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**COUNCIL OF THE GOVERNOR GENERAL  
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**ABSTRACT OF THE PROCEEDINGS**  
**OF**  
**THE COUNCIL OF THE GOVERNOR GENERAL OF INDIA**  
**ASSEMBLED FOR THE PURPOSE OF MAKING**  
**LAWS AND REGULATIONS**  
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1916



GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT.

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE INDIAN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ASSEMBLED UNDER  
THE PROVISIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT, 1915  
(5 & 6 Geo. V, Ch. 61).

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The Council met at the Council Chamber, Imperial Secretariat, Delhi, on  
Thursday, the 16th March, 1916.

PRESENT :

The Hon'ble SIR WILLIAM CLARK, K.C.S.I., C.M.G., *Vice-President, presiding,*  
and 47 Members, of whom 41 were Additional Members.

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**RESOLUTION RE AMELIORATION OF THE DE-  
PRESSED CLASSES.**

**The Hon'ble Mr. Dadabhoj :—**“ Sir, I beg to move :—

‘ That this Council recommends to the Governor General in Council that measures be devised with the help, if necessary, of a small representative committee of officials and non-officials for an amelioration in the moral, material and educational condition of what are known as the Depressed Classes, and that, as a preliminary step, the Local Governments and Administrations be invited to formulate schemes with due regard to local conditions.’

“ From the last census returns it is difficult to find out easily the classes, castes and tribes that would fall within the group of Depressed Classes, and *ergo* the number of men who belong to them. In the lowest strata of Indian society there are three classes of men who are as much depressed as any other class, but they are not usually known as the Depressed Classes. The aboriginals, the criminal and wandering tribes, and the Mahomedan *ajlaf* and *arsul* stand out of the group, and only the ‘untouchables’ among the Hindus have come to be identified with the Depressed Classes. Again, there are other numerous castes of Hindus with varying degrees of social disability,—the

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inferior and the unclean sudras of the classification of 1901—who might well claim our care, attention and sympathy; but their case does not come within the scope of the present Resolution, and perhaps time and education are slowly, but steadily, solving the problem for them. The four classes noted above have a total strength of nearly 70,000,000 souls, or a little less than a quarter of the total population. In the classification according to religion the aboriginals would mostly come under the group of animists who number, according to the last census, over 10 millions, of whom 7,348,024 live in British India, and 2,947,144 in the Feudatory States. Some of them might come under the other head of 'beggars, vagrants, procurers, receivers of stolen goods and cattle prisoners'; but the wandering and criminal tribes are most of them within this group, and their number, notwithstanding the variation since 1901, is still large. In 1901, the *ajlaf* and the *arad* together numbered 12,523,982, and the Hindu untouchables numbered over 50,670,000. If the classes increased during the subsequent decade at the same rate as the general population, the numbers must now be over 13 millions and 54 millions respectively. Of these latter 42½ millions belong to British India, while the aboriginals within the same area are six millions in number. The reclamation and elevation of these various classes ought to be our chief concern. If India has to make a sound progress as a whole, the moral and material condition of the people in the lowest rungs cannot surely be neglected or even regarded with benevolent indifference. But somehow the problem has not so far been tackled with that earnestness of purpose and determination which a conviction of its gravity and its supreme importance to the welfare of the body politic could ensure. After long years the educated Indian is slowly waking up to the grim realities of the situation, but the amount of prejudice is still great. On the other hand, the policy of Government, if there has been any, has been one of drift; more accurately speaking, the whole administration in relation to these unfortunate classes is marked by the absence of a definite policy. The result is, there has been unequal development among the different groups. The time has surely come when the progress of the lower orders should engage the earnest attention of Government. It is a fact of great moment that any reasonable scheme of elevation will have the cordial support of the best minds of India. With the spread of high education, both Hindus and Mahomedans in advanced positions in life have come to realise that the amelioration in the general condition of the country cannot be properly effected without the elevation of the Depressed Classes of both the communities, and of the aboriginals and the wandering and the criminal tribes, who might also be included among the Depressed Classes. Even if considerations of national self-respect and of humanity did not operate, self-interest would secure, not only the support, but the co-operation, of the advanced sections in any promising scheme of improvement of these classes. Government might, therefore, be reasonably expected to take the matter seriously in hand.

" Sir, in the United States of America, there is a large population which occupies a degraded position. The Government there have a negro problem, or a problem of the elevation of the degraded classes, to which they have applied themselves with characteristic zeal and devotion. The solution is not far distant. To judge of the tremendous rate at which these negroes are progressing, it should be borne in mind that this question of their social, political and moral advancement has arisen only since the abolition of the Slave Trade. Roughly, the period is about half of that spent by India under British rule. And while we can hardly be said to have even undertaken the preliminary spadework for the elevation of our degraded classes, the negroes in the United States of America are advancing at rapid strides. There are large benefactions for the education of the coloured people. The Peabody Fund, the John F. Slater Fund, and the Daniel Hand Fund may be mentioned as instances. The State also fully recognises its responsibility in this matter, and 1,000,000 dollars are spent annually in the Northern States alone for education among the negroes. It appears from the Report of the Education Commissioner that in the Slave States 44·86 per cent. of boys of school-going

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age were at school in 1907-08 against the general percentage of 69·32 for the whole of the United States, and 70·34 per cent. among the white population, and the ratio of attendance was 62·18 per cent against 66·13 per cent. among the white Americans. There are special normal and industrial schools, secondary schools, universities and colleges, schools of theology, schools of law and schools of medicine, dentistry and pharmacy. Hampton and Tuskegee have special industrial schools for training in handicrafts. In 1908-09, 23,160 pupils received industrial training in schools above the elementary grades. The white American has taken the negro by the hand and, notwithstanding race repulsion, gives him every encouragement, in the Northern States at least, to attain a dignified position in life. At Harvard once a coloured student was chosen 'class orator.' In some instances, white lawyers have backed up coloured barristers for appointment to important Federal offices. The Negro Trade Unions are admitted to the federation of the Knights of Labour.

"The brown Filipino has likewise made marvellous progress during the past few years of American rule. Schools have multiplied rapidly, but have failed to overtake the demand. There is now in the Philippines an insatiable desire for useful knowledge. And this has been excited among a population who, in the beginning, viewed American educational methods with suspicion, and opposed their introduction in supersession of the old Spanish organisation.

"In Europe, a similar problem does not exist, but in most of the progressive countries special measures are adopted for the uplift of their degraded classes,—the vagrants and tramps and criminals. In England at Thrope Arch near Leeds, an industrial school is maintained for the children of criminals and delinquents. In Switzerland, the education colony at Witzwil, Berne, for vagabonds and tramps has, within the short space of twenty years, created a revolution, the effects of which are not confined to that State. It is a new gospel of reclamation and progress which now finds favour in distant lands also. France has profited by the Swiss example. It is the same story everywhere—enlightenment and advancement—with of course varying degrees of success. But the picture is changed when we come to India. Here the problem has not been tackled seriously, and no scheme even has been formulated for the elevation of the untouchables, the aboriginals, the wandering and criminal tribes, and the degraded Mahomedans. In the Punjab alone, through the *kot* system, an effort has been made for the reclamation of the wandering and criminal tribes, but that has not gone far. As regards education even, a regrettable indifference is noticeable among the authorities. It would be ungenerous to suggest that the Government are regardless of humanitarian principles; but they clearly fight shy at the magnitude of the problem, and rather than tackle the difficulties themselves with proper zeal and spirit, they have practically left the field to missionaries and philanthropic enthusiasts. Even the annual educational reports do not contain any information about the progress in the education of the special classes. Neither is there in them any reference to the subject. It is only in the last quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in India, thanks to the efforts of the Hon'ble Mr. Sharp, that there is a summary of the position. And there we find that only 2·6 per cent. aboriginals are at school, while the figures for the Depressed Classes are not available. The percentages of literates among these two classes are 0·4 and 2·8! And this with all the progress made during the quinquennium! In Madras, where something like a serious effort is being made, the expenses of the education of the Depressed Classes rose from Rs. 2,63,072 to Rs 6,07,775, and the contribution from the public funds, including local board funds, accounted for less than half of this latter sum. There was a decline in the number of special secondary schools, and all the progress there was in elementary education was due to missionary effort. In Bombay, the same arrangements prevail for both aboriginals and untouchables, with hardly much progress. The Bombay Government admit that the *mahars* and the *dheds* who form the bulk of the Bombay untouchables value education, 'are possessed of admirable brains and well repay the labour of teaching them,' but have no special scheme

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to suggest. In the ordinary schools the boys have to pick up crumbs of knowledge 'on the verandah away from the master's eye,' and special schools are few in number. The recent Press Note on the subject issued by the Bombay Government closes with a magnificent *non possumus* :—

'The position of these castes and tribes in the future depends partly on their own selves, and partly on those more favoured Indian communities, which by extending the hand of human comradeship or hardening their hearts and averting their faces, have it in their power to elevate or to degrade them.'

