will bottle the prejudices and nullify the injustice which the social forces are likely to cause if they were let loose.

So far I have explained in a general way why the peculiar social structure of the Hindu Society calls for a peculiar political structure

and why the marker of the Indian Constitution cannot escape problems which did not plague the makers of Constitution in other countries. Let me now take the specific question, namely why it is necessary that in the Indian Constitution the Communal Scheme must find its place and why in the Public Services for the Untouchables should be specified and should be assigned to them as their separate possession. The justification for these demands is easy and obvious. It arises from the undeniable fact that what divides the Untouchables from the Hindus is not mere matter of difference on non-essentials. It is a case of fundamental antagonism and antipathy. No evidence of this antipathy and antagonism is necessary. The system of Untouchability is enough evidence of the inherent antagonism between the Hindus and the Untouchables. Given this antagonism it is simply impossible to ask the Untouchables to depend upon and trust the Hindus to do them justice when the Hindu get their freedom and independence from the British. Who can say that the Untouchable is not right in saying that he will not trust the Hindu? The Hindu is as alien to him as a European is and what is worse the European alien is neutral but the Hindu is most shamefully partial to his own class and antagonistic to the Untouchables. There can be no doubt that the Hindus have all these ages despised, disregarded and disowned the Untouchables as belonging to a different and contemptible strata of Society if not to a different race. By their own code of conduct the Hindus behave as the most exclusive class steeped in their own prejudices and never sharing the aspirations of the Untouchables with whom they have nothing to do and whose interests are opposed to theirs. Why should the Untouchables entrust their fate to such people? How could the Untouchables be legitimately asked to leave their interest into the hands of a people who as a matter of fact are opposed to them in their motives and interests, who do not sympathise with the living forces operating among the Untouchables, who are themselves not charged with their wants, cravings and desires, who are inimical to their aspirations, who in all certainty will deny justice to them and to discriminate against them and who by reason of the sanction of their religion have not been and will not be ashamed to practise against the Untouchables any kind of inhumanity. The only safety against such people is to have the political rights which the Untouchables claim as safeguards against the tyranny of the Hindu Majority defined in the Constitution. Are the Untouchables extravagant in demanding this safety?

CHAPTER X

SOME QUESTIONS TO THE HINDUS AND THEIR FRIENDS

IN the midst of this political controversy one notices that the Hindus are behaving differently towards different communities. The Untouchables are not the only people in India who are demanding political safeguards. Like the Untouchables the Muslims and the Sikhs have also presented their political demands to the Hindus. Both the Mussalmans and the Sikhs can in no sense be called helpless minorities. On the contrary they are the two most powerful communities in India. They are educationally quite advanced and economically well placed. By their social standing they are quite as high as the Hindus. Their organization is a solid structure and no Hindu will dare to take any liberties with them much less cause any harm to them.

What are the political demands of the Muslims and the Sikhs? It is not possible to set them out here. But the general opinion is that they are very extravagant and the Hindus resent them very much. In contrast with this the condition and the demands of the Untouchables are just the opposite of the condition of the Muslims and the Sikhs. They are a weak, helpless and despised minority. They are at the mercy of all and there are not a few occasions when Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs combine to oppress them. Of all the Minorities they need the greatest protection and the strongest safeguards. Their demands are of the modest kind and there is nothing in them of that over-insurance which may be said to characterize the demands of the Muslims and the Sikhs. What is the reaction of the Hindus to the demands of the Muslims, the Sikhs and the Untouchables? Notwithstanding the extravagance of their demands the Hindus are ever ready to conciliate the Mussalmans and the Sikhs, particularly the former. They not only want to be correct in their relationship with the Mussalmans, they are prepared to be considerate and even

