

Mr. M. R. Masani (Bombay: General): Mr. Chairman, in rising to speak on this Resolution, I would like to make it clear at the outset that I do so, not as a member of one of the several communities, into which unfortunately, our nation is today divided, but as an Indian first and last. (Hear). I do so even though I owe my origin to the very smallest or tiniest of our national minorities. It was one of those groups of people who received that welcome, that hospitality and that protection to which Babu Purushottamdas Tandon referred in his speech in seconding this Resolution. I hope, Sir, that these minorities which exist in our country, will, along with the majority, continue their progress towards becoming a nation, a process which in this ancient country was happening through the absorption of new groups that came into it through the centuries, but a process which seems to have been retarded through the rigidity of caste and through the exclusiveness of society in the past few centuries. I would only observe at this stage that the conception of a nation does not permit the existence of perpetual or permanent minorities. Either the nation absorbs these minorities or, in course of time, it must break up. Therefore, while welcoming the clause in this Resolution which promises adequate safeguards for the minorities, I would say that it is a good thing that we have these legal and constitutional safeguards, but that ultimately no legal safeguard can protect small minorities from the overwhelming domination of big masses, unless on both sides an effort is made to get closer and become one corporate nation, a homogeneous nation. That process has been shown to us by the United States of America, where peoples of different races have, with one unfortunate exception, been absorbed into one nation.

There must have been indeed very few members of this House who were not deeply moved, and who did not feel elevated, by the noble speech with which the Mover of this Resolution introduced it in this House. He peered into the future and tried to see what shape the destiny of the people of India would take and, in response to the appeal which he made that we should consider this Resolution as something fundamental and avoid legal disputes and quibbling over its terms. I would like, in the very few minutes that, Sir, you have placed at my disposal, to draw the attention of this House to what I might call the social or long-term aspect of this Resolution and to try to understand what kind of society or State, what way of life this Resolution offers to the people of this country. I feel, Sir, that immediate disputes aside, that is the part of the Resolution at which the common people of the country will look with the closest attention.

I approach this part of the Resolution, Sir, as a Democratic Socialist, a Socialist who feels that democracy needs to be extended from the Political to the economic and social spheres and that, if socialism does not mean that, then it means nothing at all. I welcome this Resolution in spite of the fact that neither the word 'Democracy' nor the word 'Socialist' finds a place in its Preamble. It is perhaps just as well that those words have been avoided because, as one of us here put it in his Presidential Address at the Meerut Congress, terms like Socialism or Democracy can be made to cover Multitude of sins. The fog of words often covers realities. We know the French Revolution was made in the name of fraternity but, towards the end of that Revolution a cynic remarked--

"When I saw what men did in the name of fraternity, I resolved if I had a brother to call him cousin"

That I fear, is true of other revolutions as well.

As a Socialist, Sir, I welcome this aspect of the Resolution because, as the Mover has rightly pointed out, the content of economic democracy is there although the label is not there. The 'Resolution, in my view clearly rejects the

present social structure, it rejects the social *status quo*. There can be no other meaning to the words in clause 5 which refer to justice-- social, economic and political. I do not think anyone here would argue that the present state of our society is based on justice. I think it has an estimated that today if our national income were to be divided into three equal thirds, 5 out of 100 Indians get one third of our national income, another 33 get the second third and the big mass of 62 get the remaining portion. That surely is not social or economic justice and, therefore, as I understand this Resolution, it would not tolerate the wide and gross inequalities which exist in our country. It would not tolerate the exploitation of a man's labour by somebody else. It certainly means that every one who toils for the common good will get his fair share of the fruits of his labour. It also means that the people of this country, so far as any constitution can endow them, will get social security--the right to work or maintenance by the Community. The Resolution also provides for equality of opportunity. Equality of opportunity, Sir, presupposes equal facilities in education and in the development of the talent that is latent in each one of us. Today, among our masses a fund of latent talent exists which has no chance to come out and contribute to our national good. Equality of opportunity certainly assumes that every child in this country, every boy and girl, will get an equal opportunity to develop those faculties which he or she possesses in order contribute to the common good.

