

Shrimati Purnima Banerji (United Provinces : General): Mr. President, Sir, I do confess that dealing with these Articles regarding the Upper House, not knowing as to what is going to be the composition of the Upper House does put us in some difficulty. We passed Article 148 as many of the provinces did agree to the creation of an Upper House mainly depending on the kind and nature of the House and we did it on the assumption that it would be something of the kind based upon the Irish model, a model which was supplied to us by the Secretariat of the Constituent Assembly. We were always of the opinion that an Upper House could perform the very good and useful function of being a revising body, and that, while its views may count but not its votes, it should not be a House of vested interests. It was felt that those who could not enter into the rough and tumble of active politics could by their good offices advise the Lower House. Such people could get an opportunity to revise or amend legislations of the Lower House and would thus be performing a useful function. But, now by these Articles, when we leave the entire composition to the future Parliament and yet vote for an Upper House we are actually groping in the dark. I do not agree with my friend Mr. Brajeshwar Prasad that it is because we are afraid of adult franchise which we consider a leap in the dark that we want to provide for Upper Houses. It was our experience in the Legislative Assemblies that it was useful to have associated in our governmental activities and in our legislative activities such useful people as were doing useful work for the country, people doing social service, service among Harijans or backward classes, some representatives of labour who were not organised or were not to be found in such large numbers as to form a constituency by themselves or members of a co-operative association, men of letters or some such people whose advice would count, who would not be actuated by any motive to withhold any legislation which is good for the nation but whose voice may have a good effect upon us—it was for such an Upper House we voted and not for an Upper House whose nature and composition we do not know. For the moment we know that the present Upper Houses in the various Legislatures are Houses of vested interest as it is people having a certain amount of property qualification and people with large bank balances who are elected to the Upper Houses. Now, when we have left the entire qualifications to the future Parliament, we do find some difficulty when this Constitution-making body is yet required to vote these Articles. I do not know if Dr. Ambedkar can give an assurance, for what his assurance will count, that it will not be a House of vested interests or of people with large properties who would stay any legislation which is necessary in the interests of the country. With these words, I hope that our views expressed in this House will be taken into account in the future Parliament and that an Upper House which will be only of a revising nature, which would be neither pernicious nor useless would be brought into being and that the possession of large properties by persons will not be considered a qualification entitling them to membership of the Upper Houses.