

Proposer.—J. B. Kripalani.

Secunder.—Vallabhbhai Patel.

I agree to the nomination. Rajendra Prasad."

This nomination paper is valid, and is in order There, is another nomination paper.

"I propose Dr. Rajendra Prasad as Chairman of the Assembly and I have ascertained that he is willing to serve if elected.

Proposer.—The Hon'ble Shri Harekrushna Mahtab.

I second the above. Nand Kishore Das."

This nomination also is in order.

The other two proposals received are invalid. One of them sent by the Hon'ble Mr. Prakasam was sent in beyond time, and I do not see the name of any seconder.

Similarly, I have got before me another proposal by Sir S. Radhakrishnan. That also, I fear, is not in order, because it has got no seconder; and neither of these two documents (the one sent by the Hon'ble, Mr. Prakasam and the other sent in by Sir S. Radhakrishnan) has got any endorsement from Dr. Rajendra Prasad that he is willing to serve. However, as the other two proposals are perfectly valid and in order, and there is no other nomination paper before me, I hereby declare the Hon'ble Dr. Rajendra Prasad, as the duly elected permanent Chairman. (*Cheers*).

My next duty as temporary Chairman is to request that Acharya Kripalani and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Sahib will kindly approach, on behalf of the Constituent Assembly, the duly elected President of this House now, and bring him up to the platform to sit on the chair by my side. (*Cheers*).

(The Hon'ble Doctor Rajendra Prasad was conducted to the chair by Acharya Kripalani and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Sahib.).

The Chairman: Hip hip hurrah, hip hip hurrah.

Hon'ble Members: Inquilab Zindabad, Inquilab Zindabad. Jai Hind, Jai Hind.

The Chairman: Now that the permanent elected Chairman of the House has taken his seat, it is open to Hon'ble Members to offer to him their congratulations. I call upon Sir S. Radhakrishnan to be the first speaker.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE PERMANENT CHAIRMAN

Dr S. Radhakrishnan (United Provinces: General): Mr. President, Sir, I consider it a great honour to be, called upon to be the first speaker after the election of the permanent, Chairman of the Constituent Assembly. I offer to him, on behalf of this House, our most respectful congratulations on the unique honour that has been conferred on him.

This Constituent Assembly has met here to frame the constitution, to effect the withdrawal of British control, political, economic and military and to establish a free independent India. If successful, this transfer of authority will be the biggest and the least bloody of all transfers in human history (*Cheers*).

The first Britisher to arrive in this country was a Jesuit Missionary in 1579. He was followed by merchants who came to trade but stayed to rule. In 1765 the authority was transferred to the East India Company, Later it was gradually subordinated to and replaced by the authority of Parliament and it has been continuing till now on the famous principle enunciated by Cecil Rhodes-the principle fundamental to imperialism, philanthropy *plus* 5 per cent. On that principle it has worked. Right through however there were protests against the British rule. All these protests became canalized when the Indian National Congress was established in 1885. It adopted mild methods till the advent of Mahatma Gandhi when it became aggressive and dynamic. In 1930 the Resolution for the Independence of India was passed at Lahore and we are now here to give effect to that resolution. The British are empirics from beginning to end. It was Lord Palmerston who said 'we British have no eternal principles, we have only eternal interests'. When they adopt any particular line of action you may take it that it is not a willing surrender of power or authority but it is response to the historic necessities of the case. When the discontent grew up they gave us the Morley-Minto Reforms and they introduced the principle of communal electorates and these communal electorates were intended to keep, the people apart. The higher mind of Britain advised the local officials that they would betray the trust placed upon them if they foisted communal electorates. They would inject a poison into the very body politic which could be removed if at all, at the cost of a civil war. We know how those anticipations are getting realized today. We had after that the Montford Reforms and then the 1935 Act, the Cripps' proposals and now the Cabinet Plan. The latest Statement of His Majesty's Government on this question indicates how it is not in human nature to surrender power easily. (*Hear, hear*) Playing off one section against another is unworthy of a great people. It is much too clever to be permanent and would embitter the relations of this country and Great Britain. (*Hear, hear*). It is essential for the British to understand that if an act is done it must be done with the utmost grace. All the same we are here assembled to draw up a constitution for future India. A constitution is the fundamental law of the nation. It should embody and express the dreams and passions, the ideals and aspirations of the people. It must be based on the consent of all, and respect the rights of all people who belong to this great land.

We have been kept apart. It is our duty now to find each other. We all deplore-speakers yesterday and day before yesterday deplored-the abstention of the representatives of the Muslim League from this Constituent Assembly. We take it that it will only be temporary, for their cooperation is absolutely essential for the success of any constitution which we may lay down. But in approaching these matters our attitude should be one of realism. Take the problems from which we suffer; our hunger, our poverty, our disease, our malnutrition-these are common to all. Take the psychological evils from which we suffer-the loss of human dignity, the slavery of the mind, the stunting of

sensibility and the shame of subjection,-these are common to all; Hindus or Muslims, Princes or peasants. The Chains may be made of gold but they-are still chains that fetter us. Even the Princes will have to realise that they are slaves in this country. (*Hear, hear*): If they have a sufficient sense of self-respect and exercise a little self-analysis, they will find how much their freedom is fettered.