That, Sir, is the socialist aspect of the Resolution. It does not provide for Socialism. It would be wrong to provide for such a thing, because this House has no mandate to go in for far-reaching economic changes in the country. Those changes can be brought about by a properly constituted Parliament when it comes into existence with the mandate of the people. All that we can do as an Assembly here, is to frame a constitution which will allow those far-reaching changes which are necessary to be made and I submit, Sir, that this Resolution goes as far as it can in satisfying the most ardent socialist amongst us.

As I said, Sir, I approach this as a Democratic Socialist and, if Socialism is there, so is Democracy or the content of Democracy included in the Resolution. I do not think the word 'Republic' there is adequate. As Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru himself has stated; it is conceivable that a Republic may not be democratic. If we cast our eyes around the globe to-day, we shall see several instances of this and therefore, apart from saying that we shall be a Republic, it is necessary that we should make it clear, as clauses 4 and 5 do, that in our view Democracy does not mean a Police State, where the Secret Police can arrest or liquidate people without trial. It does not mean a totalitarian State where one party can seize power and keep opposition parties suppressed and not give them the freedom to function freely and with equal facilities. It cannot mean a Society or State where an individual is made a robot or where is reduced to "a small screw in the big machine of State". Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru has pointed out that this Resolution is based on Democracy, and that all our past bears witness to the fact that we stand for Democracy and for nothing less. But it is not only our past which is a guarantee of our democratic faith. It is also our present.

Our national life has many different trends in it but, almost unanimously, we all stand for the freedom of the individual and for a democratic State. And to show how widely differing schools of thought in our midst can agree with almost

one voice on this desire to distribute power to our common people, to distribute political and economic power so widely that no one man or group of people can exploit or dominate the rest, I will cite to you first the testimony of one who is not present amongst us, one who, was referred to by the Mover as the Father of our Nation. I refer to Mahatma Gandhi. (*Cheers*). These are his words as quoted in 'A Week with Gandhi' by Louis Fischer:-

"The centre of power now is in New Delhi, or in Calcutta and Bombay, in the big cities. I would have it distributed among the seven hundred thousand villages of India...."

"There will then be voluntary co-operation between these seven hundred thousand units, voluntary co-operation-not co-operation induced by Nazi methods. Voluntary co-operation will produce real freedom and a new order vastly superior to the new order in Soviet Russia....."

"Some say there is ruthlessness in Russia, but that it is exercised for the lowest and the poorest and is good for that reason. For me, it has very little good in it."

And as if to find an echo of that in a thinker of a very different school, I shall now cite a sentence or two from a recent Picture of Socialism drawn by the leader of the Indian Socialist Party, Jai Prakash Narain. I regret, Sir that he has not joined us in our labour here, but this is what he says and it sounds almost like an echo of Gandhiji's thought:

"The State under Socialism threatens, as in Russia, far from withering away, to become an all-powerful tyrant maintaining a strangle-hold over the entire life of the citizen. This leads to totalitarianism of the type we witness in Russia today. By, dispersing the ownership and management of industry and by developing the village into a democratic village republic, we break this strangle-hold to a very large extent and attenuate the danger of totalitarianism. Thus my picture of a socialist India is the picture of an economic and political democracy. In this democracy, men will neither be slaves to capitalism nor to a party or the State. Man will be free."

Sir, it is a fashion of our day to argue that the social and economic changes that are at present required cannot be made unless individual liberty and democracy are first destroyed and an all-powerful State can push its programmes through. This Resolution, if I read it aright, is a refutation of that thesis. It envisages far-reaching social changes-social justice in the fullest sense of the term but it works for those social changes through the mechanism of political Democracy and individual liberty. To those defeatists who say that this cannot be done, this Resolution says it can be done, and we have the intention and the determination to do it. The central problem of our times is whether the State is to own the people or the people are to own the State. Where the State belongs to the people, the State is a mere instrument subordinate to the people and it serves the people. It only takes away the liberty of the individual to the extent that the people really desire it. Where the State owns the people, the people are mere robots in a big machine-pushed about here and there by the whims of an all-powerful dictator or an all-powerful party. It is because I believe, Sir, that this Resolution points the direction to a constitution where the people will be in power, where the individual will occupy the centre of the stage and the development of the individual personality will be the main aim of our social good, that I support this part of the Resolution, this aspect of it, for I believe that, as the fathers of the United States Constitution put it, every individual Indian has an "inalienable right to Life, Liberty and pursuit of Happiness'. (*Cheers*.)