generous. Mr. Rajagopalachari's political exploits are too fresh to be forgotten. Suddenly he enrolled himself as a soldier of the Muslim League and proclaimed a war on his own kin and former friends and for what? Not for their not failure to grant the reasonable demands of the Muslim but for their conceding the most extravagant one, namely Pakistan !! What is Mr. Rajagopalachari's response to the demands of the Untouchables? So far I am aware there is no response. He does not even seem to be aware that there are 60 million Untouchables in this country and that they too like the Muslims are demanding political safeguards. This attitude of studied silence and cold indifference of Mr. Rajagopalachari is typical of the whole body of Hindus. The Hindus have been opposing the political demands of the Untouchables with the tenacity of a bulldog and the perversity of a renegade. The Press is theirs and they make a systematic attempt to ignore the Untouchables. When they fail to ignore them they buy their leaders; and where they find a leader not open to purchase they systematically abuse him, misrepresent him, blackmail him, and do everything possible that lies in their power to suppress him and silence him: Any such leader who is determined to fight for the cause of the Untouchables he and his followers are condemned as anti-National. So exasperated the Hindus become by the political demands of the Untouchables that they in their rage refuse to recognize how generous the Untouchables are in consenting to be ruled by a Hindu Majority in return for nothing more than a few political safeguards. The Hindus are not aware of what Carson said to Redmond when the two were negotiating for a United Ireland. The incident is worth recalling. Redmond said to Carson "Ask any safeguards you like for the Protestant Minority of Ulster, I am prepared to give them; but let us have a United Ireland under one constitution." Carson's reply was curt and brutal. He said without asking for time to consider the offer "Damn your safeguards, I don't want to be ruled by you". The Hindus ought to be thankful that the Untouchables have not taken the attitude which Carson took. But far from being thankful they are angry because the Untouchables are daring to ask for political rights. In the opinion of the Hindus the Untouchables have no right to ask for any rights. What does this difference of attitude on the part of the Hindus to the political demands of the different communities indicate?

It indicates three things (1) They want to get all power to themselves, (2) They are not prepared to base their political institutions on the principle of justice, (3) Where they have to surrender power they will surrender it to the forces of truculence and the mailed fist but never to the dictates of justice.

This attitude of the Hindus forms the tragic scene of Indian politics. Unfortunately this is not the only tragic scene with Indian Politics. There is another equally tragic in character. It concerns the friends of the Hindus in foreign countries. The Hindus have created many friends for themselves all over the world by their clever propaganda, particularly in America, "the land of liberty". The tragedy is that these friends of the Hindus are supporting a side without examining whether it is the side which they in point of justice ought to support. No American friends of the Hindus have, so far as I know, asked what do the Hindus stand for? Are they fighting for freedom or are they fighting for power? If the Hindus are fighting for power, are the American friends justified in helping the Hindus? If the Hindus are engaged in a war for freedom, must they not be asked to declare their war aims? This is the least bit these American friends could do. Since the American friends have thought it fit to respond to the Hindu call for help it is necessary to tell these American friends of the Hindus what wrong they will be doing to the cause of freedom by their indiscriminate and blind support to the Hindu side. What I want to say follows the line of argument which the Hindus themselves have taken. Since the war started the Hindus, both inside and outside the Congress, demanded that the British should declare their war aims. Day in and day out the British were told, "If you want our help, tell us what you are fighting for? If you are fighting for freedom, tell us if you will give us freedom in the name of which you are waging this war" There was a stage when the Hindus were prepared to be satisfied with a promise from the British that India will have the benefit of freedom for which the British are waging. They have gone a stage further. They are no longer content with a promise. Or to put it in the language of a congressman, "They refuse to accept a postdated cheque on a crashing Bank". They wanted freedom to be given right now, before the Hindus would consent to give their voluntary support to the War effort. That is the significance of Mr. Gandhi's new slogan of "Quit India". Mr. Churchill on whom the

responsibility of answering these questions fell replied, that his war aim was victory over the enemy. The Hindus were not satisfied. They questioned him further "What are you going to do after you get that victory? What social order you propose to establish after the war?" There was a storm when Mr. Churchill replied that he hoped to restore traditional Britain. These were legitimate questions I agree. But do not the friends of Hindus think that if it is legitimate to ask the very same questions to Mr. Churchill it is also legitimate to ask the very same questions to Mr. Gandhi and the Hindus? The British had declared war against Hitler. Mr. Gandhi has declared war against the British. The British have an Empire. So have the Hindus. For is not Hindumism a form of imperialism and are not the Untouchables a subject race, owing there allegiance and their servitude to their Hindu Master? If Churchill must be asked to declare his war aims how could anybody avoid asking Mr. Gandhi and the Hindus to declare their war aims? Both say their war is a war for freedom. If that is so both have a duty to declare what their war aims. are. What does Mr. Gandhi propose to do after he gets his victory over the British? Does he propose to use the freedom he hopes to get to make the Untouchables free or will he allow the freedom he gets to be used to endow the Hindus with more power than they now possess, to hold the Untouchables as their bondsmen? Will Mr. Gandhi and Hindus establish a New Order or will they be content with rehabilitation of the traditional Hindu India, with its castes and its untouchability, with its denial of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity? I should think that these questions should be asked by those American friends to Mr. Gandhi and the Hindus who are helping them in this so-called war for Freedom. These questions are legitimate and pertinent. It is only answers to such questions which will enable these American friends to know whether Mr. Gandhi's war is a war for freedom or a war for power. These questions are not merely pertinent and legitimate, they are also necessary. The reason is obvious to those who know the Hindus. The Hindus have an innate and inveterate conservatism and they have a religion which is incompatible with liberty, equality and fraternity i. e. with democracy. Inequality, no doubt, exists everywhere in the world. It is largely to conditions and circumstances. But it never has had the support of religion. With the Hindus it is

