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Topics of the Week.

Ordinance Bill.

AFTER a debate lasting over the best part of five days the Assembly agreed to refer the Ordinance Bill to a select committee. This result was not unexpected by anybody who knew anything of the present personnel of the Assembly. We cannot however pretend to be sorry over the rejection of the motion for the circulation of the Bill for eliciting public opinion, for even if that course had been decided upon it is doubtful if it would have added anything to our knowledge on the subject. There would be some force in trying to gain time, which was apparently the object underlying the motion for circulation, if the unofficial benches ever hoped to be strong enough to defeat the passage of the Bill; but as the Assembly is constituted at present, nothing but a miracle would bring about such a result. The next best is to try and get the Bill amended in the right direction. Even of this there does not appear to be much chance, for as pointed out by the Home Member, the Government "would not be prepared to accept as fulfilling the object of this Bill any pale shadow of the provisions which we have inserted." He also added: "we must be satisfied that the efficacy of the essential powers is not impaired." All which clearly means that any substantial amendment of the Bill is out of the question. The only thing that may be hoped for is a limitation on the life of the measure, for which, if Mr. James was correctly representing their mind, even the European group may be expected to press.

As regards the speeches in the debate, most of them were of a hum-drum nature and did not adduce a single new or striking argument either for or against the Bill. This is hardly surprising, seeing that the Ordinances have engaged the country's attention for the last nine months, during which the matter has been discussed threadbare. The Home Member's

speeches in support of the Bill were nothing but an amplification of the statement issued by Government on January 4 last justifying the issue of the Ordinances. The Government tried to justify their action in attempting to make the Ordinances the ordinary law of the land on the ground that the reformed Government would find the special powers they confer very handy in dealing with sudden emergencies of the nature with which they themselves were faced at the beginning of the year. So, let all concerned take note that it is not a desire to consolidate their own position but a solicitude for the future of this unhappy land that has prompted them to face all the odium of placing on the statute book a law which important sections of opinion combine in regarding as even more odious than the notorious Rowlatt Act. What altruism!

Have the Ordinances proved a success? Have they, in other words, achieved the purpose for which they were intended, viz., of throttling the civil disobedience movement? We look in vain through the Home Member's speeches for a categorical answer. Whatever may be his opinion on the point, Sir Abdullah Suharawardy, whose vote in support of the Bill should protect him from any charge of irresponsibility, unequivocally represented the view widely held in Bengal that the Bengal Ordinance at any rate had failed to check terrorism—a view corroborated by recent events in that province. So far as the anti-Congress Ordinances are concerned, even their staunchest advocate cannot with any show of reason claim that they have permanently crushed the national organisation and this in spite of the widespread use of methods hardly distinguishable from martial law.

In his speech on the Bill, published elsewhere in this issue, Mr. Joshi explained how non-co-operation secured its recruits. He declared that "Government had made it abundantly clear that they would be influenced only by the method of non-co-operation." "Was it not" he pertinently asked; "after the non-co-operation of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru that they restored the Round Table Conference method?" He also added that the Congress had the sympathy of the people throughout the country which the passing of the Bill would, he prophesied, only serve to increase.

Terrorist Outrages.

THE daring outrage by terrorists at Pahartali near Chittagong last week has startled the whole country beyond measure and has received universal condemnation. On the night of September 25 a social function was in progress in the European Railway Institute where the local European and Anglo-Indian community had foregathered and was indulging in dancing and other forms of merry-making when all of a sudden bombs were thrown in their midst and shots from guns, rifles, etc., were fired in quick succession. This resulted in the instantaneous death

of an elderly European woman and more or less serious injuries to thirteen others, including five women. The raiders, it is said, numbered ten and the attack was, according to newspaper reports, "carried out with lightning-like rapidity and almost perfect organisation." The party of raiders was, surprisingly enough, able to make good its escape and included an educated Bengali girl who was found dead not far away from the Institute having perhaps poisoned herself. The feeling of horror and indignation aroused throughout the land was echoed in both houses of the Indian legislature which was then in session and which expressed its condemnation of the outrage and its sympathy with the sufferers in suitable terms. Another terrorist crime which shocked public imagination was the second attempt made last week on the life of Sir A. Watson, Editor of the *Statesman*. While driving home in his car, Sir Alfred Watson was followed by half a dozen Bengalis in another car and was fired at at close range. He, along with his lady secretary and a servant, both of whom were in the car with him, is reported to have received serious injuries. We are however glad to learn that there is no danger to his life. In this case too the assailants were able to make good their escape. It is only natural that these shocking incidents should fill the European and Anglo-Indian community not only of Chittagong but of the whole of Bengal with a deep sense of nervousness as to their own safety. But let them not lose their balance of mind. We know it will be said that the advice is more easily tendered than acted upon. Even so, never was the need for cool heads greater than at the present time, for it appears from a resolution passed by the Bengal Europeans that they have grown not merely indignant but hysterical over the incident and have lost all self-control. In this resolution they have in all seriousness proposed the postponement of all reforms for Bengal till terrorism had ceased. We hope this short-sighted advice will not be followed by those in authority who too must show extraordinary tact in handling a situation which is without doubt full of difficulty. Reprisals like heavy fines to be inflicted upon the whole locality for its failure to give information leading to the arrest of the criminals, which seem to be officially favoured at the moment, will only serve to worsen the situation and should be avoided. The real remedy is the granting of a liberal measure of reforms without delay which will convince public opinion about the *bona fides* of the Government and will induce it to stand by them in their fight against terrorism. No amount of Ordinance rule will ease the situation, as it has clearly failed to do in Bengal.

Communal Poison in Education.

How deeply communal poison has permeated our public life is conclusively shown by the proceedings of the Bombay Legislative Council last week in connection with a non-official bill providing for the reservation of seats for particular communities in the Schools Committee of the Bombay Municipal Corporation. The Committee consists of sixteen members, twelve of whom must be members of the Corporation and the remaining non-members. The Bill in question tried to introduce the communal principle for the first time in bodies connected with the Corporation by suggesting the reservation of seven out of the twelve seats,—3 for the Muslims, 3 for the backward classes and 1 for the depressed classes. The attempt naturally caused unusual stir in Bombay and the Schools Committee itself entered an emphatic protest against it, the parent body, the Corporation, passing an adjournment motion to register its strong disapproval of the innovation.

The Mayor, apparently acting with the support of his brother-corporators, telegraphed to the Minister, earnestly pleading for a postponement of the further consideration of the obnoxious Bill. Attempts were made on the floor of the House itself to get the Bill postponed by asking first for its reference to select committee, then for its circulation with a view to eliciting public opinion and lastly, for its further stages being taken up after the official business was finished. All this however proved unavailing. The Bill was carried through all its stages in a comparatively short time and now forms part of the law of the land. This was made possible by the help of the official *bloc*. It was only the four members of the Government that refrained from voting, but the nominated officials voted *en bloc* for it. The result was that its first reading was carried by 4 to 1, which shows at what heavy discount nationalism is in the Bombay legislature. It is no use blaming the poor mover of the Bill for having sponsored it. In doing so he was doing nothing more than bringing the constitution of the Bombay Schools Committee in line with that of similar bodies associated with local bodies all over the Presidency. For the introduction of this communal principle in the school boards set up in the districts and the more important towns the Government and they alone are responsible. The Bill as passed is apparently so abhorrent to public feeling in Bombay City that we daresay we have not heard the last of the agitation against it.