There ends the responsibility of the State, and indeed the shortest way to progress has been shown! People sunk in ignorance, despised, degraded and persecuted must look to themselves and to their persecutors for their elevation! Could there be a greater lack of imagination or appreciation of their duty in an enlightened Government? Sir A. Bourne has well pointed out in connection with the whole problem of the Depressed Classes that—

'Hindus in general take little interest in these people, and practically all that has been, or is being, done to elevate them is the work of missionary bodies.'

"In Bengal, only 'a slow increase (in special schools) is observable'; in the Punjab, 'the whole number (of special schools) seems to be very small'; in the Central Provinces, 'the number of low-caste children at school has risen from about 15,331 to 16,231', or about 6 per cent! The United Provinces Government have fallen into a similar error. In their Resolution No. 1611-XV of 25th August, 1914 on the Report of the Piggott Committee, they observe :—

'There have recently been gratifying signs of desire for education among castes who have hitherto been condemned to menial or even predatory habits, such as the Doms of Benares; and it is the clear duty of the Government and the Boards to support any such awakenings. His Honour trusts that the benevolent intentions of liberal Hindu thought will be translated more or more, as time goes on, into practical help and persuasion towards this object. Meanwhile he accepts the recommendation of a majority of the Committee that, in places where a particular section or group, e.g., of the depressed classes, applies for a school, guarantees an attendance of an adequate number of boys and offers (if it can) to provide reasonable accommodation, even though it may be below the regular standard, the Board should start a special school under a suitable master. More than this, it seems impracticable to prescribe at present.'

Again, the same strain of helplessness.—the same attitude of *laissez faire*—the same inability to prove equal to the occasion! It seems, unless the stimulus comes from this Government, the Provincial Administrations will not undertake any proper scheme of reform.

"But, Sir, it is not all a question of education. The problem is not the same for all the four classes, each of them having a distinct problem of its own. In the case of the Mahomedan *ajlaf* and *arzul* it is one of education, general and industrial, while in that of the wandering and criminal tribes, the main question is one of settlement, education ranking next in importance. The common brotherhood of Islam may be depended upon to secure for the former elevation in the social scale once they become educationally advanced. But the vagrants and tramps must be gathered together in organised settlements before they can be weaned from their nomadic and thieving habits, and before education can be introduced among them. This education too must be mostly industrial in the initial stages. The aborigines stand upon a slightly different level. They are already settled in villages, but the difficulty is they are scattered, generally in the hills far away from the centres of habitation. Education is undoubtedly the chief need, but to be effective and practicable as regards cost, it can only be imparted to them after they have been removed to, and settled in, farm colonies. The organisation of these colonies will do more for them than the mere establishment of elementary schools. But after all farm colonies may be difficult where the people are already settled in villages for which they have naturally a strong attachment. Some special scheme of education must accordingly be evolved for their children which would combine the advantages of cheapness, attractiveness and accessibility. The case of Hindu untouchables presents an entirely new set of difficulties. That any man made after the image of God, endowed with

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brains and : moral sense, should pollute his fellow being with his touch, is incredible. The very idea is revolting, and is enough to shock humanity. But despite of our vaunted civilisation, despite of our progress and enlightenment, large bodies, nay millions, of men have been relegated to that infamous position for centuries through Brahmanical persecution. The District Manual of Mangalore points out :—

‘The *Ande Koragas* were considered so unclean that they were not permitted to spit on the public way, but had a pot suspended from the neck which they used as a spittoon.’

Good gracious! I hope this is a description of the past. Moreover, this may be an extreme case, but the exclusion of the Depressed Classes from even court-houses and other public places in certain parts of India is a notorious fact. The pariah, under the penalty of severe punishment, must call out from a long distance on the public way to warn high caste Hindus of his presence. The touch of the filthiest vermin does not offend so much as that of the ‘untouchable’ man. Could human perversity go further? Could hatred brutalise humanity more? And yet that is a true picture of even the present state of things. It is, Sir, a shame to Hindu society, it is a shame to Hindu culture, it is a shame to India. Government cannot really sit idle in the face of such enormities. But it may be argued the problem is more social than anything with which Government are directly concerned. Government must be powerless to remove the social ban. It is for the society itself to apply the corrective. At the same time, it has been pointed out by more than one earnest worker in the cause that, without the removal of the ban, no real improvement in the condition of the Depressed Classes is possible. Is there then no hope for these millions of inoffensive, law-abiding, industrious citizens? I, for my part, do not despair.

“Sir, putting aside for the moment this problem of social reform, I submit Government could do much to improve the lot of the Hindu untouchables by means of well-devised schemes of educational, industrial and political advancement. It has been remarked by one acute observer that their conversion to Christianity effaces all memories of their former degradation. Change of religion is, therefore, their only hope. This view, however, does not appeal to me. The change in treatment which follows the assumption by them of European dress is produced, not by the conversion preceding it, but by the material wealth and prosperity lying at the back of it. Poor Christians do not enjoy the same consideration. It is wealth which counts in these days more than anything else. The facts taking place before our very eyes confirm me in this belief. Some of the *mahars* in the Central Provinces are prosperous, and as they gain in wealth the social ban is relaxed. In other provinces also the acquisition of wealth by members of the Depressed Classes is followed by a perceptible improvement in their relations with the higher sections of the Hindu society. I am credibly informed in one of the provinces a *kalal* has been made a Raja by Government, and it came out in evidence sometime ago that a Brahmin, a Mukerji, had taken rice at his place. The fact thus stands out that wealth is a powerful leveller, and caste disabilities disappear under its influence. And in this we have a key to the solution of the problem.

“Sir, to my mind, our object should accordingly be to help the material prosperity of the Depressed Classes, and to secure its official recognition by the appointment of the deserving members to the local bodies and other official committees, and, in exceptional cases, by the bestowal of honours. Some sort of education is the first necessity, but high literary culture is not a condition precedent. In my humble opinion, our first objective ought to be to secure the widest diffusion of elementary and secondary education among the classes concerned simultaneously with industrial education. Next in importance is the encouragement of industries among the men. By attacking this educational and industrial problem with vigour and determination, Government would help materially in the solution of the whole problem of the elevation of the Depressed Classes. The impetus of appointment to public offices will again encourage the dissemination of education

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among them. Thus, the problem to which I claim the attention of the Council and Government is three-fold—educational, industrial and political. In some instances, the solution of this problem may have to be supplemented by colonisation and settlement; but those are questions of detail. I request Government to adopt a definite policy of reform, and to formulate a scheme in consultation with the Local Governments and official and non-official representatives.

“Sir, in this connection the question of cost claims our first consideration, as Government may not, in present circumstances, be disposed to view with favour any scheme involving large expenditure. But my own idea is, the magnitude of the task and the inevitable heavy cost need not paralyse us. The investigation I recommend in the Resolution can alone enable us to form a correct estimate of the amount of expenditure necessary. But I would not be wrong in assuming that it will be large. Even then I hold that the task of elevation of the Depressed Classes should be taken in hand without delay. And I hold further that this can be done without imposing an extra severe strain upon the Exchequer. The State will undoubtedly have to spend more and more of the educational grants on special institutions, but the major portion of the work can be done in other ways. Philanthropic bodies and Christian missionaries are already rendering splendid service in the cause. The success of the missionaries among the aboriginals is well known. The great Salvation Army has shown us a new way of humanising tramps and criminals. I do not think I can speak too highly of their reforming work. It is written large on the pages of the history of the Punjab, the United Provinces and Madras. The chief drawback in the case of all these missionaries is, that their object may be viewed with suspicion. The Arya Samaj may be expected to do a good deal in this line. It has special advantages and can do much. The various Depressed Classes Mission societies, either organised or encouraged by devoted philanthropists like Sir Narayan Ganesh Chandavarkar and the Hon’ble Sir Sankaran Nair, are active and watchful. All this non-official agency can be utilised by the Government, with proper safeguards, where necessary, to accelerate the pace of advancement among the Depressed Classes, moral, material and educational. With a liberal system of grants-in-aid the object can be attained at a minimum of cost. Government can further reduce the State cost by attracting private benefactions for the behoof of the Depressed Classes. Private charity, experience shows, usually takes its direction from the lead of Government, and benefactions can be made to flow in this channel with a little official encouragement and a discriminating official recognition. This source has not been exploited so far. But more than all these, I would urge the adoption of the Swiss system of education colonies in which industrial education is imparted to the pupils along with general education, and the industries help the colonies to become self-supporting. Captain J. W. Petavel is now in India, popularising the method and organising experimental colonies. From what has been said of education colonies, they appear to have a great future, and they are calculated to prove especially valuable as an elevating agency in the cause I advocate before the Council. Much could thus be done by Government to remove from the fair name of India the stigma of the Depressed Classes without incurring enormous expenditure. But we must have a definite policy for a beginning, and a workable scheme of reform. And this plan of action I ask Hon’ble Members to recommend to Government by adopting this Resolution.”

