

Shri Biswanath Das (Orissa : General): Sir, I have come to support the article and in doing so, I feel it necessary to place certain facts before the Assembly. Sir, I think that articles 67 and 149 should have been discussed together because they are correlated and one is complementary or supplementary to the other. As such, I feel that it could have been a great convenience to the honourable Members of this House if both these articles had been discussed together. I have to place before the honourable Members of this House the immensity of the resolution that they are passing today. We are giving our seal of approval to the most important principle, namely the principle of adult suffrage, by which every adult--male or female--in this country irrespective of the fact that he is a plains-man or belonging to the hill tribes or to the scheduled caste, becomes a voter and as such shares the responsibilities and anxieties of the administration of the State and becomes an equal citizen absolutely and in all respects. Having adopted this important principle it is necessary that we realise the immensity of the proposal. This makes me feel that we will hereafter have an electorate which in no case will be less than twenty crores. It may be more. My honourable Friend Pandit Thakur Dass Bhargava I think did less than justice when he stated that the number of voters may be somewhere between 15 and 16 crores. Our population is 32 crores and if those below 21 are eliminated I feel sure that the number of voters is bound to exceed 20 crores. 15 percent is taken as children of the school-going age, who are below 14. If that is so, I have no hesitation in saying that 25 per cent may as well be taken as people below the age of 21. As such three-fourths of the entire existing population may be taken as voters. Therefore, the country and the Government will have to keep themselves ready so meet the immensity of the proposal that they are accepting today. There would thus be a minimum of twenty crores of voters, which would mean that there should be about 2 lakhs polling stations and four lakhs of polling officers. I do not know how long it will take to conduct and finish the elections. I therefore appeal to the Government and also to you as the person primarily in charge of this work, so far as we are here concerned, to take immediate action in time to set up the machinery to carry out this stupendous task. It is through you that we are devising a special agency for this purpose, namely the election commission but that does not minimise the tremendousness of the task.

Having stated so far about the immensity of the problem, I would come to two areas which give enough cause for anxiety. These are the States and provinces in the north and also the provinces of West Bengal and Assam. In these two different and distinct areas there has been hug migration of the population. Lakhs and millions of people have migrated either to Pakistan or have come away from there. We have reservation of seats; and not only that, incertain cases, as in the case of the aboriginal population, the constitution has prescribed that whether they live on the hills or on the plains they have to be taken together and seats to be reserved on that basis. That being the position I think it would be doing a grave injustice to the people of East Punjab as also to the states bordering Pakistan in the North and also probably to the Union of Sourashtra and Bombay, as also to the two provinces of Assam and West Bengal, if a census is not taken. I think a census is called for, because of article 149. This article lays down that the basis of representation has to be devised on the figures of the previous census. The previous census is the one that was taken in 1941. It is a fact within common knowledge that due to the war and in the name of paper shortage and the like the then government did not think it necessary to take a full-fledged census. Not only that but what little information was gathered was also left aside with the result that an abridged census was taken. Ever since, much water has flown under the bridges. Therefore it is necessary that to be fair to these areas in the North-East and the North-West early census is necessary. A special census in these areas for this purpose should be undertaken. In this connection need I invite your attention to what has been done in Pakistan? In Pakistan they have undertaken a census in the Provinces of Sind and the West Punjab as also in East Bengal and they have come to certain conclusions for the purpose of representation in the Constituent Assembly after

this census. What was done in Pakistan could have easily been done in India and need I say that even today it is not too late for a census to be taken in all seriousness without further delay.

Having said so much about census I come to another aspect of this question. Soon after passing the Third Reforms Act in the British Parliament the late lamented Gladstone declared in the House of Commons that the time has come when they should find more money and put forth all their exertions to educate their "little masters". Who are these little masters? These little masters are the voters: they are the real masters. What have you done to educate your little masters? In this country the percentage of literacy is about ten per cent. Female literacy is much lower; so also is the case with the scheduled castes. As regards literacy among the hill tribes whom you have enfranchised in full and given the right to vote, it is practically next to nothing. What a tremendous risk you have taken? You are calling upon them to vote, but who are they? A very highly inflammable class of people who have up to date absolutely no experience either of propaganda or of voting in elections. Therefore I warn you to take early steps in this regard, so that the difficulties that I have placed before you are minimised. And what have you done in this regard to minimise them? You have done nothing. Last year it was my misfortune to have an interpellation in the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) to know whether Government have undertaken to appoint an organisation to delimit the constituencies. The reply was that it had already been done. What is the sort of delimitation that you have already undertaken? The Provincial Governments are asked to delimit the constituencies; they have asked their officials and some blessed official sits and delimits the constituencies. Is that the sort of delimitation that you are going to have under this Constitution? I warn the Government, and through you, Sir, I beg of the honourable Members of this Constituent Assembly to see that these conditions are changed. Immediate action is necessary to see that delimitation of constituencies is undertaken and necessary steps in that regard should immediately be taken.

With these words, Sir, I fully support the article, but with the warning that I have given.