

3

INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, having discussed with his colleagues, formed a Political Party, called Independent Labour Party. Aim behind forming the party was to concentrate and solve the problems and grievances of the landless, poor tenants, agriculturists and workers. On this background Dr. Ambedkar was interviewed by the Times of India wherein he explained the aims and objects of the party.

Following are the salient features of the Independent Labour Party—Editors.

INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY

Its formation And Its Aims

**(Reprinted from the Times of India
15th August, 1936)**

**Independent Labour Party
Publications
No. 1**

A new political party has been organised in Bombay for the purpose of contesting the elections in the Bombay Presidency under the new Constitution to both Chambers of the Legislature. It is known as the "Independent Labour Party" and has been formed by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the Depressed Classes leader.

It appears that originally Dr. Ambedkar's idea was to organise a party exclusively of the Depressed Classes. But its programme was specifically worded in terms of the needs of these Classes. But at the desire of his friends from other classes, he has consented to give a general name to the party and has worded the programme in more general terms. The Party is open to any one who wishes to stand for election on the Party ticket and work in the Legislature in accordance with the programme formulated for the purpose.

BROAD PROGRAMME

In an interview with a representative of the Times of India Dr. Ambedkar declared that having regard to the fact that the present was no time for the parties communally organised, he had in agreement with the wishes of his friends "broadened the name and also the programme of the Party so as to permit political co-operation between the other classes and the Depressed Classes." The nucleus of the Party would still be the fifteen members of the Depressed Classes. But members of the other classes were free to join the party.

Dr. Ambedkar added that the Depressed Classes possessed large voting strength in constituencies in which no seat was reserved for them, and it would be possible for them to place that voting strength at the disposal of any candidate, who cared to become a member of the Party.

He made it clear that the Party membership was open to persons of all creeds and communities, although the Depressed Classes votes could by reason of the law be made available to persons belonging to such communities and creeds as were included in the general electorate. Already some persons from other classes had expressed their willingness to join the Party, and other who cared to take advantage of that opportunity might corresponds with the Secretary of the Party at the office, of the Party.

Questioned what cohesion the Independent Labour Party would have, Dr. Ambedkar pointed out that the Party was not going to be a miscellaneous collection of members of the Legislature, who after getting elected, each on his own, would befriend one another in the Legislature, and agree to vote together. The party would have its roots in the electorate, and its members would have fought the election as such, would have pledged to the electorate to uphold a common and clearly defined programme, and to be bound by the rules of discipline framed by the Party.

Open to All

Asked what prompted him to select that particular name for the Party, Dr. Ambedkar explained that the Party would be independent of every other political organisation, although it would be ready to co-operate with any other political party where co-operation was possible. The Party was a labour organisation in the sense that its programme was mainly to advance the welfare of the labouring classes. The Party believes in having correct ideology suited to the section of the people whose interests it regards as paramount. The word 'Labodur' is used instead of the words 'Depressed Classes', because labour includes the Depressed Classes as well.

AIMS OF PARTY

Working The Constitution Despite Defects

Explaining the programme of the Party, Dr. Ambedkar said that it had been formulated after mature consideration and in consultation with all those who were interested in it, so far as the new Constitution was concerned.

"The Party recognises that the new constitution is full of defects and falls much short of full responsible Government. The Party objects to several features of the Provincial Constitution, particularly the institution of the second Chamber. All the same, the party believes in working the Constitution. But while prepared to work the Constitution, the party will strive to see that the Special Emergency and Reserved Powers vested in the Governor, are not exercised in a manner which altogether nullifies the system of responsible Governments."

As regards the economic question

(1) “the Party will undertake to establish Land Mortgage Banks, agriculturist producers’, co-operative societies and marketing societies with a view to improving the productivity of agriculture.

(2) “The Party thinks that fragmentation of holdings which in the opinion of the party is a severe handicap in the way of the application of capital and improved methods of cultivation to agriculture and is therefore a direct cause of the poverty of the agriculturists.

Pressure of Population

“The Party, however believes that the fragmentation of holdings and the consequent poverty of the agriculturists are mainly due to the pressure of population on land, and unless the pressure is relieved by draining off the excess population subsisting on land, fragmentation will continue, and the condition of the agriculturists will remain as poverty-stricken as it is today. In the opinion of the party the principal means of helping the agriculturists and making agriculture more productive consists in the industrialisation of the Province. The party will, therefore, endeavour to rehabilitate old industries and promote such new industries as the natural resources of the Provinces will permit.

(3) “To raise the efficiency and the productive capacity of the people the Party will endeavour to undertake an extensive programme of technical education.

(4) “The Party accepts the principle of State Management and State Ownership of industry whenever it may become necessary in the interest of the people.