**The Hon’ble Sir Gangadhar Chitnavis:**—“Sir, I have listened with great interest to the Hon’ble Mover’s comprehensive and very attractive speech, and though I do not wholly agree with the somewhat exaggerated picture he gives of the treatment of the Depressed Classes by the higher classes, I share his earnest desire that the elevation of the Depressed Classes should be systematised, and, wherever possible, pushed forward. The old condition of things has now everywhere changed. I also admit that in



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parts of India, through the benevolent efforts of Government and the various missionary bodies, including the Depressed Classes Improvement Missions with many high class Hindus as members, the material condition of the depressed classes and the lower castes has everywhere, to some extent, improved along with that of the general population. The whole tendency of modern civilisation is to remove inequalities in social status based upon anything but sterling merit, and to produce complete toleration among the conflicting units. It is producing its natural results in India. With the principle 'of live and let live' at work, the weaker sections of the community have a chance, of which they are not slow to avail themselves. But I believe the pace of progress could be accelerated. In the Central Provinces, the *Mahars* and the *Mangs* are improving. They are freely receiving education in Government and missionary schools, and the social disabilities of the more thriving amongst them are gradually becoming less oppressive. Some of the *Mahars* have shown great aptitude in the various trades, and some of them have been admitted into Government service as patwaris and clerks. Acquisition of wealth is certainly a great factor in the solution of the problem. And so far as that is dependent upon general, industrial and technical education, it is a matter in which Government help is both desirable and necessary. The Government and the various missionary societies have done much in this direction; but before any comprehensive scheme of elevation can be prepared, a thorough investigation of the whole subject must be undertaken, and that is what my friend the Hon'ble Mr. Dadabhoj seeks in his motion. I have, therefore, great pleasure in supporting the Resolution."

**The Hon'ble Mr. Rama Rayaningar:**—"Sir, I am glad my friend, the Hon'ble Mr. Dadabhoj, has raised this question of the elevation of the Depressed Classes. I wanted to move a Resolution about it myself. In 1913, I invited Government attention to it by interpellation and also by general observations in the course of the debate on the Budget. But the Government reply was to a degree disappointing. They refused to show the members of the Depressed Classes any special consideration in the matter, even of appointment to the low paid public offices. If that attitude continues, there is little hope of progress, but I hope in the interest of the country better counsels now prevail.

"Sir, we have in Madras a large depressed class. Some of them are not allowed even to enter public places. Their movements on the public way are not free and unrestricted. Regrettable as it is, it is true that in some cases the social rigours are so great that, to escape from them, the depressed people are driven to embrace either Christianity or Islamism. Their only fault is their birth. Are we Hindus so dead even to our own interests, that we are not prepared to entertain kindlier feelings towards the depressed classes, and would much rather lose than keep them among us by humane treatment? Can it be believed that the elevation of the depressed classes is repugnant to the sublime principles of the Hindu religion, or that it was the intention of the ancient lawgivers that they should be permanently kept out of the common rights of humanity? The Hindu religious tenets and the intentions of the lawgivers are not in favour of such extravagant theory. The Avatar hero of Ramayana did not scruple to mix with Guha, a Nishada, a Panchama by caste. The sage Kanva, according to *Bhavishtottara purana*, admitted into the sacred fold of Hindu Dwiijas a large number of Mlechyas. The *Skandu purana* relates how a whole tribe of Konkan fishermen were elevated into Brahmins. Sri Ramanuja Charya, the great teacher of the *Vistavita* philosophy, took the Panchamas by hand and promoted them in the social scale. But unfortunately through the moral degeneration of centuries Hindu Society has lost its former elasticity; the rules have become crystalised; the intentions of our lawgivers have become obscured in a mass of unmeaning and uncompromising practices. We must have a broader outlook and a more practical sense of our present needs and our social duties. We must revert to the old order of things when Hinduism was

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progressive and the Hindus constantly got recruits from among non-Hindus and advanced to conquer the world. I hope there is a change coming in the country. Hindu thought is undergoing a slow evolution, and the day may not be distant when our leaders will themselves advance to receive in brotherly embrace the depressed of our society. The Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj and the Theosophical Society perhaps give us the lead.

"Sir, this however is not the direction in which Government can be expected to help us. The change will come of itself. Under the influence of modern civilization we are progressing fast, and the reconstitution of our society on modern and liberal lines is a question of time. But it is not desirable to leave the solution of this sore problem of the depressed classes to the humanizing influence of time. The Hon'ble Mover has indicated the line in which Government can and ought to move to help in the solution. Government has certain obvious duties in this matter, and it is sincerely to be hoped it will not be slow to recognise and perform them. The situation requires tactful and sympathetic handling. We representatives of the people have the right to expect Government to organise special measures for the elevation of the depressed classes. Sir, it will not do to consider their claims to educational facilities and to public appointment along with those of the other sections of the community. Regard for the special needs of minorities is one of the accepted principles of this Government. The special treatment of the depressed classes will not therefore involve any serious violation of policy. I recommend to Government the adoption of a definite policy and the formulation of proper schemes with due regard to local conditions. Sir, the object of the Resolution has my whole-hearted support."

**The Hon'ble Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee:**—"I think, Sir, every member of this Council, be he an official or a non-official, will sympathise with the object of this Resolution. Whatever differences of opinion there may exist with regard to the terms of the Resolution or the form of the recommendation that has been made, I think we all welcome the discussion that this Resolution has given rise to in this Council. We of the educated community cannot neglect this question; we cannot discard the depressed classes; they are Indians. They are of us and we are of them, the bone of our bone and the flesh of our flesh, and we feel this, that in the onward march which has begun, in the onward national movement, we must take them with us, and if we do not do that, they will drag us down. The progress of a community does not mean the progress of this section or of that; it means the harmonious, the conjoint, the simultaneous advancement of the whole, and therefore in this onward movement the depressed classes must take their place and their share. Sir, this movement is universal throughout India. I regret very much that my Hon'ble friend the mover of this Resolution went somewhat out of his way to level (I do not think he did it intentionally) an attack against the Hindu community. He must bear in mind that we are the inheritors of past traditions, of a civilization as ancient as the world. That civilization undoubtedly had its defects, but that civilization in the morning of the world was the guarantee for law and order and social stability. In the past it afforded consolation to millions; in the future it is destined to afford consolation to millions. We are trying to evolve a national system in conformity to our present environments, but we cannot push aside all those things which have come down to us from the past. We reverence the venerable fabric which has been built up by our ancestors. We notice their defects, and we are anxious to get rid of them gradually and steadily, not by any revolutionary movement, but by the slow, steady process of evolution. My friend must have a little sympathy with us; he must extend to us the hand of generosity in our efforts to deal with these problems. My Hon'ble friend suggests that the Government should take measures—measures of an educational character, measures which will help forward the moral and material advancement of the depressed classes—and he recommends further that the Provincial Governments should frame

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schemes, in consultation with officials and non-officials. Sir, we welcome the action of Government in a matter of this kind, but after all, if you analyse the situation, it is a social problem, and the British Government, very properly, as I think, in conformity with its ancient traditions, holds aloof from all interference with social questions.

“Government can do a great deal by way of education, a great deal by helping forward the industrial movement among the Depressed Classes. But the vital problem, the problem of problems, is one of social uplifting, and there the Government can only afford to be a benevolent spectator. It may sympathise with our efforts, but it cannot actively participate in them. I say the crux of the problem is social. I think, in regard to matters of administration, the best way is to look at a concrete case and try to solve its complexities by reference to actual facts. I am acquainted with this problem in my province. I may say that I have been taking an interest in the elevation of the Depressed Classes. We have a hundred thousand *Namasudras*, as they are called in Bengal in the Faridpur district, and we have a few thousand in the Mymensingh district. Now what is their grievance? It is this, that the upper classes will not partake of food or water which is touched by them; that the upper classes will not admit them into the rooms where they are dining; that the priests of the upper classes will not minister to their religious rites, and that in some cases the upper classes will not allow the wells where they draw water from to be touched by them. These are the grievances which practically weigh heavily upon the Depressed Classes, and we are doing our best by the education of public opinion to bring about a reasonable and amicable settlement of these points.

“The settlement cannot come in a day; public opinion must be educated, public feeling has to be transformed, a better understanding has to be established. It is the work of years, but the work has begun, and I am perfectly confident that, with the growing desire of the educated community to uplift these *Namasudras*, within a measurable distance of time, most of these grievances will have disappeared. My Hon'ble friend has made an attack upon the Hindus; my friend has said that we are doing nothing. I think he said that. Am I right in that interpretation?”