Uneconomic Economy.

THE action of the Bombay Government in cutting down one session of the Council this year on grounds of economy was deeply resented by the members, the more earnest-minded among whom did not hesitate to communicate their protest to the Governor as the final authority in such matters. Last week the Council took the very desirable course of formally informing him that normally it would not be satisfied with anything less than three sessions. One cannot say that the number is adequate; but certainly three is better than two. The really better plan would be to have short sessions every two months which would enable public grievances to be ventilated without much delay. The Council's request for longer time for non-official business is also a step in the right direction, for it is a matter of common knowledge that in the matter of apportionment of time for official and non-official business the latter has invariably received step-motherly treatment at the hands of Government with the result that important questions sometimes fail to come before the Council for want of time.

Indianisation of Port Trust Services.

LAST week the Council of State discussed an important resolution which was moved by Sir Phiroze C. Sethna. In this he asked for effective action to bring about substantial Indianisation in the services of the Port Trusts which number seven. Ten years ago the Council passed a similar resolution at the instance of the same gentleman; but the intervening period has not witnessed any considerable improvement in the matter of the admission of Indians to the higher services under the Trusts. But a little reflection will show that there is hardly anything in this which need cause surprise. For to ask for Indianisation of the services in the control of the Port Trusts without at the same time securing an Indian majority among the Trustees themselves is like putting the cart before the horse. So long as Europeans are in the ascendant in these bodies, it is useless, human

nature being what it is, to expect them to be in a particular hurry to promote Indianisation. Sir Phiroze too seems now to be taking this view and devoted a considerable part of his speech in support of his resolution to showing how deplorably slow was the pace of Indianisation of the Trustees themselves. The total number of Trustees ten years ago was 90, out of whom only 18 were Indians. The total has risen by 20 to 110 during these ten years without disturbing to a material extent the dominant position which the Europeans enjoy on these bodies. 74 out of these 110 seats are at present held by them while only 36 have gone to Indians! In Bombay, where Indians occupy a very important position in relation to commerce and industry, not more than 9 out of a total of 22 Trustees are Indians. The results of this European dominance on these bodies are to be seen in the snail's pace at which the Trust Services are being Indianised, and favouritism to Europeans and injustice to Indians in the matter of appointments, of which Sir Phiroze gave some very glaring instances. Coming back to the question of Indianisation, Sir Phiroze had no difficulty in showing on the strength of information furnished by the Government themselves that out of 144 appointments carrying initial salaries of Rs. 500 to Rs. 999 made by the Port Trusts during the last ten years and a half, only 14, or about 10 per cent., had gone to Indians. The proportion dwindles down in the higher grades until when we come to the highest grade of Rs. 2,000, we find that the Trustees could not persuade themselves to confer the appointment upon a single Indian. Was it because no competent Indians were available? Those, like Sir Phiroze who know anything about the matter, do not think so. The evidence produced by Sir Phiroze in support of his resolution was unanswerable and the Council had no alternative but to pass it.

Unconvincing.

THERE can be no doubt that Mr. J. R. Glorney Bolton was representing the opinions of a large section of Britishers when in his letter of the 18th Sept. last to the London Times, he said:

Mr. Gandhi, however, should not forget that the Englishman is genuinely concerned for the welfare of the "untouchable." Many Conservatives will conscientiously oppose the new reforms if they cannot convince themselves that

the "untouchable" is not to become subject to a "Brahmin tyranny."

Mr. Bolton will, however, find it very hard to convince the Indian, be he an "untouchable" or a "Brahmin", of the sincerity of his concern, and that it was not merely an excuse to hang on to power in India. It may do him some good to read the vigorous criticism of British administration by no other than Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, an "untouchable", who was selected by the British Government to represent the "untouchables" at the Round Table Conference. In his first speech at the first session of the Conference, Dr. Ambedkar, in defending the "momentous" change in the attitude of the depressed classes towards British rule in India, said: "We have judged of the existing administration solely in the light of our own circumstances and we have found it wanting in some of the most essential elements of a good government." He went on to accuse the Government that it had "all along used them (the depressed classes) as an excuse for its continued existence." It is apparent, therefore, that the "Untouchables" have yet to be convinced of the concern of the Britishers for their welfare.

Mr. Bolton's assertion would have been more convincing if the Britisher had shown similar concern for the suppressed natives and Asiatics in South Africa and East Africa. In East Africa non-Europeans continue to be treated as "untouchables" under the direct rule of Great Britain, and the handful of white men are given a predominant voice in the administration. In South Africa even to-day Britain could bring enormous pressure to bear on the Government, notwithstanding her Dominion Status, to treat the non-Europeans better. England did not hesitate to embark on a tariff war against Ireland when the latter offended her. England need not go to war with South Africa in the defence of the non-European British citizen, notwithstanding the precedent of the Boer War. England has only to take the South African cry for independence at its face value and decline to have any concern for the defence of that country against external invasion. Japan will soon have something to say to South Africa, and the South African attitude will undergo a surprising change. Why, even to-day her attitude towards Japan is different from and better than her attitude towards the Asiatic and the Native within her own borders. If South Africa discriminates against non-Europeans, Great Britain is no less responsible for it than white South Africa.

FRESH MOVES

IT is not surprising that in certain quarters, particularly in the Punjab, notes of dissent have been raised against the Poona Pact. Whatever be the merits or the demerits of the Pact, there is however this supreme consideration in its favour that it is Swadeshi; it was an agreement reached by Indians themselves without pressure or dictation from outside. It has been ratified by the Hindu leaders' Conference in Bombay and by public meetings in various other cities and towns. It has been accepted by the British Government, and the Mahatma has threatened to defend it with his life. Of course, both the Mahatma and the Government have left the door open to further negotiations between the parties concerned, and if a change is agreed to, they will not stand in the way. But there is no chance of the

leaders of the depressed classes agreeing to reopen the Pact so soon; at any rate, not until some experience is gained of its working. Whatever be the drawbacks of the Pact, either in itself or as compared with the Award, it is a settled fact. And it is up to the Hindu community as well as other communities to stand by it loyally and stoutly. An ideal solution is impracticable; if the Pact is denounced, the Award will take its place, and it is by no means an ideal solution.

II.

The modification of the Government's Communal Award as a result of the Poona Pact has raised the hopes of other communities and bodies that by mutual agreement other modifications may be effected. The Indian Christian community is among the first to be

stirred with this hope. It is easy to understand. The preponderating section of the community has all along been against separate electorates and insisted on common electorates. It was only in Madras that a section of the Roman Catholics stood out for separate electorates. Nevertheless, the British Government chose, most gratuitously, to thrust separate electorates on the whole community. The leaders of the Indian Christian community in different parts of India have initiated steps for the purpose of negotiating an agreement between themselves and the Hindu leaders. The spontaneity of the move is most gratifying, and there is every hope that an agreement will soon be reached which will replace the relevant clauses in the Government's Award.

The women of India are another section who vehemently objected to communal division of themselves. But the Government chose to divide them so. They have also protested against the Award and are seeking means of eliminating the objectionable feature. But who are their opponents with whom they might negotiate an agreement? The women are not divided on the subject; they are unanimous. The men and women of India are not divided on the subject; the men have not insisted that women should be divided communally. The division was entirely the handiwork of the Government; it was perhaps a corollary of their acceptance of communal electorates for the Muslims.

