

The Honourable Rev. J. J. M. Nichols-Roy (Assam: General): Mr. President, Sir, I beg to move my amendment which stands as follows:

"That the following proviso be added to sub-clause (2) of Clause 19:

'Provided that in giving representation to any territorial area or areas inhabited by hill tribes, the Provincial Government may determine a lower basis of population than one lakh and the total representation of the Province shall be increased accordingly'."

My reason for giving this amendment is this that the language of sub-clause (2) of Clause 19 seems to prevent any province from having a number of representatives in the Legislative Assembly that will be more than the proportional number of one man for every lakh of the population. If that is the meaning of the language of this clause, then it will be a real hardship on the people of the hills in Assam. In the hill areas of my Province we have large territories which are inhabited by a Proportionately small number of people. For example, in the Lushai Hills we have an area of over 8,000 sq. miles, but inhabited by a people called Lushais--(they call themselves Mizoos)-- numbering only a little over a lakh and a half. In one of the plains district, however, there is an area of about 3,800 sq. miles with a population of 12,54,000. This being so, if the basis of population of one lakh per-member is applied to the hill areas also, it will clearly be a great and terrible hardship to the people of the hills.

Then, Sir, there is another area--the North Cachar hills--with an area of about 2,000 sq. miles which is inhabited by hill tribes, with a population of only about 37,000. This morning just before we came here we got a letter from the people of that area saying thus :

"Going through the papers, I find that the Model Provincial Constitution Committee has recommended that representation to the Provincial Legislatures shall be on the basis of population of not more than one man for one lakh, subject to the minimum of 50. This, if adopted without a proviso for special cases, will permanently deny representation to North Cachar hills which has a population of only 37,000. To deny representation to a whole sub-division on the ground of population would be an injustice and even absurd."

Sir, this is the feeling among the hill people of Assam, and it applies not only to this particular hill area, but it applies to all the hill areas in Assam.

Even now, Sir, there is representation to the Assembly of Assam from the hill areas with a much lower population basis than one lakh. There is an area represented by one representative, but having a population of only about 85,000; there is another with a population of about 70,000 sending one representative. Now, if this clause means that no representative can be sent from a territory which has a population of less than a lakh then it means that these constituencies will have to be abolished. When we are talking about the coming of freedom for India, these will mean slavery to the hill people which the hill people cannot accept as justice at all. Therefore, Sir, I request that the drafting of this clause should not prevent a lower basis of population in a province which needs such a lower basis of population for one member in the Legislature. I am told by someone that this clause probably allows all-this.

It allows that a province should have representation between 50 and, if a maximum is put, 300 or 400. But it seems to me that the language may be interpreted in a different way altogether. If the interpretation is that a province is free to fix the number of representatives then it will be all right. But if it is fixed only on a basis of one representative for 1 lakh it will be a great hardship and its operation will work to the detriment of the people of the hills area. We must also consider the fact that there are some people in the hill areas of Assam now who want to be independent altogether and stand as a separate State, some who want to join Burma and some others who probably want to join Pakistan too. If this kind of representation be forced upon the hill people of Assam, it will help that propaganda and will cause a great deal of trouble to India. Therefore I would request that the Mover of the resolution may enlighten the House whether the province, will be able to give representation on a lower basis to the peoples of the hill areas where in a large territory the population is small. And these territories are sources of potential wealth and are therefore very important to the province of Assam. If that is not considered it will be a great hardship indeed. Sir, I commend my motion for the acceptance of the House.