**The Hon'ble Mr. Dadabhoj** :—“No, my Hon'ble friend is wrong.”

**The Hon'ble Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee** :—“I am very pleased to hear that. I was under the impression that he had made that attack, and if he had, I should certainly have replied to it with considerable emphasis. We are doing our very best in the task of uplifting the Depressed Classes. As a matter of fact we have our organizations. There is the Brahma-Samaj which has got a mission of its own; there is the Social Service League which has got a mission of its own; there is the Arya Samaj which is working in the same direction; there are leaders in the mofussil who are helping forward this movement. And in an educational way we are doing our best. A concrete fact will interest the Council. I am associated with the Ripon College which contains a very large number of students. We make it a point, when a poor member of the Depressed Classes applies for admission, either to admit him free or to charge him half fees, and I believe the same thing is being done by the authorities in the other colleges. There is the difficulty about our hostels that, while our students will perhaps live with them in the same hostel, they will not dine with them, and I find from the proceedings which have been published in to-day's papers that my Hon'ble friend Babu Radha Charan Pal moved a Resolution in the Bengal Legislative Council asking the Government for a small grant of Rs. 1,200 for a hostel for these classes. Therefore, the fact is that educated public opinion in Bengal and in India is most anxious that there should be a definite movement towards uplifting the Depressed Classes. Government can co-operate by establishing schools, by helping the organisations which are already at work by starting Co-operative

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Credit Societies, and by affording facilities for the admission of members of the Depressed Classes into the public service. In this way the community will be educated; their self-consciousness and their self-respect will be strengthened. They will learn to assert their rights, and, Sir, when a community has learnt to assert itself its future is assured, for, sooner or later, it will get its rights. And the *Namasudras* have begun that process.

“I think, therefore, that the future of this question appears to me to be exceedingly hopeful. I hope and trust that the Resolution of my Hon'ble friend will be accepted—at least the principle of it: I think it can do nothing but good. The association of Government with private effort in this direction will stimulate private effort; and will bring about, within a measurable distance of time, a satisfactory solution of this great problem.”

**The Hon'ble Mr. Hill:**—“Sir, the Hon'ble Mr. Dadabhoj, in moving this Resolution, has placed two sets of people in the dock, first of all the Hindus and secondly, the Local Governments. My Hon'ble friend Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee has effectively defended that part of the attack which was levelled at the Hindus, and has pointed out that the fundamental difficulty in connection with this problem is, at the root, religious and social, and the two, in the case of Hinduism, are indissolubly connected. That being so, it was, I cordially agree with my Hon'ble friend, somewhat ungenerous to make an attack upon the leaders of Hindu opinion for their failure to grapple with a problem of extraordinary difficulty. However, I am not concerned so much to defend the Hindus who, under the able leadership of the Hon'ble Mr. Banerjee, are quite able to take care of themselves. What I am anxious about is, to express the bewilderment with which I listened to the remarks of the Hon'ble Mover of this Resolution, which assumed throughout that Local Governments were sitting with folded hands and required the leadership of the Government of India. With all respect, Sir, I have come sufficiently recently from a province to state that that position is diametrically opposed to the facts. I can only speak with some authority in respect of one province, but in respect of that province, I desire to repudiate, with the greatest possible emphasis, the suggestion that the Local Governments are indifferent to this problem. Nothing could be further from the facts. On another point, I should like also, in respect of this Resolution, to indicate that the suggestion that a Committee emanating from the Government of India should be appointed, coupled with non-officials, to go into this question and to formulate a sort of uniform policy for India, seems to be one open to serious objection. I have listened with considerable sympathy to the general object which the Hon'ble Mover has in view, and I do not wish for a moment to suggest that the objects aimed at by this Resolution may not be desirable in themselves; but the suggestion that there ought to be a uniform policy laid down for the whole of India strikes one coming from the Bombay Presidency, where conditions from one end to the other differ so materially, as likely to hamper rather than to further the object which we all have in view. Between the north in Gujerat, and the south in Bijapur, where Mr. Starte is making, as I believe my Hon'ble friend Sir Reginald Craddock will explain, most admirable arrangements for the reclamation of the criminal classes of the Southern Division, there is such a wide difference of conditions and circumstances, that the suggestion that a uniform policy could be applied to all these classes seems to me absolutely untenable. In addition to those bodies to which my Hon'ble friend Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee referred who are doing useful work, gradual spade work, in the preparation of the ground for the elevation of the Depressed Classes, I should like to add the name of the Servants of India Society. That Society in Bombay—and it is for the purpose of mentioning this that I have ventured to intervene in this debate—that Society in Bombay city is working whole-heartedly, in conjunction with officials, who are helping, as far as possible, in the direction of improving the economic condition of the Depressed Classes of Bombay city.

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So far they have limited themselves to that. No doubt they will extend their operations as time goes on; but what I wish to emphasize, Sir, is that the Servants of India Society is precisely the kind of organization which, if it enlists the assistance, as the Servants of India Society has done, of Government and Government officials so far as is legitimate, can effect much more within given limits than any official or semi-official committee appointed by Government. The members of the Servants of India Society know precisely the conditions in which they are working, and Government could not possibly have a better agency to advise and help them and to indicate to them the directions in which Government can most successfully intervene.

“For these reasons, Sir, while sympathising—as all the speakers have done—with the objective which the Hon’ble Mr. Dadabhoj had in moving this Resolution, I have ventured to suggest that the charges brought against Local Governments are void of foundation, and that the suggestion that a committee, composed of officials and non-officials, should be appointed in order to create a uniform policy to give effect to the objects of the Resolution, is one which cannot really commend itself to those who have the objects of the Resolution at heart.”

**The Hon’ble Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya:**—“Sir, it seems rather ungracious to say so, but a sense of the dignity of the proceedings of this Council compels me to utter a protest against the manner in which sometimes subjects are brought before it for consideration. I am certain that in private conversation, in private dealings between man and man, no member of the Council would be guilty of the discourtesy which some of us, in the course of our discussions, I am sorry to say, have at times shown towards whole communities.

“In moving the Resolution the object of which I may at once say, has my whole-hearted support, my friend, the Hon’ble Mr. Dadabhoj, went out of his way to make remarks against the Hindu community which, I think, he ought to have avoided. Now, Sir, I am not here to defend everything Hindu that exists. I am not here to apologise for the many prejudices or superstitions, which I am sadly conscious are to be found among one portion or another of our community. But it is not the Hindu community alone which finds it difficult to get rid of prejudices. You, Sir, know—every sensible educated man knows—that whatever the community may be, superstitions and prejudices die hard. Without meaning the smallest disrespect, I would instance the case of the marriage with a Deceased Wife’s Sister Bill. I suppose everybody recognises that that was a measure of an absolutely harmless nature which should have been accepted long, long ago by English society. At any rate, that is the view of a lot of people. And yet we know very well how many years it took, and what an amount of effort it needed to persuade English people to accept such a simple measure. Well, I mention that only as an instance to show that prejudices die hard. We Hindus have got some much worse prejudices to fight against, I acknowledge, I own it. But I do not think it is within the province of a Member of this Council either to lecture to the Hindus present here or to those outside as to socio-religious disabilities among themselves which they might fight against and remove. I think the province of Members of this Council is limited to dealing with matters of legislation or other administrative matters which may properly be taken up by the Government. As has been already pointed out, the Government have, in pursuance of a wise and liberal policy, laid it down that they shall not interfere in matters of a religious or socio-religious character, and accusations of the character in question ought, therefore, to be avoided here. When they are indulged in, it places members other than those who bring such charges in a very awkward position. I do not wish to descend into a disputation as to the merits of the imputations or the justification for the general observations that have been made. If I do, I shall be guilty of what I protest against. And yet if I do not, I am left in the position that I have heard without protest remarks showing that the Hindu community from one end of the country to the other was guilty of all that my friend, the Hon’ble Mover of the Resolution, has suggested. He has not

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paused to qualify his remarks; he has not paused to inquire whether the conditions he had heard of as obtaining say, in Madras, obtained at all in the United Provinces, or whether they were different; and whether the conditions which obtain in the Punjab are the same as those which obtain in Bengal and Bombay. It is one sweeping generalisation that he has made against a whole community. I am conscious that we Hindus have many prejudices to fight against and conquer; but I submit that this is not the place to tell us of them.

“Secondly, in dealing with the Resolution, my Hon’ble friend might well have done a little more justice to the Government. I have been a student of the reports on Public Instruction for many years. My Hon’ble friends, Sir Edward Maclagan and Mr. Sharp, will bear me out when I say that there are numerous reports on public instruction which show that the Government of India—and under the direction of the Government of India, the Local Governments—have for decades past been endeavouring to promote in a special degree the education of the backward classes. I find that, even in the report to which my Hon’ble friend referred, a list is given of the many ways in which the Government have been endeavouring to promote the education of the backward classes. Not only that; but we know that in many places men of the humblest classes have risen high, and have been greeted as any educated man would be greeted. I had the honour of having a friend at Allahabad who belonged to the *Chamar* class. He was an M.A. of the same University as I belonged to. I greeted him just as cordially as any other man; and I would in similar circumstances greet any *Chamar* or any *Chandal* as cordially. It is not that the old conditions are not changing. They are changing; they must change. But we have to recognise that social conditions are the legacy of a number of circumstances. They are not created to order. And education is the great solvent which removes all social differences and prejudices. Let there be more education. I join with my Hon’ble friend in asking that more efforts should be made in that direction. But let not the impression go forth, as the Hon’ble Mr. Hill has very well pointed out, that we are starting a new campaign, or that effort in a new direction is being suggested which has hitherto been absent from the mind of the Government—both the Government of India and the Local Governments. The history of education, as can be seen from the Quinquennial Reports previous to that of the Hon’ble Mr. Sharp, shows that the Government has been very much alive to this aspect of the question.