There is a stir among the Muslims as well to negotiate an agreed settlement with the Hindus and other communities. There are, besides, movements in some provinces to arrive at agreed settlements limited to particular provinces.

The principal improvement desired is to find some common ground on which all communities shall meet for political action. Common electorates are therefore essential. They must be combined with guarantees for the minorities which will be satisfactory to them. One method which holds out hopes of acceptability is that of adult franchise with reservation of seats on population basis. Compared with the permanent and incalculable mischief that the communal virus contained in the Government's Award will do to India, the introduction of adult franchise seems to be a far lesser evil. The chief objection to it is more administrative than constitutional.

The next alternative is the system of primary elections, originally put forward by Major C.R. Attlee, a member of the Simon Commission, and now, at the instance of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, adopted in the Poona Pact for the depressed classes. Though this system retains the communal electorate in the first instance and increases the cost of elections, it has the merit that at the secondary stage at least the candidates of one community will have to solicit the votes of all the communities.

A far better course is the reservation of seats on a common electorate without primary elections. We trust the Indian Christians will accept this method, though we believe that without reservations they will, like the Parsees, do better than their numbers war-

rant, thanks to their higher average of education and progressiveness.

In any event, even if communal electorates are retained for primary elections only, it is essential that nobody should be compelled to go on a communal register against his wish. To compel the nationalist Muslim, the nationalist Christian and the nationalist Sikh, for instance, to go on communal electorates or forfeit the vote altogether, is an unmitigated perversity for which there is not the slightest excuse.

III.

The psychology created by the Mahatma's fast led by a natural and innocent process to another development. Some of the leading politicians who helped to bring about the Poona Pact went further and sought to explore the possibilities of reconciliation between the Congress and the Government. It was a good move and well-timed. It deserved to be encouraged by the Government and all men of peace and goodwill. With an utter lack of grace and imagination, the Government put a stop to the pourparlers just when they were promising. Technically, the Government were right: they had relaxed the restrictions on the State prisoner in Yerawada only to the extent of permitting him to discuss the representation of the depressed classes. He was not free to discuss other political questions without the express permission of the Government. And that had not been sought. If the Government was not so wooden but had a human touch about them, they would have overlooked the technical breach of discipline and observed a benevolent neutrality even if they were not disposed to actively help. It is clear that the Government, for all their offer to consider requests for interviews on their merits, have not the slightest desire to promote the cause of peace and reconciliation. Nevertheless, the cause of peace is so great that efforts to bring it about may not be abandoned.

THE STORY OF THE FAST.

THE Great Fast has ended and millions of people in India as well as abroad are happy that it ended, and a life, perhaps the most precious at the time and one of the greatest of all times, has been saved to continue that inimitable and incalculable service to India and the world which the Mahatma alone can render. When the fast was announced millions of his devoted followers and his critics who are no less his personal admirers, were puzzled, stupefied and awestruck by the tragic and stupendous implications of the ordeal which the Mahatma had invited on himself. The heart of India stood still and in reverential agony and anguish watched the sands of life gradually and steadily running out at Yerawda. It was vexed, as never it was before, with the wrangling of the politicians, hurriedly assembled in Poona, over what appeared to be insignificant matters compared with the saving of the life of the Mahatma. Not even the signing of the armistice, terminating the Great War in 1918, could have brought greater relief and joy to the

combatant nations than the news that the Poona Pact had been signed and that the British Government had accepted it, brought to the people of India. The Hindu politicians worked hard, and raced against time as they never did before, and for once the British Government itself moved with a celerity which is as astonishing as it is worthy of grateful acknowledgment. And the Mahatma was saved from self-immolation.

The rejoicings are, however, tempered by forebodings. The Mahatma has foreshadowed a resumption of the fast under any one of three contingencies: as a protest against governmental repression; if the caste Hindus do not abolish untouchability in good time; and in defence of the Poona Pact. It is impossible to anticipate when and under what circumstances the Mahatma may feel the call to enter on another fast. India is uneasy and her heart trembles with apprehension. The gathering at Poona from the farthest corners of India of its most prominent politicians and statesmen, including those who were not his followers or Congressmen, has amply demonstrated the universal respect in which the Mahatma is held and the immeasurable value placed by all on his life and work. His critics as well as his followers worked at white heat to save his life and it is no exaggeration to say that his critics contributed more than the others to achieve the common purpose. They have a claim on the Mahatma by right of service. Should he once again threaten to imperil his life and keep India in uneasy suspense? Is the method of the fast necessary or wise? Does it stand a critical test?

It will be admitted without question that the fast has brought about a great upheaval of opinion in favour of the uplift of the depressed classes. Decades have been crowded into days, and acts which were undreamt of the day before the fast was announced happened in quick succession, as if by a miracle. Hinduism was given a thorough good shake-up and a mighty blow was struck at untouchability. All this is undoubtedly a matter for gratification and thankfulness. It argues however no lack of appreciation of these stupendous achievements if it is pointed out that they were the by-products of the fast; not its main objective. The Mahatma has made it clear beyond a shadow of doubt that his fast was a protest against the introduction of separate electorates for the depressed classes in the Communal Award of the British Government and that it would come to an end when that feature was eliminated. The intense longing of the Mahatma to abolish untouchability and his willingness to stop at no sacrifice of himself to bring it about is beyond question. But it is important to remember that the fast was not meant as a direct attack on untouchability; its scope was limited to the political arrangement contained in the Communal Award. The Mahatma did not demand of the caste Hindus any particular action in order to test the removal of untouchability as, for instance, Mr. Kelappan Nair did. With less prudence if with more heroism, the latter made a direct attack on

untouchability when he demanded the throwing open of the famous Guruvayur Temple, the citadel of the most orthodox Hindus in the most conservative part of India, Malabar. Here we may pause to offer our felicitations to the Mahatma for persuading Mr. Kelappan to break his fast, and Mr. Kelappan for having responded to the unanimous and weighty request of the leaders of the Hindu community all over India.

To return. If some temples were opened to the untouchables, and if some inter-caste dinners were held in some places, and if an All-India Anti-Untouchability League has been started, these are bye-products of the upheaval and not the direct objectives of the Mahatma's vow. Admittedly important as are these bye-products, was it really necessary for the Mahatma to have staked his life for them? The Great War had stimulated progress in many directions which he who runs may read. They were the bye-products of the War. But would anybody have advocated the War because of the adventitious advantages it was bound to bring in its trail? It will be pertinent to enquire if any of his followers, even the most devoted among them, approved of the Mahatma's fast.

Secondly, will the results achieved under the circumstances of the fast be of such a nature as to survive for long the emotional stress? There is the unforgettable episode of the Mahatma's fast of three weeks some years ago in the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. The fraternisation of the two communities on the occasion was most spectacular and hope-inspiring. The Mahatma had then worked a miracle. But is the Mahatma satisfied with the aftermath of it? Has his magnificent sacrifice effected a permanent understanding between the two communities? Agreements reached under such pressure and coercion are bound to be more spectacular than abiding, while reforms brought about by patient persuasion and real change of heart incur no reverses. Is it worthwhile for the Mahatma to gamble with his precious life for such ephemeral and adventitious results as these?