different. There is not only inequality in Hindu Society but inequality is the official doctrine of the Hindu religion. The Hindu has no will to equality. His inclination and his attitude are opposed to the democratic doctrine of one man one value. Every Hindu is a social Tory and political Radical. Mr Gandhi is no exception to this rule. He presents himself to the world as a liberal but his liberalism is only a very thin veneer which sits very lightly on him as dust does on one's boots. You scratch him and you will find that underneath his liberalism he is a blue blooded Tory. He stands for the cursed caste. He is a fanatic Hindu upholding the Hindu religion. See how the Hindus read the famous American Declaration of Independence of 1776. The Hindu is mad with joy when he reads the Declaration to say—

‘That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organising its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.’

But he stops there. He never bothers about the earlier part of that Declaration which says :—

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

The implementation of this Declaration has no doubt been a tragic episode in the history of the United States. There have been two views about this document. Some hold that it is a great spiritual document. Others have held that it immortalizes many untruths. In any case this charter of human Liberty was not applied to the Negroes. What is however important to note is the faith underlying the Declaration. There is no doubt about it and certainly no doubt about the faith of Jefferson, the author of this Declaration. He never forgot that while enunciating a long principle, his country decided to take a short step. He wrote, “I am sorry for my countrymen.” It may be no recompense to the Negroes. But it is by no means small comfort to know that the conscience of the country is not altogether dead and the flame of righteous indignation may

one day burst forth. The Negroes may laugh at this. But the fact is that even this much comfort the Untouchables cannot hope to have from the Hindus. People to-day are proud of the fact that the Hindus are a solid mass. But strange as it may appear, to the Untouchables of India, this is more a matter of dread than comfort—as the “Solid South” is to the Negroes in the United States. Where could anyone find in India among the Hindus any person with a sense of shame and a sense of remorse such as was felt by Jefferson ? I should have thought the Hindus would be too ashamed of this stigma of Untouchability on them to appear before the world with a demand for their freedom. That they do clamour for freedom—the pity is that they get support—is evidence that their conscience is dead, that they feel no righteous indignation, and to them Untouchability is neither a moral sin nor a civil wrong. It is just a sport as cricket or hockey is. The friends of Mr. Gandhi will no doubt point to him and his work. But what has Mr. Gandhi done to reform Hindu Society that his work and life be cited by democrats as a witness of hope and assurance ? His friends have been informed of the Harijan Sevak Sangh and they continue to ask, “Is not Mr. Gandhi working to uplift the Harijans ?” Is he ? What is the object of this Harijan Sevak Sangh ? Is it to prepare the Untouchables to win their freedom from their Hindu masters, to make them their social and political equals ? Mr. Gandhi had never had any such object before him and he never wants to do this, and I say that he cannot do this. This is the task of a democrat and a revolutionary. Mr. Gandhi is neither. He is a Tory by birth as well as by faith. The work of the Harijan Sevak Sangh is not to raise the Untouchables. His main object, as every self-respecting Untouchable knows, is to make India safe for Hindus and, Hinduism. He is certainly not fighting the battle of the Untouchables. On the contrary by distributing through the Harijan Sevak Sangh petty gifts to petty Untouchables he is buying, benumbing and drawing the claws of the opposition of the Untouchables which he knows is the only force which will disrupt the caste system and will establish real democracy in India. Mr. Gandhi wants Hinduism and the Hindu caste system to remain intact. Mr. Gandhi also wants the Untouchables to remain as Hindus. But as what ? not as partners but as poor relations of the Hindus. Mr. Gandhi is kind to the Untouchables. But for what ?

Only because he wants to kill, by kindness, them and their movement for separation and independence from Hindus. The Harijan Sevak Sangh is one of the many techniques which has enabled Mr. Gandhi to be a successful humbug.