(5) “The Party will endeavour to remove all obstacles to free and full life and to alter, amend or abolish any economic system which is unjust to any class or section of the people.

(6) “The Party will undertake legislation to protect agriculture tenants from the exaction and evictions by the landlords in general and in particular the tenants under (a) the Khoti System, and (b) the Talukadari System.

(7) "The Party will endeavour to provide for the workers, agricultural as well as industrial a minimum standard of living compatible with civilised life.

(8) "For the benefit of the industrial workers the party will endeavour to introduce legislation to control the employment, dismissal and promotion of employees in factories, to fix maximum hours of work, to make provision for the payment of adequate wages, for leave with pay, and as many amenities of life as possible, and to provide payment to the workers of bonuses, pensions of other provisions on retirements from active work, on account of old age or other incapacity. The party will also introduce a scheme of social insurance which will provide the workers against sickness, unemployment and accident. The party will endeavour to provide cheap and sanitary dwellings for the workers.

(9) "For the benefit of the agricultural workers the party will endeavour to extent to them the same benefits which it proposes to secure for the industrial workers with such modifications as circumstances may require.

(10) "The Party accepts the principle that it is the duty of the State to relieve unemployment, and the party will therefore endeavour to carry out this obligation by introducing schemes of land settlement and by starting public works to provide for the unemployed and the landless labourers.

(11) "The Party will undertake legislation to protect the debtor class from undue exactions, usurious delings and fraudulent transaction of the money-lenders and endeavour to tackle the problem of rural indebtedness.

(12) "The Party will undertake legislation to afford adequate protection to the lower middle class in the matter of house rents, in industrial centres in big cities and towns."

Taxation Problems

The attitude of the Party towards taxation is that "it believes that for the improvement in the well-being of the people every Government must undertake a large number of nation building activities and that these activities can be undertaken only when

Government has money in its treasury. This money can come mainly from taxation levied on the people. A prosperous Government is the best guarantee of good Government.

“The Party thinks that to preach reduction of taxation as a principle and to tell the people that the reduction of taxation even at the sacrifice to useful nation-building activities is in their interest, is to misguide the people and to deceive the poorer classes. This does not mean that the Party wishes to keep the system of taxation as it is. On the contrary the Party sees great objection to the system of taxation now in operation. The Party definitely recognises that the present system of taxation is unjust and weighs heavily on the poorer sections of the population. The Party will endeavour to rectify this inequity in the general system of taxation. The Party has great objections to the present system of levying land revenue and it will undertake legislation to make it more equitable and more elastic.”

SOCIAL REFORM

Legislation Plans

With regard to social reform :

(1) “The Party will undertake legislation for the advancement of all necessary social reform (i) to prevent social reformers from being outcasted by the orthodox and (ii) to penalise all forms of organised attempts at direct action such as terrorism and boycott to prevent individuals or classes from exercising the rights and liberties given to them by law.

(2) “The Party will undertake legislation to regulate the administration of all public charities with a view to preventing the mismanagement and misapplication of the charity funds and to secure the use of any surplus that may be left over to the advancement of such secular purposes as education etc.

(3) “The Party will undertake legislation to deal with the Problem of beggars and other destitute persons.”

Rural Reconstruction

“The attitude of the Party towards rural reconstruction is :

(1) “The Party will endeavour to make village life cheerful by providing as many amenities of life as may be necessary for the object in view.

(2) "The Party will endeavour to improve village sanitation and housing by introducing a scheme of village planning some what on the lines of town-planning.

(3) "The Party will endeavour to establish village libraries, village halls, village radious and rotary cinemas in order to modernise the outlook of the village and to make him a progressive persons."

Education

In matters of education ;

(1) "The Party will give effect to the scheme of free and compulsory primary education.

(2) "The Party will undertake a scheme of adult education so as to make all people literate.

(3) "The Party will lay special emphasis on technical education.

(4) "The Party will endeavour to provide facilities for higher education in India and abroad by means of State aid to deserving persons from communities which are educationally backward.

(5) "The Party will undertake legislation to reorganise the university education in the Presidency by establishing regional universities and to make them teaching universities. The Party believes that this is the only remedy by which the course of examination which has blasted the intelligence and effort of the student population can be removed."

Administration

The altitude of the Party towards the administration is:

(1) "The Party will endeavour to see that the administration is good, efficient and free from corruption.

(2) "To secure the ends of good and efficient administration the Party will endeavour (i) to secure the separation of the Judiciary from the Executive and (ii) to amend the *Vatan* system in a way suited to modern conditions.

(3) "The Party will also endeavour to prevent the administration from becoming the monopoly of any single caste or community. Consistently with efficiency of administration the Party will endeavour to bring about a fair admixture of all castes and communities in the administration of the Presidency."