The Mahatma has claimed to be a true democrat, in a far truer sense than the British constitution is democratic. Had he the Indian nation behind him when he decided on his fast? Great as must have been his own physical sufferings as he withstood the pangs of hunger and starvation during the fast, we wonder if the Mahatma, who would not cause the least pain to any living being, human or subhuman, fully realised the intense suffering he inflicted even on his critics, not to speak of his own devoted followers, by his self-imposed fast.

In the matter of fasts, as in the case of civil disobedience, the Mahatma has set an example which is bound to be copied and lead to deplorable results. His own case is unique. He was extremely wise and prudent in the choice of his stake; it was not impossible of immediate achievement. Further, his fast conscripted the attention of the whole world, and the all-India leaders rushed to his rescue. But take the case of Mr. Kelappan of Malabar. He imprudently

attempted what at the moment was impossible. His fast did not, for obvious reasons, mobilise the same forces as the Mahatma's did. And he failed in his immediate objective. But for the Mahatma's own persuasion, India would have lost one of her noblest sons. The Mahatma was not blind to this danger when he warned in his press interview on the 20th Sept. : "I am sure that if anybody fasts like that he would be setting a bad example and it would do no good to him or anybody else and it is very likely that it will do such a person spiritual harm." But of what avail is this warning when he himself sets the example?

II

It is worthwhile examining whether the fast achieved even the limited political purpose which the Mahatma had in view. In his letter to the Prime Minister, dated August 18 last, the Mahatma said :

This fast will cease if during its progress the British Government, of its own motion or under pressure of public opinion, revise their decision and withdraw their scheme of communal electorates for the "depressed classes" whose representatives should be elected by the general electorate under the common franchise, no matter how wide it is.

Now the Poona Pact, which has received the blessings of the Mahatma and in defence of which he is prepared to stake his life, retains separate electorates for the depressed classes in the shape of primary elections. The depressed classes must under the Pact meet separately first and elect their panel of candidates who, along with the candidates from the caste Hindus, will be eligible for election by the whole electorate, consisting of the caste Hindus and the untouchables. The purpose of the Mahatma is better brought out in his speech at the Round Table Conference last year. Speaking to the Minorities Committee he said that he was opposed to the special representation of the untouchables; that he would not be party to either "special reservation or special electorates for any other minorities" than the Sikhs and the Muslims. "We do not want on our register and on our census untouchables classified as a separate class" because, while the Muslims, the Sikhs and the Europeans might honourably retain their communal identity in perpetuity, should the Untouchables retain theirs in perpetuity? Now the Poona Pact gives the Untouchables not only special reservation but also special electorates, both of which the Mahatma refused in London.

The Mahatma, who bitterly opposed the demand of Dr. Ambedkar at the Round Table Conference for separate electorates, has now conceded them. While Dr. Ambedkar asked in Poona that only a part of the seats reserved for the depressed classes be returned by the method of primary electorates, the Mahatma offered him the whole! If the Mahatma surrenders, he surrenders over-generously on his own Himalayan scale. No wonder Dr. Ambedkar said in the Bombay meeting of the Hindu leaders that there was much in common between the Mahatma and himself,

and asked in anguish why the Mahatma was not half as accommodating in London as he was in Poona, which would have saved him the ordeal of the fast. Was it really necessary for the Mahatma to have gone through that fiery ordeal in order to surrender to Dr. Ambedkar?

There is yet another aspect of the episode that should not be overlooked. In London the disputants were the Mahatma and Dr. Ambedkar. If the Mahatma had listened to the advice of some of the other Hindu members of the Conference, a compromise would most probably have been reached there on the basis of common electorates with reservation of seats. There can be no question that such a compromise would have been far superior to the Poona Pact, inasmuch as under the latter scheme the depressed class voters in their millions will have to be separated from the caste Hindu voters, while under the former scheme the segregation would be limited to a handful of candidates. The Mahatma's object of not classifying the depressed classes separately would then have been achieved far more completely. The distinction between Untouchables and others would then have been restricted to a small number of candidates and not been extended to the large mass of voters. The Mahatma's uncompromising attitude in London stood in the way of such a compromise. In Poona the Mahatma completely went over to Dr. Ambedkar, and gave him more than he asked for. The disputants were no longer the Mahatma and Dr. Ambedkar, with the other Hindu leaders vainly persuading the former to meet the latter half way, but the Mahatma and Dr. Ambedkar on one side and the other Hindu leaders on the other side! The Mahatma deserted his "allies" as it were, and went over to his "opponent" and in doing so, handed over his "allies," bound hand and foot, to the "opponent." The Mahatma in his generosity made Dr. Ambedkar the unquestioned master of the situation, who could dictate his terms. It is all to the credit of Dr. Ambedkar, that though he drove a hard bargain, he was as reasonable as he ultimately was. Again, was it necessary for the Mahatma to go through the ordeal he did if it resulted only in his surrender to Dr. Ambedkar and in putting the other caste Hindu leaders quite gratuitously in the wrong?

In the last resort, it was open to the Mahatma, if he did not wish the depressed classes to non-co-operate with the Award altogether and refuse to participate in the elections under it, to advise them to participate in the general electorate only and decline to avail themselves of the separate electorate. After all, the separate electorate is supplementary to the general, and the depressed classes would not be deprived of their right to participate in the general electorate if they refused to avail themselves of the separate electorate. With the influence over the depressed classes that the Mahatma claimed in London, the boycott of the separate electorate by them would have completely fulfilled the Mahatma's desire, infinitely better than the Poona Pact. There was no need to resist the Award by the drastic method of the fast.

Even on merits, the superiority of the Poona Pact over the Government's Communal Award is not very marked. In both the caste Hindus and depressed classes vote on common and communal registers: in the former they are super-imposed, one over the other, while in the latter they are collateral. It is to the credit of the Pact that in the final election of the depressed class representatives the caste Hindus will have a voice, however limited. Under it the depressed classes get larger representation than under the Award; more than double. But as against it, it has the disadvantage that the depressed classes, poor, uneducated and unorganised, will have to go through primary elections and incur heavier expenditure. The Award provides only for separate electorates, which were however to cease at the end of twenty years; the Pact provides for both separate electorates, which are however to disappear at the latest in ten years, and reserved seats, which will continue until by mutual agreement the arrangement is terminated. The Pact has this decisive advantage over the Award that it is *Swadeshi*, though even this satisfaction is to some extent discounted by the fact that it was arrived at under compulsion. In respect of the Punjab and Assam, the Award was more in consonance with the wish of the Mahatma than the Pact, for the former did not recognise the depressed classes in the two provinces as a separate entity, while the Pact does.

Considered from every point of view, the Mahatma's fast finds no justification, and such of the good results as it has to its credit are either adventitious or could have been secured by other and less dangerous and painful means. The Mahatma will serve India and the world better by living for them than by "fasting unto death" for them.

P. KODANDA RAO.

THE PROBLEM OF CRIMINAL TRIBES.

I.