“But, Sir, when I come to deal with the subject-matter of the Resolution, I find myself in complete agreement with my Hon’ble friend. I understand he desires two things. One is that the status of the members of these Depressed Classes should be elevated. So far as the elevation or depression of that status rests upon social or socio-religious causes, the Government would rightly abstain from making any attempt in that direction. But I submit that it depends largely, almost wholly—nay, I say it depends wholly—upon education. That is the one solvent which will solve this problem, and most certainly do I wish and pray that the Government will do as much more as it can towards the spread of education among these classes. There are, however, other facts to be recognised. In going to deal with the Depressed Classes, the Government cannot regard other—what I may call non—Depressed Classes as out of the field of its consideration. The British Government has been offering education to children of every class in India. If it has not been doing so, it should. But if certain classes will not come forward to avail themselves of it, that is due to causes for which the Government is not responsible. If there are certain classes who readily avail themselves of that education, that again is the result of causes which have worked for a long time. All that we can reasonably ask—and I do join my friend in asking for it—is that there should be absolutely no impediment placed in the way of the education of any boy belonging to any class of the community. Be he a *Chamar*, be he a *Chandal*, be he or she of whatever class or condition, if there is a child living and breathing in India, the schools of the Government and the schools of the community ought to be

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open to that child as much as to any other child. And if there are any difficulties thrown in their way, if any difficulties are shown to exist anywhere in the case of these children of the Depressed Classes, the matter should certainly be brought to the notice of the Government for remedy at the earliest possible opportunity. I will go further. I will say let there be special facilities, special encouragement given, in order to induce them to come forward to avail themselves of education. For I wish that there should be provision for educating every child. I hope the time will soon come, distant though it may seem at present, when compulsory education will be provided for every child in India. In the meantime let us provide such facilities as are possible for every class of the community who will come forward to avail themselves of it. And when you have once given education, an amelioration of the other conditions that my friend speaks of in the Resolution will come in as a matter of course. I have known many instances which support my view, but I do not wish to take up the time of Council by narrating them. I have heard from the lips of so revered a man as Sir Gurudas Banerjee, a Brahmin of Brahmins, how he treats every educated man who goes to him, whatever his caste may be. I know of no friend who would not be ashamed of himself if he refused to treat an educated brother in the way in which he should, merely because he happened to be of a lower or Depressed Class. Therefore, I say let there be more and more of education; let the other social advantages which result from education spring up, and the complaint about the treatment given to the Depressed Classes will disappear.

"I have already said in the beginning that we all have got to contend against some difficulties, and I know that even with education there may be some small-minded people, some narrow-minded people, who may fail to act up to the standard that is the right standard for a man to adopt towards his brother-man. But such instances you will find even among communities other than Hindus. There is not a community in which there are not some people who would allow their treatment of their fellow-men to be affected by differences in social position. Even in societies where there is absolutely no caste, in the sense in which we Hindus have it, in European societies and even in Muhammadan societies differences in social position sometimes lead not merely to the refusal of the courtesies which may be due to a man, but sometimes even to his persecution. There will always be some such men perhaps in every community: let us not think too much of them. So far as the general bulk of the community is concerned in India as elsewhere, once you educate the humblest men, once they begin to lead a life of cleanliness, once they wean themselves effectually, extricate themselves from the bondage of the customs and habits and surroundings which have for a long time been associated, unfortunately associated, with their position, there will be absolutely no bar to their being admitted into society, no bar to their being treated as educated brethren, and it is in that view, Sir, that I support the prayer that has been made that the Government should do all that it can to promote education among these humble people. I may add, however, that I do not at all see the necessity for a committee such as has been proposed. I entirely agree with the Hon'ble Mr. Hill in the view that there is no need for such a committee. I think, Sir, that Government, both Imperial and Provincial, are alive to their duty in this direction, and I think all that is needed is the provision of more funds. As Lord Curzon said long ago, the question of education in India is a question of funds; if funds are forthcoming, if grants for education will be made in abundance, then I have no doubt that this question of the amelioration of the conditions of the Depressed Classes will by itself steadily move on towards solution. For that purpose and to that extent I support the prayer which is contained in the Resolution."

**The Hon'ble Mr. Madhu Sudan Das:**—"Sir, the turn which the discussion on this Resolution has taken reminds me of the beginning and the heat of a football match. When two teams about to be engaged in a football match meet one another, each wishes that the other should come out

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successful ; but when the kicking of the ball commences, in the heat of the sport, all that benevolence disappears, and the whole thing assumes an altogether different aspect. The object which moved the Hon'ble Mr. Dadabhoj to put forward his Resolution has the full sympathy and support of all the Hindu Members. But in his attempt to kick the ball of responsibility to the other side, he raised a heat in the sport which has brought out undesirable discussion. But the discussion and the remarks which have been made have prominently brought into view these facts, that the leaders of the Hindu community are as anxious as anybody else to advance the interests of these Depressed, I should rather say, Oppressed Classes. But then to quote the language of the Hon'ble speaker who preceded me (Mr. Malaviya), customs and traditions die hard. And the Hon'ble Mr. Banerjee in his speech pointed out that when it is a contest between a desire to improve and between old customs and traditions—customs based in most cases on religion—then we must look forward to the work of evolution ; a revolution should be avoided. Now, then, what is the position of the Depressed Classes as we find at this moment of the discussion of this question in this Council? People are advancing to approach the Depressed Classes and give them the right hand of uplift. But that must be the work of evolution, and evolution is slow. It may be steady, but it is slow, very slow. Who can say how many millions of ages it took to evolve man out of his ancestor, the monkey, according to Darwin? Evolution is very slow, and traditions and customs die hard, but there stands the man of the Depressed Class. What is his position? He is away from Hindu society in the midst of a desert. Why is he there? Because at some time or other he was cast away as the sweepings of society ; and he does not receive the same treatment which even sweepings in thriving cities do, because the sweepings are looked after so that they may not ferment and breed germs of disease. Here these people live on the outskirts of a village ; they are deprived of every opportunity of seeing the example of a good moral healthy life ; they are deprived of what is a very powerful deterrent in the human nature, and that is the approval of respectable society. I believe, Sir, that the censure of society is a more powerful deterrent than the sentence of a judge.

"Sir, the man who confesses his guilt to the policeman of having committed theft will conceal it from his neighbour ; the soldier who will walk into the mouth of the roaring cannon will shrink before the little finger of scorn of society. Society furnishes a very powerful motive for a man to be worthy of its approbation and to earn its good opinion. What is the position of the Depressed Classes? What wonder if they turn to be criminal? It is all very good, Sir, to speak of the Criminal Tribes, but I am afraid very few of us realise the meaning of these two little words. A few men in a village commit an offence to which perhaps they are driven by hunger, and the residents of the village are all put down as belonging to the tribe of criminals. Before a child is born with the impress of God's innocence on his face, while he is actually drawing his mother's blood in his mother's womb, the brand of the criminal is put upon him. That is the meaning as I understand of criminal tribes, and that is what we have at the present day under the British Government, though the brightest jewel on the Crown of England was earned by abolishing slavery in the world. It is not my duty here to say what the Government has done or what the Government should have done. The question is, if those responsible for the administration of the country feel that they have done all that they could do or should have done to stretch the right hand of help to uplift these men from their pit of degradation ; if they are satisfied I have nothing to say. Reference has been made in the course of the speeches delivered to the missionaries' benevolent efforts in this direction. I may say that on account of the complexity of the Hindu social system the missionaries perhaps in some cases have added another Depressed Class. They acted from the best of motives, from the most benevolent of motives, in fact I should say from the highest of motives, but on account of their ignorance of the social conditions and their inability to understand the complex rules of society, they have added another Depressed Class, and I belong to the



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Depressed Class of the Indian Christian community. I was born a high caste Hindu, but owing to my conversion I belong to that additional Depressed Class. The doors of this Chamber are hermetically sealed against that Depressed Class. If any Resolution is sent to this Council on the subject it is considered controversial, perhaps the very existence of that class is considered problematic; and that in a country where the Government maintains an ecclesiastical establishment and where the King who rules over us proudly bears the title of the Defender of the Faith. But let us turn to the situation where the Government can be of some help; many of these Depressed Classes are to be found in the jails; a man goes to jail and is taught an industry, he learns an industry and we often find that on the very day he regains his freedom he commits an offence again. To my mind that suggests a most interesting psychological problem. Why does he do this? Outside the jail he has those whom he loves and who are near and dear to him. As I said, after leaving jail he loses no time in losing his freedom again; why is that? I think, Sir, because the rules under which he works do not present to his mind any reward; he does not associate labour with the reward of labour; he considers the grub he gets is due to his imprisoned conditions. Can Government do nothing to improve this state of things? Cannot the jail rules be relaxed in such a way that the man would associate his right to earn an honest livelihood with his labour, and thus have an inducement to engage in the industry which he has learned in the jail? I suggest this because these jail birds are the people who are entirely under the control of Government. I do not like to go further because I know Government rules are cast-iron, but it is certainly in the power of Government to recast them in order to suit the present circumstances. I think we are agreed that this class really deserves our earnest attention, and I hope the Government, as well as those outside the walls of this Chamber, men of position, men of influence, will all combine (instead of kicking the football of responsibility among ourselves), that they will— ”

**The Hon'ble the Vice-President** :—“I must ask the Hon'ble Member to bring his remarks to a close; he has one more minute.”