Turn to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He draws his inspiration from the Jeffersonian Declaration; but has he ever expressed any shame or any remorse about the condition of the 60 millions of Untouchables ? Has he anywhere referred to them in the torrent of literature which comes out from his pen ? Go to the youth of India, if you want. The youths who fill the Universities and who follow the Pandit's lead are ever ready to fight the political battle of India against the British. But what do these children of the leisured class Hindus have done to redress the wrongs their forefathers have done to the Untouchables ? You can get thousands of Hindu youths to join political propaganda but you cannot get one single youth to take up the cause of breaking the caste system or of removing Untouchability. Democracy and democratic life, justice and conscience which are sustained by a belief in democratic principle are foreign to the Hindu mind. To leave democracy and freedom in such Tory hands would be the greatest mistake democrats could commit. It is therefore very necessary for the American friends of the Hindus to ask Mr. Gandhi and the Hindus to declare their War aims, so that they may be sure that the fight of the Hindus against British is really and truly a fight for freedom. The Congress and the Hindus will no doubt refer their inquiring foreign friends to the Congress Resolutions regarding minority rights. But I would like to warn the American friends of the Hindus not to be content with the "glittering generalities" contained in congress declaration of Minority Rights. To declare the rights of the minority is one thing and to have them implemented is another. And why should the friends of the Hindus if they are really friends of freedom, not insist on implementation straight away ? Are not the Hindus saying that they would not be satisfied with mere declaration of freedom from the British ? Are they not asking for immediate implementation ? If they want the British to implement their War aims, why should the Hindus be not prepared to implement their war aims ? American friends of the Hindus, I am sure, will not be misled by the Hindu propaganda that this war of the Hindus against the British is a War for freedom. Before helping the Hindus they

must get themselves satisfied that the Hindus who are urging that their war against the British is a war for freedom will not turn out to be the enemies of the freedom of millions of Indians like the Untouchables. That is the plea I am making on behalf of the 60 millions of the Untouchables of India. And above all let not the American friends think that checks and balances in a Constitution—the demand for checks and balances suited to Indian conditions—are not necessary because the struggle is carried on by a people and is carried on in the name of freedom. Friends of democracy and freedom cannot afford to forget the words of John Adams when he said—

“We may appeal to every page of history we have hitherto turned over, for proof irrefragable that the people when they have been unchecked, have been as unjust, tyrannical, brutal, barbarous , and cruel as any king or Senate possessed of uncontrollable power : the majority has eternally and without one exception usurped over the rights of the minority.”

If all Majorities must be subjected, to checks and balances how much more must it be so in the case of the Hindus ?

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INDEX

- American Declaration of
Independence : 430
Annihilation of Castes : 423
Anti-semitism : 378, 397
Bible : 422

Campbell, Bannerman : 418
Carson, Sir Edward : 427
Caste system : 423-24
Churchill, Sir Winston : 428-29
Class system : 423-24
Commission for Scheduled Castes : 404-05
Communal Scheme : 408, 411, 414, 425
Congress, Indian National : 401-02, 407

Dicey, Prof. : 415

Equality : 428

Fraternity : 428
Freedom, India's : 401-02

Gandhi M. K. : 407, 428-31

Harijan Sevak Sangh : 431-32
Hindus : 398, 401-02, 406-07, 410, 415-33
Hinduism : 401, 430
Hindu Press : 420
Hindu Social System : 410

Imperialism : 397, 401-02
Indian Constitution : 425
Institute of International Affairs : 402
Institute of Public Relation : 397, 402

Jefferson, Thomas : 430, 432
Jews : 397, 398, 401
Joint Electorates : 412-14

Liberty : 428

Muslim : 401, 415, 426
Muslim League : 427

'Nation' the : 401
Nationalism : 410
National Scheme : 408, 411, 414
Nazis : 398
Negroes : 398, 401, 430, 431
Nehru, Jawaharlal : 432
Quit India : 428

Parliamentary Government : 409
Political Majority : 415-16
Political Minority : 415-16

Recialism : 397
Romans : 401
Scheduled Castes Conference.
 at Nagpur : 403,
 Demands of : 404
Sikhs : 426
Separate Electorates : 404, 412-14
Separate Settlements : 419
Serfdom : 401

Radicals : 430
Rajgopalachari, Mr. C. : 427
Redmond, Mr. : 427

Slaves : 398, 401
Slavery : 401
Spartans : 401
State Committee : 420-21
'Statesman', the : 401
Swaraj : 405

Tory : 430
Untouchables (Scheduled Castes) :
 405, 408,
 410-27
 Political demands of : 403-08
 As separate entity : 403
 Separate Settlements of : 405-06
 Reservations for : 418-19
Untouchability : 401, 418-20

Villeinage : 401
Villeins : 401

Ward, Mr. : 401