IT is not widely known that in India there are a number of castes and tribes who follow no other profession but that of committing crimes. These tribes may roughly be divided into three classes. In the first place we have tribes who, though originally criminal, have now settled down to honest occupations though some sections of them and many individuals still live by crime. Such, for instance, are the Kolis, Bhils and Ramoshis of the Bombay presidency. The second class consists of tribes and castes who have settled abodes and generally some ostensible means of subsistence and occupation, but who periodically proceed on raids often at great distances from their homes and live solely on their ill-gotten gains. The third class comprises the many gypsy-like and wandering classes who roam over the country and commit crime whenever opportunity offers. The instances of the first kind are the Bhils, numbering 559,930, who are chiefly found in Gujarat and Khandesh. Their original home is the hilly country between Abu and Asirgarh from which they have spread into the plains of Gujarat and the northern Deccan. They

are found in considerable numbers in Rajputana and Central India. The Bhils speak cognate dialects of Gujarati, Marathi, Rangdi, Mewadi, Hindi, Rajputani, etc. Bhils are mostly peasants, labourers, and watchmen. In some places they work as field labourers, sell grass and fuel and help the ordinary Kunbi landholder. All Bhils are good hunters killing with their bows and arrows pigeons, partridges, wild cats and hare. They rear fowls in large numbers specially for sale. The Bhil is frank, thriftless, timid, fond of spirits and loathes steady work. At the same time he is simple, faithful, honest, kindly and intelligent. Though the Bhils are poor and still unsettled they are not as a class given to serious crime. They are fond of amusement and excitement, hunting and fishing, playing games of chance, telling stories, singing and dancing to the accompaniment of the six-stringed fiddle. In the Bombay presidency 2,470 Bhils, or less than one-half per cent., have been registered under the Criminal Tribes Act, while only 43 are in Criminal Tribes Settlements.

The Ramoshis are to be found in the Deccan. Poona and Satara Districts are their chief strongholds. They number 60,554. From times immemorial the Ramoshi has been a dacoit and robber, and though with the march of civilization and orderly government he has settled to a more or less regular life, his restless spirit and predatory instinct which he has inherited, is soon roused whenever through scarcity or other causes necessity drives him, or a favourable opportunity offers. A large number of Ramoshis are hereditary watchmen and a few are enlisted in the Police. They also cultivate land, hire themselves out as field watchmen, labour in the fields, take up domestic service, ply carts for hire and even work as coolies. A Ramoshi will commit any crime against property likely to yield him profit, such as dacoity, robbery, crop-stealing and other cognate offences. He is known to be a confirmed burglar and when in dire straits will resort to cattle and sheep lifting. He also extorts blackmail from travellers and cartmen putting up at his village for the night and if it is not paid, the victim is pretty certain to be robbed during the night. Heinous crimes are committed only on dark nights or in the last quarter of the moon. Before venturing on a dacoity, the Ramoshi carefully selects the house to be raided and ascertains such particulars concerning the locality, his victims, etc., as will facilitate the execution of his design, carefully calculating the nature of resistance he is likely to meet. For the commission of organised crime the Ramoshi sets about forming a gang varying from three to twelve or even fifteen. The leader of the gang is styled Naik and he fixes and determines the strength and constitution of the gang. But the Ramoshi cannot be classed as wholly criminal.

The Aherias who are found in the district of Aligarh of the United Provinces are good cultivators but have a bad reputation for crime. They are expert thieves and burglars; but though they frequently accompany gangs of dacoits on their excursions, they seldom take an active part beyond procuring information. Being cultivators they are generally wel-

comed in their villages by Zamindars. Their depredations usually take place by night when they act in small gangs seldom numbering more than twelve persons, but they are apt to cause serious trouble, if disturbed, owing to the readiness they display in the use of the lathi.

The Veppur Paraiyans, who get their name from a village in the Vriddhachalam Taluka of Arcot Dist. in Madras Presidency, are notorious criminals. They exact blackmail from the ryots as the price of exempting them from molestation. A watchman belonging to the caste is quartered upon the village. The crimes to which they are most addicted are house-breaking and the theft of cattle, sheep and goats. The difficulty of bringing them to book is increased by the organised manner in which they carry on their depredations. They are, for example, commonly in league with the very heads of villages who ought to be doing their utmost to secure their arrest and they have useful allies in some of the Udaiyans of those parts. These Udaiyans are the caste from which were drawn some of the *kavalgars* who in pre-British days were appointed to perform police duties and keep the country clear of thieves, and some of the descendants of these men are even now to be met with. The connection of the members of the Poligar caste with the Veppur Paraiyans which is of course confined to the less reputable sections among them, seems to have had its origin in the days when they were still head *Kavalgars* entrusted with police duties in the different villages. They now act as receivers of stolen property and protect the Paraiyans when they are in trouble with the police.

K. G. SHARANGPANI

Our Geneva Letter.

(BY AIR MAIL.)

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

GENEVA, 24th September.

SHORTER HOURS OF WORK.

AFTER two days' discussion of the Italian Government's representative's proposal for the reduction of hours of work in industry, the Governing Body of the International Labour Office has decided to call a Preparatory Conference for the study of the technical problems which arise in connection with such reduction. The Special Conference, which will be composed of representatives of governments, employers and workers, will meet in Geneva in January 1933 and its conclusions will be immediately submitted to the Governing Body, which will examine the desirability of communicating them to the World Economic Conference and possibly to Governments.

The Italian proposal finds an echo in many countries at present. In Austria the Ministry of Social Administration is undertaking an enquiry into the question of the hours of work and it may be recalled that the National Council on 11th December last adopted a motion requesting the I. L. O. to examine the possibility of establishing international agreements for reducing hours of work to less than eight per day.

In Belgium a Commission of Enquiry has been appointed for the same purpose with Professor Mahaim, Chairman of the Governing Body of the I. L. O. as president. In Colombia a Bill was submitted to the Chamber of Representatives in favour of a seven-hour day, and more recently the Government stated that it considered it imperative to arrive at a better arrangement of hours of work by means of international agreements, either of a general nature or for particular industries. In Czechoslovakia a Bill in favour of the forty-hour week has been drafted by the Ministry of Social Affairs and submitted to the other Ministers concerned. The forty-hour week has been introduced in the offices of the Sickness Fund under the National Insurance Institute. In Danzig, the forty-hour week is being applied to Government Departments and public services. In Denmark, a Committee has been set up to examine the matter and to report in time for the possible introduction of legislation when Parliament meets in October.

In France, the Socialist Group has introduced a Bill in favour of the forty-hour week in the Chamber of Deputies. The Minister of Labour has stated before the Chamber that he will urge that the question of the forty-hour week should be placed on the agenda of the next International Labour Conference, and the Prime Minister, speaking before the Executive Committee of the Radical Party, expressed himself in agreement with the forty-hour week, provided it was introduced internationally. In Germany, a Decree of 5th June 1931 authorises the Federal Government to reduce hours of work to forty in the week in those industries where such a reduction is technically possible. By a circular of 17th June 1932 the Minister of Labour has caused Committees to be set up in each State to study the question, and the regulation of hours of work by arbitral award is contemplated as a possibility in certain cases. In addition, a recent legislative decree provides for a variety of measures to encourage employers to reduce working hours so as to keep workers in employment and absorb some of the unemployed.

