

Shrimati Renuka Ray (West Bengal : General): Mr. Vice-President, Sir, I am one of those who believe that, in the present context of things in this country and in view of the fact that we have so much leeway to make up in the matter of the nation-building services, we should of course have a very strong federal Centre. It is necessary that the Centre should be in a position to see that the provinces do not fall behind in regard to the minimum standards of development. But, nonetheless, I must say that the arguments that Pandit Kunzru has advanced before the House this morning have a great deal in them. It is not possible for a province to administer its responsibilities in an adequate manner if its financial position is unstable or uncertain. I realise that it is in the case of emergencies alone that this power under Article 277 is sought to be given to the President, which means the Central Government. Nonetheless I do feel that this is a very drastic measure. The provinces draw their finances from two sources. One source is the obligatory allocation made to them to maintain their general services. The other is the grants made for development purposes. I could have understood it, if a demarcation had been made and the finances of the provinces had been left intact in the matter of obligatory taxes with which they carry on their normal life. Even that has not been done. I do not want to reiterate all that Pandit Kunzru has very pertinently pointed out. I do feel that this is a vital matter. There is Article 276-B under which all extravagant expenditure during emergencies could be stopped. The provinces can be requested to drop their development programmes during an emergency such as war. But surely it should not be in the power of the Centre or the President to stop the normal functioning of the provinces. It is through the provinces that the life and activities of the people of the country is administered. I should like to point out that the Centre does not work in the air. It has to work through the provinces and I can see no reason whatsoever for having this provision just as it is. I do think that Pandit Kunzru has drawn attention to a very important point. I would therefore request Dr. Ambedkar and Drafting Committee to hold over this Article and re-draft it in the light of the observations that have been made.

Prof. N.G. Ranga (Madras: General): Hold over till the emergency is over?

Shrimati Renuka Ray: I do not mean that Professor Ranga has sought to be very sarcastic. I would point out to him that even in an emergency the normal functioning of the provinces must continue. I see no reason whatsoever to give the President power to stop those sources of revenue from which the provinces have to function in a normal way, even in an emergency. I can understand stopping the development activities of a province in an emergency, but how can the normal functioning of the provinces be stopped even in emergencies? Even in war-time, people have to continue to eat, to have education and be protected against evil-doers. I do appeal to Dr. Ambedkar and the Drafting Committee to reconsider this Article which is a vital one. I support the changes proposed by Pandit Kunzru.