

Shri Biswanath Das : (Orissa : General) : It is within the knowledge of honourable Members that we appointed a Committee to go into the question of the Minor Administrations. The Committee was presided over by our esteemed and revered Friend, Dr. Shri Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the Congress President. Unfortunately, the report of the committee was not available to the honourable Members of this House, and as such could not be discussed in this House. In the result, the Drafting Committee assumed authority to embody what provisions have been made for Minor Administrations in the Constitution. You will please therefore allow the Members of this House a certain amount of latitude while discussing this question because the House had no opportunity to have its say on the report itself, therefore, I take it, Sir, that along with the consideration of the articles – I mean articles 212, 213 and 214, it is also necessary that we discuss the

Shri Biswanath Das : I said – and I repeat – that the Assembly had not the opportunity to discuss this question. That is what I said and I stand by it.

Sir, the report, I am glad, is not unanimous and I am further glad that the honourable Shri Mukut Bihar Lal Bhargava, representing these areas – I mean Ajmer and Merwara province of these areas – has recorded his voice of dissent, and I will read the last sentence from his Minute of Dissent. He says:

"Accordingly, I may impress on the Constituent Assembly the urgency of incorporating a suitable provision in this chapter of the Constitution so as to make it possible for each of these area to join as a contiguous union."

Having stated the views of the representative of this area, in this House, I cannot very much congratulate the Committee for the performance they have shown in the report. What is the performance? The performance is that the Committee recommends responsible Government in the Minor Administered States in the provinces under the lines of the old antiquated Act of 1935, in which instead of the Governor they propose to have a Lieut-Governor and a Council not on the basis of the Constitution that you have framed, but on a separate basis altogether as given at page 3 of the Report. The basis represented is 5,000 persons subject to a maximum of 33 persons for Coorg, and 15,000 subject to a maximum of 40 persons for Ajmer-Merwara. That is the basis on which you will have, according to their proposals, a council or any Assembly which will have its Prime Minister, Ministers and all the paraphernalia attached to the Act of 1935.

I am thankful further to the Members of the Committee for having used the very mischievous expressions from the Act of 1935. I have to record my strong note of dissent in this House against this report because it does least to the people of these Minor Administered Areas in bringing them under a discredited Act. The reasons are these:

First, the administrative set-up that they propose in this report is absolutely different from the administrative set-up that we have adumbrated for the provinces in this Constitution. Need I say that it is very and hopelessly reactionary, looked upon from the point of view of Free India.

The second objection to this report is that they want and propose to perpetuate in this Constitution a system of administration which has been rejected by all shades of public opinion in this country.

Thirdly, they bring to bear upon the administration and unnecessary and costly machinery and the snare of having the possibility of perpetuating Minor Administrations in the garb of provinces. If this is the view, why on earth should you do away with the smaller States who were out to confer responsible government? It really surpasses my comprehension.

Therefore, looked at from any point of view, the report of the Committee's set-up is not, and in no sense can be, acceptable to the honourable Members of this House in this year of 1949.

In this connection let me also refer to the report of the Simon commission which went thoroughly into the question. They recommended that the time had come when these minor administrations should be made to merge in the neighbouring provinces and they justified it on two grounds. The first was economy and the second was efficiency in administration. They laid more stress on the efficiency of the administration because they said that the government of India officials who were in charge of these minor administrations had no experience in provincial sphere and therefore necessarily the administration suffered in efficiency. Is it for these purposes that you are going to invest more money and perpetuate an administration which has been condemned outright not only by public opinion in India but also by a most reactionary body like the Simon Commission? This is out-Heroding Herod. Under these circumstances I cannot congratulate the Committee on its performance.

Why do you have a province like Coorg? It is a province of 1,600 and odd square miles, which is adjacent to Madras and equally adjacent to Mysore. Madras is a province of our own and Mysore is a State which has also responsible government that is practically on a par with Madras. Added to it, the Kanarese people on the basis of linguistic distribution of provinces lay claim to the same area. It may be very soon in the day that you may have linguistic provinces and a separate province of Kanara. If that becomes possible Coorg merges itself automatically into it. Is it, therefore, fair to perpetuate the existing conditions and add to our financial difficulties and that at the expense of efficiency? I submit that it is doing least justice to the country and to the honourable Members of this House.

Again, with regard to Ajmer-Merwara the honourable Member representing the area has had his say and I have nothing more to say except to commend what the honourable Mr. Mukut Biharilal Bhargava has stated in this connection.

Then you have Panth-Piploda, comprising of ten and a half villages, which you can as well put in any other place.

You have thereafter the province of Delhi. Why on earth have a province under Delhi administration? You can add it to the East Punjab or the United Provinces.

We have then only two other areas, namely, the City of Delhi and the Islands of Nicobars and Andamans. As regards the City of Delhi you can have it on the lines of the British Constitution and have a corporation for the Metropolis of Delhi on the lines of London or on American lines according as is desirable and necessary. Under the circumstances I fail to understand why you should add to Delhi a small area merely to call it a province, having a machinery and a legislative assembly, with a Premier and minister and all the other paraphernalia. Under the circumstances I do not agree with my honourable friends of the Committee.

The only other area which remains is the Andamans. It is a strategic area.....

Shri Biswanath Das: You may have it under the Home or Defence Ministry. Therefore why should you burden the Constitution with these provisions? I feel that part (1) of article 212, and articles 213 and 214 are unnecessary, useless and undesirable, and the set-up is expensive. Under the circumstances, I strongly oppose the inclusion of these provisions and I see no utility in them excepting adding to the bulk of the Constitution for which we have earned a reputation and adding to our financial commitments. We are going through very hard times. Our civil administration today has multiplied three to four times its pre-war level. Why then add more commitments and pile up to the expenses that we are already incurring? Therefore no option is left to me but to oppose these articles, especially 212.

You, Sir, took a very bold step on Saturday by requesting the House to reconsider certain articles. Need I appeal to you that the provisions under reference do need reconsideration and revision of the decision already taken?