In Italy, the National Council of Corporations on 15th June 1932 adopted a resolution proposing that the possibility of a compulsory reduction of hours of work to forty per week in all administrations and undertakings should be considered as rapidly as possible with a view to making it possible to conclude definite arrangements of an international character. In Poland, a Bill enabling the Government in times of economic depression to reduce hours of work so as to distribute employment over a large number of workers was adopted by the Diet and the Senate. Further, a Bill has been submitted by the Socialist Party with a view to limiting hours of work to forty in the week, and the Minister of Labour has drafted a Bill to reduce hours of work to forty in the week in the case of certain classes of salaried employees, including bank and insurance clerks. This Bill has been submitted to the National Association of Industry, Mining and Commerce. The National Committee on Unemployment in Poland has recommended the introduction of four shifts of six hours in sugar refineries. In the United States, various proposals for a shorter working week have been put forward and in particular, the question of a flexible working day and week has been discussed by a Conference of the New England States at Boston on which occasion President Hoover welcomed the opportunity to discuss the conclusions reached on the five-day week or shorter work hours as a means of wider distribution of employment.

Our London Letter.

(BY AIR MAIL.)

(From Our Correspondent.)

LONDON, 23rd September.

THE FAST.

WHEN Gandhiji announced, at noon on Tuesday, that he had begun his fast unto death unless he were relieved of his self-imposed vow by prior agreement upon a solution of the method of representation in the Indian Legislatures for the depressed classes in substitution of the provision therefor contained in the Government's award, it was realised that all efforts to dissuade him from his purpose, or to induce him to postpone his intention, had failed. Indeed, at the back of the minds of some people on this side who know him well and are intimately acquainted with his mentality there was belief that no one would succeed in prevailing upon the Mahatma, if only for the reason that the more nearly the time approached for him to carry his intention into effect, the more eagerly did he look forward to his willing sacrifice and the more impossible would it be to divert him. One peculiar piece of information contributed by the *Times*, Bombay correspondent was to the effect that, after Gandhiji had announced his intention to the Prime Minister to proceed with his vow, he had actually had himself fitted, or refitted, with a set of artificial teeth, the obvious deduction being that he himself had no real belief that he would be called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice. At any rate, apart from their own inner convictions, which it is hoped will be verified very shortly, his friends here took heart of grace from this news and set themselves to work to educate public opinion in this country, and to give such aid as lay in their power to those in Bombay and Poona who were gathering together to endeavour to find a way out of the *impasse*.

SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES.

I think that it is proper to say here that the great majority of people here are not wedded to any particular method for securing the rights of the depressed classes in India. On the other hand, it is, I believe, a fact that the British people have become acutely alive to the reality of the nature and the existence of those disabilities, and that, so far as public opinion on such a subject is capable of expression, it would support the Government in any steps they might take to secure the prospect that the depressed classes should have the unfettered opportunity, by their own efforts, to remove the disabilities under which they labour, and to raise themselves in social and economic status. It is of a piece with the whole liberating and humanitarian movement that has so large a hold upon popular imagination in this country. That movement is becoming increasingly self-conscious, though it is not always wise in its manifestation or expression. When Mr. Patel, who has just left for America on a lecture-tour, self-righteously asserts that Britain has no heart he is either talking in ignorance or is perverting the facts. At any rate he ought to know better. It may well be that, taking advantage of this well-known sentimentalism on the part of the public, certain politicians, British and Indian, last year induced Dr. Ambedkar to participate in the notorious Minorities Pact. That, however, is beside the question. The real fact is that, now that the public here has become aware of the "calculated degradation of centuries" to which the depressed classes have, in Mr. Gandhi's language, been subjected, all that is best in the country has risen in de-

termination to see justice done to these unfortunate people. When, therefore, the Government in their award decide upon separate electorates for the depressed classes as the only practical means of securing the election of members of those classes who would genuinely represent them and be responsible to them, the British public did not recall that, though this may be Dr. Ambedkar's present view, as expressed at the Round Table Conference, it is directly opposed to the reasoned arguments that he incorporated in the minutes submitted to the Simon Commission, in 1930, and published with their Report. Nor did it occur to them that the Simon Commission itself condemned the setting up of separate electorates for the depressed classes on the ground that it would "stereotype the difference between the depressed classes and the remainder of the Hindus", and "stigmatise each individual voter in the list, militating against the process which is already beginning and which needs to be in every way encouraged—that of helping those who are depressed to rise in the social and economic scale." These facts are recalled in a letter to the Press signed by, amongst others, Mr. Horace Alexander, Mr. C. F. Andrews, Mr. H. N. Brailsford, Miss Agatha Harrison, Mr. J. F. Horrabin, Mr. George Lansbury, Mr. H. G. Laski, Mr. James Marley, Mr. Pethick-Lawrence, and Mr. Bertrand Russell.

Two things have nevertheless amazed the public, and are still not understood. The first is that Mr. Gandhi should be prepared to fast unto death in order to secure a different method of election for the depressed classes than that provided for in the Government's award. It is difficult, if not impossible, to get the public to realise why Mr. Gandhi should regard this as a religious issue, in which conscience is involved, rather than the purely political one as almost everyone in this country would regard it. The second is, that, ostensibly, Mr. Gandhi is fasting against the British Government rather than, as is the widespread belief of British opinion, against the case Hindus as he might have done if he felt so very strongly about the matter at any time during the last ten years. This, too, is calculated to emphasise the political construction that is placed upon Mr. Gandhi's action without in any way necessarily casting a reflection on the sincerity of his attitude towards the depressed classes. It is true that there is a minority that does question his sincerity, both as regards his real intention of fasting unto death, and as regards his motive. There are those who are content to regard it as a political stunt intended for exhibition purposes and not to be proceeded with beyond a certain point, secondly as a spectacular method of launching a fresh anti-British attack, and lastly as intended to bolster caste-Hindu intransigence against an award that will ostensibly for the first time place a certain degree of power into the hands of those who have been for centuries ground into the dust by their fellow-Hindus. I do not think, however, that except in quarters that it is impossible to placate these minority views carry very much weight.

What is at last appearing to emerge is the fact that the Mahatma's dramatic resolve is really directed to compel the caste Hindus to come to a reasonable accommodation with the depressed classes, and thereby to compel the Government to carry out their expressed intention of substituting an agreement reached by the parties concerned for the proposals contained in the award. The telegrams that have appeared in the last few days clearly show how seriously the parties in India are taking Mahatmaji's fast, and how earnestly they are applying to themselves the severe strictures apparently directed by him to other quarters. For once the instinct of Hindu India appears to be rightly guided, and I think that there will be a universal rejoicing here

if, within the next forty-eight hours, the news of a complete agreement comes with the prospect of the early termination of Gandhiji's fast, with the accomplishment of the object of his challenge.

The three bodies that have been particularly active in endeavouring to educate public opinion here are: the India Conciliation Group, that has been meeting daily at Friends House since the new crisis arose; the India League, whose delegation is now in India and is cabling agitatedly for Gandhiji's release and the suspension of an award that is in fact in suspense, for it is not yet in operation, nor need it be; and the Friends of India organization that is announcing a public meeting on why Gandhiji is fasting to be presided over by Mr. Fenner-Brockway and to be addressed by Miss Muriel Lester, whose book "Entertaining Gandhi" has just appeared, Mrs. Haidari, Mr. Bhattacharji and Mr. C. F. Andrews, who is working himself to the bone, as one might expect upon an occasion that so nearly reminds him of the events of Gandhiji's last great fast at Delhi, in 1924, that seems to have been productive of so little. The India Conciliation Group by its very constitution is a private body meeting for consultation and action but precluded from propaganda. Nevertheless it has access to very many high and influential quarters, both corporatively and through its individual members, and, though I am for obvious reasons not in a position to give detailed information as to its activities, I can at any rate give the assurance that they have a very effective bearing upon the present crisis and its elucidation.