**The Hon'ble Mr. Madhu Sudan Das** :—“I will die before that minute expires! I hope all will join together and stretch forth their hands of sympathy and help with a sincere desire to uplift those classes in such a way that the class will feel that the hands are held out to uplift them and not to strike them.”

**The Hon'ble Mr. Hudson** :—“Sir, I beg to be permitted to say a few words. The last district in the Bombay Presidency in which I served was the Panch Mahals. The Hon'ble Mr. Dadabhoj's definition of 'Depressed Classes' would include the *Bhils*. I don't think they would be pleased to hear that they were so described because the whole country contains *Bhils*; there are there not only more than enough schools for them but there is also a school for educating *Bhil* school-masters. There are no criminal tribes resident in the district, but there are, of course, lower classes, really Depressed Classes, *Dheds* and *Bhangis*. For the *Bhangis*, which are the lower class, there are some special schools, and the *Dheds* themselves get whatever attention they require either in separate schools or in verandahs, and all inspecting officers make a point of seeing that these boys, though they may be in the verandah, do get individual attention. So much for the Panch Mahals.

“The next district is the Dharwar district. There the same remarks apply to the *Mangs* and *Mahars*, the Depressed Classes. The criminal tribes have been taken in hand by Mr. Starte, to whose work the Hon'ble Mr. Hill has referred, and I am sure that all that can be done for this class is being done by Government. We cannot interfere with social and religious matters, and

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that ties our hands very largely. In this district there is also a high caste Hindu Mission, a Depressed Classes Mission, working.

“ With these few words, Sir, I bring my remarks to a close.”

**The Hon'ble Rai Sitanath Ray Bahadur** :—“ Sir, I should like to tell the Hon'ble Mover that there is no such rigid distinction—an insurmountable barrier—between the Depressed Classes and the higher classes of Hindus in Bengal as is supposed to exist in the Madras Presidency. The question is beset with religious and social difficulties, and as such, it is difficult to see how this distinction and this barrier, which are entirely due to religion can be removed by the appointment of a Committee. I think that the elevation of the Depressed Classes must be left to the ennobling influence of education, and education alone, and I must say that education has already done much to uplift the Depressed Classes in Bengal and to remove the marks of inequality which distinguish the depressed from the higher classes. Individual efforts are not wanting in Bengal, and I may say that some of the leaders of the educated community have been crying themselves hoarse for uplifting the Depressed Classes. But the society, I mean, the orthodox Hindu society, is not yet so advanced as to yield to the influence of the leaders of the educated community. As I said before, the distinction in Bengal is not so marked and not so rigid as in Southern India. I may state here that the Depressed Classes in Bengal, be they *Namasudras*, or *Chamars*, are freely admitted into our colleges and schools, and there is absolutely no barrier against their admission. I should further state that the Government has been doing much by providing liberal education to *Namasudras* in the Faridpur district, especially, in the sub-division of Gopalgunj, and the result is that several *Namasudras* have taken M.A. and B.A. degrees and Government has been very generous towards them by appointing some of them as Deputy and Sub-Deputy Magistrates, and Kanungoes, etc., and given them some other good appointments. I may add here that whenever an educated or degree-holder *Namasudra* appears before us we do not make the slightest distinction in our treatment between such a man and another educated Hindu belonging to a higher class. All these go to show that the uplifting and elevation of the Depressed Classes can only be achieved by education and education alone, and though I have every sympathy with the object of this Resolution, I can hardly believe that the formation of a Committee alone will do much to solve the difficulty.”

**The Hon'ble Mr. Davidson** :—“ Sir, this debate has already been long drawn out—though perhaps not quite ‘in linked sweetness’—and I would not add to its length at all, were it not that I think I should be failing in my duty to my province if I did not set forth what has been done for the Depressed Classes by one of the ‘criminals in the dock,’ namely, the Government of Madras.

“ I have had a subordinate connection with that Government for intermittent periods throughout the last 25 years; this began in 1891, when it was my task to compile the Presidency Administration Report. My point is that I have had some opportunity of gauging the policy of the Local Government, and with the knowledge so gathered I can confidently aver that nothing can be further from the truth than the statement that in regard to the treatment of Depressed Classes there has been a policy of drift. On the contrary, in three departments the matter has been constantly before the Government, in the Department of Education, in the Judicial Department, and more recently in the Forest Department. With regard to the Department of Education, I need say little. That has been adequately dealt with by the Hon'ble Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. It is the case, of course, notwithstanding what the Hon'ble Mover says, that successive Administration Reports of the Education Department have again and again devoted special attention to the question of the education of the Depressed Classes. I should like, however, before I leave the topic of education, to refer briefly to one or two statements of Mr. Dadabhoj's

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in regard to which I do not think his information is quite up to date. He spoke of the outlay on Panchama education as amounting to 6·7 lakhs. I do not know where he took that figure from: the only reference I have to hand is the latest Presidency Administration Report. I find that under the heading 'Education of Panchamas'—a heading which has been included in our report for many years—it is stated that the total expenditure rose from 7·55 lakhs to 7·75 lakhs. Now I do not wish to draw any comparison between, say, 7½ lakhs and 6½ lakhs. My point is that even the larger figure is expenditure on schools which are reserved exclusively for the use of the Panchamas and in no sense represents the total outlay on the education of Panchamas; also it refers for the most part, if not entirely, to elementary education.

"Mr. Dadabhoj next referred to an alleged decline in the number of secondary schools. I suppose the number of schools is comparatively unimportant; what is of greater interest is the number of pupils. In the same Administration Report I find it stated that there was a 'notable increase in the number of Panchamas in secondary schools.

"I will leave now education and pass on briefly to refer to the Judicial and Forest Departments. In the Judicial Department, that section which deals with the Agency Tracts in the Northern Sircars, has continuously paid special attention to the educational, moral and material improvement of the hillmen indigenous to those tracts who come within Mr. Dadabhoj's definition of Depressed Classes, though I fancy that, like the *Bhils* of Bombay, they would rather resent inclusion in that category. Apart from the Agency Tracts the Judicial Department has during the last few years initiated a new departure—the establishment of special settlements for criminal tribes. This movement which is particularly associated with the name of a former member of this Council, the Hon'ble Sir Harold Stuart, has been the subject of special attention during the past two or three years. Turning again to the only book of reference, which I have at hand, the last edition of the Madras Civil Budget Estimates, I find that the matter is of sufficient importance to take up three pages of the detailed estimates, and the details show that there were at least eleven such special settlements scattered over six different districts.

"It remains only to refer to the third and last department, Forests, and there all I need say is that it is the constant endeavour of the district officers of that Department to enlist the co-operation of the hill tribesmen, who are otherwise apt to be addicted to crime, but who, finding themselves provided with regular employment and looked after by intelligent officers, soon learn to do useful work. There have during the past two or three years, in particular, been special endeavours in that way to improve the status of the *Malayalis* in North Arcot and the *Chenzus* in the Kurnool district, and if I had a forest administration report by me I could easily add other instances from at least three or four more districts.

"That, Sir, is all that I have to say on behalf of the 'criminal' to whom I stand in the relation of next friend—and I venture in conclusion to urge that I have made out a clear case to show that my client—the Government of Madras—is entitled to acquittal on the charge of neglecting the interests of the Depressed Classes."