Again, the, people-Whether they are Hindus or Muslims, Princes or peasants,-belong to this one country. Earth and Heaven have combined to make them belong to one another. If they try to disown it, their gait, their cast of countenance, their modes of, thought, their ways of behaviour, they will all betray them. (*Hear, hear*). It is not possible for us, to think that we belong to different nationalities. Our whole ancestry is there.

It is essential for any constitution which is drawn up to make all the citizens realise that their basic privileges--education, social and economic are afforded to them; that there will be cultural autonomy; that nobody will be suppressed; that it will be a constitution which will be democratic in the true sense of the term, where, from political freedom we will march on to economic freedom and equity, Every- individual should feel that he is proud to belong to this great, land.

Apart from all these, a nation does not depend on identity of race, or sentiment, or on ancestral memories, but it depends on a persistent and continuous way of life that has come down to us. Such a way of life, belongs to the very soil of this land. It is there indigenous to this country as much as the waters of the Ganges or the snows of the Himalayas. From the very roots of our civilization down in the Indus Valley to the present day, the same great culture is represented among Hindus and Muslims, we have stood for the ideal of comprehension and charity all these centuries.

I remember how Anatole France went up to the Musée Guimet on the first of May 1890 in Paris and there in the silence and simplicity, of the gods of Asia reflected on the aim of existence, on the meaning of life, on the values which peoples and Governments are in search of. Then his eyes fell on the statue of the Buddha. France felt like kneeling down and praying to him as to a God, the Buddha, eternally young, clad in ascetic robes, seated on the lotus of purity with his two fingers upraised admonishing all humanity to develop comprehension, and charity, wisdom and love, *prana* and *karuna*. If you have understanding, if you have compassion, you will be able to overcome the problems of this world. Asoka, his great disciple, when he found his Empire inhabited by men of all races and religions said-

"Samavaya eva sadhuh".

"Concord alone is the supreme good".

India is a symphony where there are, as in an orchestra, different instruments, each with its particular sonority, each with its special sound, all combining to interpret one particular score. It is this kind of combination that this country has stood for. It never adopted inquisitorial methods. It never asked the Parsis or the Jews or the Christians or the Muslims who came and took shelter there to change their creeds or become absorbed in what might be

called a uniform Hindu humanity. It never did this. "Live and let live"--that has been the spirit of this country. If we are true to that spirit, if that ideal which has dominated our cultural landscape for five or six thousand years and is still operating, I have no doubt that the crisis by which we are faced today will be overcome as many other crises in our previous history have been overcome. Suicide is the greatest sin. To murder yourself, to betray yourself, to barter away your spiritual wealth for a mess of pottage, to try to preserve your body at the expense of your spirit-that is the greatest sin. If we therefore stand out for the great ideal for which this country has stood, the ideal which has survived the assaults of invaders, the ideals to which the unheeding world today is turning its attention, if we are able to do it, the flame which has sustained us in overcoming foreign rule, will fire our efforts to build a united and free India.

It is not an accident that our temporary Chairman, Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha and our permanent Chairman, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, both come from Bihar. They are both impregnated with the spirit of the *vihara*-the invincibility of gentleness, the gospel of India. The Mahabharata says:

Mrduna darunum hanti, mrduna hanti adarunam nasadhyam mrduna

kinchit tasmāt tīkṣṇam hi mṛduth.

Gentleness can overcome the hardest things; it can overcome the softest things. There is nothing impossible to be overcome by gentleness, and therefore the sharpest weapon we have is gentleness.

Softness, gentleness,-that is the greatest weapon which will wear out the highest kind of opposition. We have not been true to It. We have betrayed and done wrong to millions of our own fellow beings. It is now time for us to make atonement for all our past guilt. It is not a question of justice or charity, it is atonement-that is how I would put it.

In Dr. Rajendra Prasad we have one who embodies this spirit of gentleness. (*Cheers*). He is the soul of goodness, he has great patience and courage, he has suffered. It is not an accident that this year which marks the sixtieth year of the Indian National Congress, is also the year of the opening of the Constituent Assembly. We have to remember with gratitude all those great souls who worked and suffered for the freedom of this country, for the dawn of this day. Thousands died, more thousands suffered privation, imprisonment, and exile, and it is their suffering that has cemented and built up this great edifice of the Indian National Congress. (*Hear, hear*). We have to remember them all, Rajendra Prasad is the suffering servant of India, of the Congress, who incarnates the spirit for which this country stands. I only hope that this spirit of amity, concord and harmony which has come down to us from the image of Siva in the Indus civilization down to Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Rajendra Prasad, will inspire our efforts. (*Applause.*)