A very interesting and possibly useful contribution has been made by the Proportional Representation Society in a letter to the press, suggesting that even reservation of seats may not be necessary if the method of the single non-transferable vote in multi-member constituencies be adopted, that being the simplest way by which illiterate and otherwise ill-organised people may most effectively ensure their representation by members of their own class and responsible to them.

SOME SIGNIFICANT EVENTS.

There is every likelihood that Lord Snowden and the Samuel Liberals will resign, within the next few days, from the National Government on the ground of their profound disagreement with the Ottawa results, which, in their view, will impose permanent tariffs and food taxes upon the people of this country with no compensating advantage. It would not be surprising, indeed, if Lord Snowden's resignation was announced before that of his colleagues. If the Cabinet Ministers go, their junior colleagues will certainly follow them. This would involve the resignation of, among others, Lord Lothian from the India Office, Sir Robert Hamilton from the Colonial Office and Mr. Isaac Foot from the Ministry of Mines. Among those whose names are mentioned as possible successors is Lord Allen of Hurtwood, who is very close to the Prime Minister. The latter is believed to desire to maintain, so far as possible, the national complexion of the Government, though it is to be confessed he is finding it more and more difficult to do so. It would not be bad, however if Lord Allen were to replace Lord Lothian at the India Office. He or Major Elliot would be a good and intelligent substitute.

Occasion was taken of the announcement of the death, in England, of the Chief Justice of South Africa, by Mr. Polak in the *Times* to remind the public that Mr. J. de Villiers, as he then was, practising as Junior Counsel, was instructed to appear for the late Mr. J. W. Leonard, K. C., the famous advocate and politician, on behalf of certain Indian plaintiffs in a well-known

test case heard in the Witwatersrand High Court in 1905, by Mr. Gandhi, then practising as an Attorney in Johannesburg. I understand that Mr. Polak had only recently joined Mr. Gandhi as an articled clerk, and that, although the plaintiffs won in the Court of First Instance, they lost on appeal.

Miscellaneous.

THE ORDINANCE BILL.

MR. N. M. JOSHI'S SPEECH.

Following is the text of the speech delivered by Mr. N. M. Joshi in opposing the Ordinance Bill in the Assembly:

THE discussion has reached such a stage that I feel you see I make a long speech, but I was anxious that I should not give a silent vote on this important measure. This Bill is described by some speakers as an emergency measure, but if we read it through carefully, I do not think we shall be justified in supposing that this Bill is an emergency measure. The Honourable the Leader of the House and also the Honourable the Home Member yesterday said that if they were convinced in the Select Committee, they might limit the operation of the Bill to some definite period. It is clear they are not so far convinced, and therefore we are not justified at this stage in supposing that the Bill is an emergency measure. If the Bill is to be an emergency measure, in my humble view, it should not last for a longer period than a session of the Assembly, so that the Assembly will have an opportunity every session to review the whole situation and see whether the special legislation is necessary or not. I also hold that it is not quite honest on the part of the Government to suggest that this Bill is introduced as a result of the resolution passed by the Legislature last session. If they had to bring forward legislation in response to the resolution, they could have done so in the last session, but they did not do it. On the other hand, they issued an ordinance again after the lapse of the first. I feel that the origin of this Bill lies in the fact that Government and the officers of Government have tasted blood. They have enjoyed the powers under the Ordinances, and naturally now they do not like to give them up. That, Sir, is the origin of this Bill, and we need not be surprised at this. This happens in every walk of life. We know what happens in the industrial field.

If you give protection to an industry, does it ever happen that that industry will give up that protection willingly? The same thing is the case with politics. The Government have enjoyed these powers and they are reluctant to give them up. The Honourable the Home Member said that his object in bringing forward this measure was to prevent a recrudescence of communism, terrorism and the civil disobedience movement. Mr. President, I assure you that I am not a communist, although I sympathise with some of the doctrines of people who are called communists. I do not believe in terrorism. I was a Congressman ten years ago, but I am not now a Congressman. But I feel that this Bill even from the point of view of a man who is neither a communist, nor a terrorist, nor a Congressman, is dangerous to individual liberty. This Bill cuts at the root of liberty and freedom. My Honourable friend Mr. James yesterday said that he would rather be an enemy of liberty and freedom than allow people to abuse them. Mr. President, it is very easy for my Honourable friend who belongs to a privileged class to say that there need not be

any freedom if that freedom is likely to be abused. But unfortunately we do not belong to a privileged class. We are ordinary citizens of this country, and if we disobey the law we are bound to be punished. I, therefore, feel that from the point of view of an ordinary citizen this Bill cuts at the root of his freedom and liberty.

I would now like to examine from one or two moral aspects whether the Government are likely to attain their objects in introducing this measure. After all, morality has a place in politics. Sir, the principle from which I look at this Bill and consider whether Government will succeed in their object or not is this. Generally it is an accepted principle in law that if you want justice you must seek justice with clean hands. If you want to get rid of communism, terrorism and the civil disobedience movement, Government must show by their action that they do not follow any of the principles of these movements. I take one principle of communism and that is dictatorship. Are Government free from dictatorship? I take terrorism. The chief principle of terrorism is the use of force to achieve its object. Are Government free from the use of force in achieving their objects? What is civil disobedience? Those that adopt civil disobedience place themselves above the law. Are Government free from this attitude? On the other hand, by introducing this Bill they themselves show that they want to place themselves above the ordinary law of the civilized world. Mr. President, if this is the attitude of Government, I do not know how they can expect to succeed in their object. I do not wish to go into the details of this Bill: but let me mention one or two points. There are in this world many people who do not like war; they abhor war, and therefore they consider that the profession of a soldier is not a right profession for people to follow. I am one of those people who accept this principle as regards war. I am a pacifist. As a pacifist, if I advise people that they should not take up the profession of war, the profession of a soldier but take up some other profession, I shall come under the clutches of this law. This clearly shows that it is not the Government that wants non-violence. It shows that it is Government that insist, "You must not preach against the use of force. You must not preach anything against the profession of a soldier."

Mr. President, in my childhood I used to have a terror of Government officers. I will explain to you what that terror was. I was not a rich man and I am not a rich man now. We used to own a bullock cart, and whenever we went in our bullock cart and a policeman approached us we felt a kind of terror. We felt that our cart would be impressed for the sake of an officer. Sir, that terror lasted for many years. After some time, on account of the education of the people, on account of people having begun to understand their rights, this terror has been reduced. But what are the Government doing now? By this Bill they are trying to re-introduce that terror. Not only that. When our carts were impressed many years ago there was no sanction of law behind that arbitrary act; but now you are passing a law by which you will not only create terror but you will have the sanction of the law behind that terror. Mr. President, I will give you one more instance, and that is this. It is my legitimate right to say even in public that an officer of Government is incompetent or high-handed, but if I say that, I shall create hatred against that officer, I shall create contempt for him, and I shall come under the clutches of this law. One more point. I take interest in the labour movement, and as an advocate of labour I sometimes make speeches and say that the capitalists in this country do not do their duty properly, that they neglect the interests of labour.