**The Hon'ble Sir Reginald Craddock:**—"Sir, I should like to preface my remarks by saying—and I do not think any one in this Council will contradict me—that the Government of India and every Local Government have always been ready to befriend the poor, oppressed, or depressed in this country, whatever their caste, race or status. The Hon'ble Member who moved this Resolution has brought within its purview classes of the community which are markedly distinct from one another, and present problems which differ totally from one another. He has accused the Government of apathy, and of merely following a negative policy of drift. Well, Sir, my task in

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defending the Government from this charge has been considerably lightened. Not only have representatives of two Governments got up to protest against the accusation, but I find myself in the pleasant position of having two Hon'ble Members, with whom I often have to disagree, as the staunchest supporters of Government of any who have risen to speak. I refer to the Hon'ble Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee and the Hon'ble Pandit Malaviya. I welcome their support. As my Hon'ble Colleague Mr. Hill said, we can very well leave the Hindu community to make its own defence against the statements made regarding them by the Hon'ble Mover, and on behalf of Government, I can only say that, while we sympathize very greatly with the object which the Hon'ble Member has in view, yet we cannot approve, and in fact no member of this Council, either official or non-official, has expressed approval, of the particular methods which the Hon'ble Mover has advocated. I should like, however, to explain to the Council how widely different some of these problems are, and to indicate very generally how they have been met, drawing also on this occasion, as some other members have done, on my personal experience in this matter which extends now to over 30 years. And in my official career I have been brought in contact with these very problems from the date on which I joined the service, almost I may say, up to the present time. Mr. Dadaboy includes tribes and castes which are hereditary criminals and regard a predatory life as their special occupation and means of livelihood. Regarding these the problem is one of winning them from their criminal habits, and finding them the means of making an honest livelihood. Various members have referred to the efforts made in this direction, the noble efforts of the Salvation Army, and in addition to these the efforts made directly by Government. It has for many years now been recognised that when you are dealing with criminal tribes, it is not sufficient to hunt them down from here and from there, to catch them when you can and imprison them in jail, or to bind them down under the bad livelihood sections. You have to do these in the interests of the peaceful citizens among whom they rob, but you will never cure them by that means, and you will never turn them into honest citizens. The police in their case are bound always to watch those men, to follow them, to dog their footsteps and to track them down, and in that case, of course, no man has a chance of reforming himself and becoming an honest citizen. It is in recognition of this that the Government have passed measures which enable them to deal with criminal tribes; and it is in recognition of this that the Government have assisted and helped the Salvation Army in their efforts to meet and deal with this great evil. Reference has been made to the work done by Mr. Starte in the Bombay Presidency. His methods have been so successful that his special duty has, from time to time, been extended and he is turning castes which led a life of plundering their fellows and of vagrancy and crime of various descriptions—coining, cattle-lifting, miscellaneous pillage of all kinds—he is turning them into steady cultivators, and in some cases even he has found them employment in mills, and there is every chance that those men will before long be weaned entirely from their former methods. Well, Sir, it is quite true that we have not found in every Province officers of Government who are equally successful in dealing with these men, and that the Salvation Army's help has been requisitioned from time to time. I do not care whether it is the Salvation Army or whether it is any other reforming body, but I do say that zeal, it may be religious zeal, is very often a necessary element in pursuing this difficult task among people of this kind and in winning them from evil ways. The fact that a man feels that he has a mission behind him encourages him to pursue his task, and enables him to inspire confidence among these men far more than can be secured by a mere paid official whom they recognise draws his salary and is merely doing the work for wages and not for any higher reward. Sir, I am sure the Council will agree that no more can be done than is being done in the direction of these criminal tribes. It is a slow process, and we are moving as steadily as we can. The Punjab Government have put forward a scheme which in these hard financial times we may not be able to start at once, but which, we hope, will be successful, and the Madras

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Government and the Government of Bombay have done their part, the United Provinces also, and some of the other Provinces where the problem is not quite so acute. But I have no doubt that, as time goes on, in every part of India the efforts to deal with this question will be more and more skilfully conducted and more and more successful.

"Now, Sir, I pass to another category of men to which the Hon'ble Mr. Dadabhoj has alluded. As far as I can make out from his remarks, he has included among these Depressed Classes people who might be described as submerged merely on the ground of poverty. The occupations which they follow may be of so menial or humble a character that few of their number can expect to earn more than a bare subsistence. The problem in the case of these men, Sir, is the whole problem of the distribution of wealth, the problem of the fight with poverty, and no Committee that could be got together, whether Official or Non-Official, could find us, for that purpose, any immediate solution. All the measures that we take to improve the education of the country, to improve agriculture and so on, will re-act beneficially on the poverty which must exist in all communities, and which must of course claim a number of victims in so large a country as this. We hope, and every one must hope, that as the development of the country proceeds, as irrigation is extended, as agriculture is improved, as industries develop, that, simultaneously with the improvement in all the better classes, must likewise come an improvement in the condition of those who may be described as 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'. But at all times, and in all places, the Government is always ready to help and assist those classes to the best of its powers.

"The third class to which the Hon'ble Mr. Dadabhoj refers is the aboriginal. As the Hon'ble Mr. Hudson has pointed out, it is quite incorrect to place the aboriginal among the Depressed Classes, that is to say, if you count the Depressed Classes as people who are in a condition of degradation. That is not the position of the aboriginal at all. They number among their ranks Feudatory Chiefs of small States, Zamindars of various degrees, cultivators and agricultural labourers, and, even if you come down the scale to the very bottom, you will find even among the tribes which inhabit the forests and live by hunting,—if they cultivate at all, they cultivate by fire and the axe,—that they are proud of their traditions and of their ancestry, and they will trace their descent, it may be to the sun or moon, along with many of the higher castes of India. And among these men, Sir, will be found many virtues—virtues of patience, courage, simplicity and honesty. The wilder men are the true children of nature, and one of the chief difficulties that the Government has to contend with, is that, as you bring these men into contact with civilization, the first contact produces deterioration, and that is one of the problems we have to deal with in connection with aboriginal races. But it is quite untrue to suggest that Government has followed a policy of drift with regard to aboriginals. In their case, the history of legislation in India shows many enactments, especially land enactments, for the benefit of these classes. I have personally had great experience in dealing with aboriginals. I know that, as regards many of the *Gonds* of Balaghat and Mandla, a great deal has been done to settle them on the land; their migratory habits are disappearing, their cultivation has improved, and they contribute to society many respectable members. In addition to that, the most noticeable feature in my time has been the tendency of these people, who were once wild and shy, to improve themselves and to ask for schools to be opened among them. That is one of the most gratifying signs of improvement which I have noticed in the course of my service, and the progress has been from year to year. Sir, these *Gonds* are by no means depressed. They show very high virtues. I recollect that, in the great famine of 1896-97, there was an Engineer who had won the confidence of these people. The work on which he was engaged was the building of a tank, and these men had promised him that they would work hard and finish the tank before the rains broke. Some time after, while the tank was yet unfinished, there was an epidemic of cholera and the *Gonds*, as is their wont when they are frightened by epidemics,

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left in a body. Yet, within three days these men came back and said :—' Well, cholera or no cholera, we promised the Sahib that we would finish this tank, and here we are ' ; and they finished it. There was another movement of reform—a temperance reform—among the *Gonds* of Balaghat District with which my Hon'ble friend Mr. Low, who was Deputy Commissioner when I was Commissioner of the Division, and I were closely associated. It was a purely spontaneous movement which we did our best to help, and in order to do that, we caused large sums to be remitted from the excise farms of the *Kalars*, for the *Kalar* has ever been the worst enemy of the *Gonds*. That movement subsisted for a long time—it subsisted, I think, for two or three years—and then unfortunately, the reformers at the head of it were unable to keep it going, though a few of them remained total abstainers. To indicate the zeal shown by these reformers, I may mention that the head of this movement had prescribed penalties for any one who indulged in liquor. Unfortunately, one of his own wives went to a neighbouring bazaar, and bought three pice worth of liquor. This was a very awkward predicament for him, but he rose to the occasion. He cut off her hair, and tied it up on an arch at the entrance of the village as an example to all who offended against the rules that he had promulgated of total abstinence. As my friend the Hon'ble Mr. Low said, this was more creditable to his zeal than likely to conduce to his domestic felicity.

" The last class with which the Hon'ble Member dealt, is one with which the speeches to-day have been mostly concerned, and that is, the class of people who are generally known as ' the untouchables,' whose disabilities are social and religious rather than economic. Among these, as has been indicated by various speakers, will be found persons of every varying grade of prosperity and poverty. Among the *Mahars* of Bombay, and of the Central Provinces and Berar, will be found individuals who own lands, take contracts, speculate in cotton, as well as cultivators, village-watchmen, and labourers of all degrees. With regard to them the difficulty is not that the Government does not recognise them, but that, until the habits and prejudices of centuries are removed, the hands of their neighbours must necessarily press upon them. My Hon'ble friends Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Mr. Surendra Nath Banerji have both stated that the educated Hindu of to-day is prepared to receive his educated brother, whatever be his class or origin. I have no doubt whatever that that statement is correct, and that the educated community are prepared to do all that these Hon'ble Members claim for it. But you must remember that these people live mostly in villages and very often in the back lanes of towns, and that their nearer neighbours have not yet come under these broad and liberal-minded influences. Therefore, as many speakers have indicated, the problem in dealing with this question is more social and religious than purely administrative.

" I know myself of many difficulties in the matter of schools. There are many places where the *Mahar* boys will not be allowed into the school; they may be allowed in the verandah, and get only a small part of the master's attention there, or they may be entirely excluded. But it is only gradually that that difficulty can be met. I have constantly dealt with this very problem on the spot. I have reasoned with the people; I have said to them : ' These are taxpayers like yourselves, either let them come into the school, or, if you wish to indulge your own prejudices—they may be reasonable prejudices, as you consider them—but if you wish to indulge them, should you not contribute something in order that these boys may have a school of their own ' ? In that way some of the better people have come forward to help in the matter of wells, and schools for the low castes; they have assisted, and the difficulties have been got over. But of course it is a matter which must take time, and Government itself cannot use compulsion. They go rather near to it sometimes, for example, in travelling by railway, and when petitions are presented in Court. But they cannot ensure that these people shall always be well-treated in their offices. Very often, I think, some of these classes refrain from seeking service they might otherwise wish to secure, because their neighbours are not likely to treat them warmly. Although the Hon'ble Mover described the

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statement made by the Government of Bombay as 'a magnificent *non-possumus*,' I think that it very accurately describes what the real difficulties of the situation are. Even though Government is willing to help in every way these unfortunate people, yet it remains true that—

'the position of these castes and tribes in the future depends partly on their own selves, and partly those more favoured Indian communities, which by extending the hand of human comradeship or hardening their hearts and averting their faces, have it in their power to elevate or to degrade them.'

