

Shrimati Renuka Ray (West Bengal: General): Mr. President, Sir, I move my amendment leaving out the first part, namely—

That for Clause 16, the following be substituted:-

“No denominational religious instruction shall be provided in schools maintained by the State. No person attending any school or educational institution recognised or aided by the State shall be compelled to attend any such religious instruction.”

Sir, I feel that the framers of the Report did not intend to imply what this Clause does imply, namely, that instruction given in schools maintained by the State out of public funds may be of a denominational character. Surely denominational schools cannot be run by a democratic secular State. Such schools may be recognised or even aided, but as the State, we envisage under the new Constitution, will be secular having no State religion as such, it cannot set up denominational religious institutions as State schools.

I do not want to make a long speech; I merely want to point out that if my amendment is substituted for Clause 16, then this interpretation will not be possible and what this Clause is intended to convey, will be brought out better. I hope the House will realise the necessity of making this substitution.

Sir, even before we have freedom, the Central Advisory Board of Education decided that the education that was to be given by the State in this country should not be of a denominational character and that religious education of a denomination character was the responsibility of the community and the home to which the child belongs and not of the State. I am sure that now that we have to fashion our own destinies and we are in a position to usher in that free and democratic State for which we have striven and for which so many have sacrificed and died, it is open to us to say that we do not want to be inconsistent. We do not want to bring in an educational system whereby the education given by the State will be in direct contravention to the ideals and the interests of the State itself. I do not say that denominational religious education should not be allowed. But education given by the State should have the teaching of moral and spiritual values; it cannot by the very nature of the State be of a denominational religious character. I hope that Sardar Patel will accept this amendment, because it is not in contravention to the desire of the Committee. It merely tries to clarify the issue. The Clause as it now stands may be misunderstood to mean that we are submitting to the State having denominational educational institutions as a part of its educational programme of policy.