

The Honourable Mr. Gopinath Bardoloi (Assam: General): Mr. President, I did not want to participate in this debate. But since my friend Mr. Nichols-Roy has placed certain issues before the House, I consider it necessary to make certain observations.

Sir, I have the privilege of being the Chairman of the Eastern Tribal and Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas Sub-Committee. In that connection we had not merely an opportunity of touring the hill areas but also of studying the conditions of the people in the hills. From a broad point of view it can definitely be stated that the method of representation proposed to be introduced for the general population cannot be made to apply to the people in the hills.

It will be seen that Assam today, with Sylhet gone, has a population of 71 lakhs and the extent of the province as it stands is only 62,000 square miles. Most of the people live in an area of about 30,000 sq.miles in the plains. With the hills, Assam comprises now 62,000 sq.miles. If you deduct 30,000 sq.miles, you will find that thirteen lakhs of hills people live in 32,000 sq.miles. What is more important for us to know is that they live as separate tribes and not as we do in the plains in a common pattern. Therefore, if any representation is proposed to be given to these people, it must be different from the manner in which representation is proposed to be given to the people in the plains. In view of this state of affairs, I think that the proposition that has been put before the House by Rev. Nichols-Roy should be supported by us generally. But I do not know whether it is necessary at all to accept the amendment as it stands. It is possibly known to all of you that the Advisory Sub-Committee will be making some recommendations in respect of representation also. Now what can be done here is that we can agree to accept the general principle so far as all other areas than the plains are concerned. I am not discussing here what that representation ought to be and whether it should be one representation for a unit of 75,000 or 1,00,000 or even 2,00,000 of the population, although in my opinion this should vary according to the population and area of the different provinces. But the broad fact should be accepted that these areas should be represented under some special plan. Mr. Nichols-Roy's recommendation is that this matter should be left to the provincial governments concerned to determine. I think the better course would be to leave this matter in the hands of the Advisory Sub-Committee and await their recommendations. The House can then consider the matter. The House should also bear in mind that in the present constitution, these hill people enjoy considerable weightage in representation. With these observations that the spirit of Rev. Nichols-Roy's amendment should be accepted, I resume my seat.