"That, Sir, I think represents very truly and accurately the position of affairs as regard these Depressed Classes. But within my own time I know that a better feeling has awakened and that prejudices are gradually becoming less and dying out; and I look to that as an augury of much brighter things in the future. I am encouraged in that hope by the statements made by non-official Members in the Council to-day.

"Sir, we sympathise with the objects of the Hon'ble Mr. Dadabhoj's Resolution. We are willing to go so far as to ask Local Governments to put on record what they have done, are doing, and what further they can do, to improve the condition of these people. But we can place no faith in special Committees. Have I not indicated to the Council how wide are the problems, and how impossible it would be to deal with them by means of Committees? The problems extend over the whole range of Government from top to bottom. What I say is that, while extending our sympathy to the objects aimed at by the Hon'ble Mr. Dadabhoj, we can go no further than promise to refer the question to Local Governments, and ask them whether they can do more than they are doing. That is as far as we can go, and with that assurance, I will ask the Hon'ble Member to withdraw his Resolution."

**The Hon'ble Mr. Dadabhoj** :—"Sir, I find myself in a very peculiar and unfortunate position. There are two parties in this Council, and they are both on their defensive on this occasion. My justification for bringing in this Resolution, if any justification were needed, is to be found in the unenthusiastic and half-hearted support which I have received from my non-official colleagues. It was no pleasure, I assure you, Sir, to me to bring in this Resolution. If I could possibly have avoided it, I would have very cheerfully and very willingly done so. This is the sixth year of the life of this Reformed Council, as Hon'ble Members are aware, and the second term is now approaching expiration. During the major portion of that time—the five years that I have been on this Council—I anticipated that the champions of public liberty, public spirit and public enterprise and culture—men like my friends the Hon'ble Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee or the Hon'ble Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya—would take the trouble of moving a Resolution to this effect. I waited all this time to see if one of these enthusiastic members would bring in a Resolution for the amelioration of the Depressed Classes; but when I found that none of them had taken up the matter—though at times this matter is discussed even in the Congress Pandal in a certain manner; when I found that it was not taken up in this Council—I thought it my duty to do so——."

**The Hon'ble Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee** :—"I must make a correction. We have taken up the matter and we are doing our best in Bengal. It is therefore not a correct statement, so far as I am concerned, to say that we have not been doing anything in connection with the elevation of the Depressed Classes. I hope my Hon'ble friend will make that correction?"

**The Hon'ble Mr. Dadabhoj** :—"My Hon'ble friend has entirely misunderstood me. I said that he had failed to take any action in this Council. I expected him to take this action, and as he had failed to do so, I, as a Parsee, representing a Hindu constituency, thought it my duty to bring this matter for public discussion in this Council."

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" I find myself, therefore, in a very unfortunate position ; and yet I say that the justification for bringing up this matter is very clear. My friends, the Hon'ble Mr. Banerjee and the Hon'ble and learned Pundit, have said that I made certain statements in disparagement of the community to which they have the honour to belong. I entirely repudiate that. I have the greatest respect for the community to which my Hon'ble friends belong. In the course of my speech, I first pointed out the history of these Depressed Classes, and showed how Hindu society in the past had neglected its duty in this matter. It is only latterly that enthusiasm has, to a certain extent, been awakened and something done for these unfortunate classes.

" Sir, I think it was not right on the part both of Official and Non-official Members to say that I have not acknowledged the value of the work done by Government in this connection. I made it perfectly clear in the earlier part of my speech that it would be ' ungenerous '—as I mentioned—not to acknowledge the work that had been done by Government. All I wanted to point out was that no special remedial measures of any tangible or appreciable character had been adopted by Government in this connection. It could be gathered from my speech—and the Hon'ble Mr. Banerjee has referred to this also—that one of the chief obstacles to the raising of the Depressed Classes is the aversion of the higher classes to allow the boys of these degraded classes to enter the public schools. That feeling, thanks to the policy adopted by Government, has been gradually dying out ; but I do say that in this connection the higher classes have not come up to the height of the occasion, and have not done all they might have been expected to do.

" Sir, as regards the statements made by some of the Official Members, first of all, the Hon'ble Mr. Hill stated what has been done in Bombay. Very probably my Hon'ble friend did not like my reference to the Press Note issued by the Government of Bombay on the subject. What I pointed out in my opening speech in connection with this Press Note was that the Bombay Government, instead of taking up the Depressed Classes in their own hands and extending to them material help and assistance and special assistance by means of special schools for them, appointments in Government offices, and instead of making their life a little more bearable than it is, had by that Note left it to the Hindu community to ameliorate the conditions of these classes. And I protested that that was not the proper or the correct policy for a responsible Government to follow, that these degraded classes should not be left to their persecutors. Government should materially help and support them. Under no circumstances have I under-estimated what the Government of Bombay has done in this connection in the presidency from which my Hon'ble friend, Mr. Claude Hill, hails. Mr. Hudson has told us something about the existence of *B&W* schools and about the inspection of those schools by Government officials, and he has also asked the Council to accept his statement that his individual attention has been paid to these schools. I do not at all doubt the correctness of his statement ; but my friend, Mr. Hudson, would have done better if he had enlightened the Council with information about the proportion these schools bore to the numbers, the attendance there was in the schools, and the amount of money actually spent by the Bombay Government in aid of these schools. And in this connection, Sir, I pointed out in my first speech that the reports of the Directors of Public Instruction were entirely incomplete, and did not give any information on the subject. I also stated that in the last quinquennial report, compiled by the Hon'ble Mr. Sharp, the information on the subject was of a very scanty nature.

" I do not understand why my Hon'ble friend from Madras, Mr. Davidson, at all got up to speak on this occasion. In my opening speech I commended the work of the Madras Presidency, and I specially pointed out — "

**The Hon'ble Mr. Davidson :**—" May I rise, Sir, on a point of order and say by way of explanation that I regarded the Hon'ble Member's reference to Madras as of the nature of that ' faint praise ' which is generally held to ' damn ' the recipient."



RESOLUTION *RE* AMELIORATION OF THE DEPRESSED 389  
CLASSES.

[16TH MARCH, 1916.]

[*Mr. Dadabhoj.*]

**The Hon'ble Mr. Dadabhoj:**—"You are mistaken, seriously mistaken. I said Madras had done a great deal in that way, and I gave the figures of the school attendance. I also pointed out what had been done, and thanks to the valuable efforts of men like the Hon'ble Sir C. Sankaran Nair the Government of Madras had done some serious work. So I cannot possibly understand his criticisms on my speech. Sir, I have heard with great respect the remarks made by the Hon'ble the Home Member whose utterances in this Council are always characterised by great soundness. I am very pleased to know from him the efforts which the Government has been making in this connection; but I also say that, if the Hon'ble Member had enlightened the Council with greater details on the subject, it would have been better and more convincing. I still repeat what I stated in my opening address to this Council about the Government of India. I do not accuse them of dereliction of duty. What I said was that theirs was a policy of benevolent indifference in this matter, because they contended that this was a social question more or less. But in my opening speech I tried to separate the two; I pointed out how, so far as the social question was concerned, the Government was incapable and incompetent to act, and how so far as the educational, political and industrial advancement of the Depressed Classes was concerned, the Government was in a position to help these people. It is unfortunate this distinction was also lost sight of by my two Hon'ble Colleagues, Mr. Banerjee and Pandit Malaviya. Sir, I shall not detain the Council any further. My arguments have been already placed before the Council; and though the form of my Resolution has been disapproved, and certain statements of mine have been controverted and challenged, and some of my remarks have been disliked for obvious reasons, I am glad to find that there is a general sympathy with reference to this matter. And after the assurance which the Hon'ble the Home Member has given to me that he will advise all the Local Governments to report what they have done in the past, and what further action they can take in the future for the amelioration of the social, moral, educational and industrial progress of the various depressed communities of this country, I do not think it necessary to press my Resolution to a division. This Resolution will do one thing. This debate will stimulate our countrymen to further action; it will stimulate our friends, Messrs. Banerjee and Malaviya, to take up this cause with greater energy; it will stimulate Government to further beneficent action. I have no doubt that Government will take steps in the near future for giving special facilities for the advancement of these unhappy and wretched classes. With these words, Sir, I shall ask your permission to withdraw the Resolution."

The Resolution was, by permission, withdrawn.

The Council adjourned to Monday, the 20th March, 1916.

A. P. MUDDIMAN,

*Secretary to the Government of India,  
Legislative Department.*

DELHI;

*The 24th March, 1916.*