If I say this, I shall be creating hatred against a class which comes under one of the clauses of this Bill. Mr. President, these instances are quite enough. These show that Government themselves have not yet given up the principles which underlie movements like communism, terrorism and civil disobedience. They want their own dictatorship; they want their officers to be dictators. They want terrorism of their officers to revive and to spread. They want also that there should be no room for free honest propaganda in this country.

Mr. President, I take up another aspect as to how far the Government will succeed in their object and the point of view from which I consider this question is this. Are the methods which the communists, the terrorists or those people who take to civil disobedience adopt—are these methods such as generally succeed or not? If communists achieve their object by communism, if terrorists achieve their object by terrorism, or if those who take to civil disobedience achieve their object by that method, they are going to adopt it and the country is going to adopt that method. If, Sir, by the conduct of the Government we find that other methods succeed with Government much better than these methods, then certainly Government have a chance of succeeding in their object.

Sir, I shall not go into old history whether the Britishers have shown that they will give self-government to any nation without the use of force. I will give you one small very recent instance to show what the spirit of Government is. You will remember that Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had visited Simla some time ago. He tried to persuade the Government of India that the Round Table method should not be given up. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru is not a bad advocate; he is a good advocate. He tried to persuade the Government of India that it is a wrong thing to give up the Round Table method. Well, Sir, was the Government of India persuaded by his arguments? They were not.

SIR MUHAMMAD YAKUB: They were.

Mr. N. M. JOSHI: They were not. Few days after the announcement by the Secretary of State in effect that the Round Table method was given up, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru resigned his membership of the Consultative Committee. A few other resignations followed. We then heard the pronouncement of his Excellency the Governor-General that the Round Table method would be restored. Now, may I ask whether the Government of India was persuaded by the method of argument used by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru or was it persuaded by the resignation of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru? (Hear, hear and applause). Well, if the Government of India were persuaded by the resignation of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, they have made it abundantly clear that it is non-co-operation that succeeds and not cooperation (hear, hear).

THE HONOURABLE MR. H. G. HAIG: I would point out that there was no change of policy at all and when the Honourable Member talks of giving up the Round Table method, his statement is not really in accordance with the statement of the Secretary of State.

Mr. N. M. JOSHI: I am entitled to interpret events in my own way; the Secretary of State's announcement did amount to scrapping the Round Table Conference. And I hold that it is the non-co-operation of Sir T. B. Sapru that succeeded and not the co-operation of Sir T. B. Sapru (Mr. Gaya Prasad Singh: You are right.) Argument did not persuade the Government of India.

Sir MUHAMMAD YAKUB: Why are you arguing now, if arguments do not persuade?

Mr. N. M. JOSHI: I will tell you the reason. I am a born co-operator. I do not resort to non-co-operation unless it is absolutely necessary and I still believe in co-operation.

Then, Sir, there is one more point about which I should like to say only a few words. It is this: I do not agree with Mahatma Gandhi in many respects. But I agree with him in one statement which he has recently made, namely, that the extraordinary powers which Government are giving to their officers brutalise the officers. These powers demoralise their officers. I will give you one instance. I have a colleague in the Servants of India Society who works in a district of Gujerat. His name is Amritalal Thakkar. After the civil disobedience movement was started and several Congressmen were sent to jail. Mr. Thakkar was given a small sum by a gentleman in order that the wives and children of Congressmen who had gone to jail should not die of starvation. Only a few days ago, one of the District Magistrates in Gujerat called Mr. Thakkar in order to bully and browbeat him. He asked him whether he was supplying funds to the wives and children of these people who had gone to jail. Now, Mr. President, I want to ask this question; why should an officer object to any one relieving the distress of the wives and children of Congressmen? I can understand Government putting the Congressmen in jail, but certainly it is not according to the rules of any civilized warfare that a combatant should desire that the wives and children of his opponent should die of starvation. I have absolutely nothing to complain about this officer. If we are placed in his position we may do just as badly, but I am certain that the system under which you have placed your officers puts them in a very difficult position. You have given so much power that if a man does anything which an officer does not like he calls him to his office and asks him not to do it. This is not the only thing. You ask your officers,—here I am not talking of the petty officers but of the higher officers,—not only to defeat the Congress but to crush and uproot the Congress. A district officer is asked to see that there should be nothing left of the Congress in his district. He has done his very best to defeat the Congress but, Sir, he is expected to crush the Congress and crushing the Congress is not a very easy thing. He, therefore, frets and fumes and resorts to methods which ordinarily he would not use. This is how the officers of Government are being demoralised.

There is only one more point and I shall finish. The Honourable the Leader of the House said yesterday that the Congress is not crushed and the Congress must be crushed. I do not approve of this attitude. I hold that on account of the stern measures which the Government have adopted the Congress is defeated. But is it right that the Government should be vindictive and try to crush and uproot the Congress? Those countries in Europe that have been vindictive after the war, have not done themselves any good? Mr. President, the English people imposed a humiliating treaty upon the Germans. That treaty has not done them any good. Now, let me tell the Government that if they are not satisfied with merely defeating the Congress but if they desire that the Congress should be uprooted and crushed, it would not do them any good. In the first place, the Congress may not be uprooted, the Congress may not be crushed. Now, let me tell the Government one of my own experiences. There are large masses of people in this country who do not believe in the principles and methods adopted by the Congress but what is happening? I have seen this in the city of Bombay.

I have seen that people who do not even now sympathise with the Congress and do not approve of the Congress methods, still supply funds to the Congress and why do they do it? I will tell you why. They do it because they feel that the Congress is being persecuted. Government is not satisfied with defeating the Congress. Government is now trying to humiliate the Congress, to persecute the Congress and to crush and uproot the Congress. It is a very wrong attitude. I should like to make a suggestion before I close and that suggestion is that Government should give up the aim of crushing the Congress and should now adopt an attitude which every generous opponent and generous victor adopts, namely, that Government should try to reconcile Congressmen. Time has come when I believe that a serious effort must be made for a reconciliation with Congressmen and as a first step towards the carrying out of that suggestion Government should give up their intention of passing measures like this. The ordinances and special powers should be withdrawn. Then I will suggest to Government that they should release all the prisoners. I feel, Mr. President, after having moved in my own city and outside amongst Congressmen and non-Congressmen, that the time has come when Congressmen, if they are given an opportunity, will reconsider their position. I have reason to believe that they will. In order to convince the House on this point I will read only a few lines from a statement made by Mr. C. Rajagopalachariar, one of the lieutenants and a very prominent lieutenant of Mr. Gandhi. Referring to Congress co-operation with Government he said that it was all a question of confidence. If Government can somehow create confidence in this direction, prestige will not stand in the way of the Congress entering into negotiations. There are enough big men in India he said to take the right step. I therefore believe that the Congress is now in a mood to reconsider its decision. But, Mr. President, the Congressmen should be placed in a position in which they can do so and in order to do it I suggest that the Government of India should immediately release all the political prisoners (Hear, hear), because I feel that so long as people are in jail, one cannot expect them to reconsider their position or to admit their mistake. For instance, if I am placed in jail and asked to admit my mistake or to reconsider my attitude, I shall never do it. I therefore feel, Sir, that if you do want Congressmen to reconsider their decision and even to admit their mistake, the right course is to release them. Mr. President, I shall not take any more time, but shall urge and urge earnestly upon the Government that they should give up their intention of passing this measure and devote their attention to effecting reconciliation with Congressmen and others. (Applause).

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