

FRAMERS OF INDIA'S CONSTITUTION MEET

Proceedings Suffer From Lack Of Realism

DR. RAJENDRA PRASAD MAY BECOME CHAIRMAN

From Our Special Representative

NEW DELHI, December 9.

THE Constituent Assembly met this morning in an atmosphere charged on the one hand with enthusiasm and on the other with uncertainty. The London statement has cast a shadow on the proceedings, which although they were gone through methodically suffered from a lack of realism. The future of the Assembly's work appeared to be in doubt, since the Congress "High Command" had not decided on the next move.

Only four Muslims were present, namely, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Mr. Asaf Ali, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Mr. Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, the fifth non-Leaguer, Nawab Sir Mozafar Ali Khan Qazilbash (Punjab Unionist) being absent. The League contingent was, of course, not there.

Of the 296 representatives of British India, about 200 attended, including a member from Assam, who was carried in a hospital chair with his left leg in plaster. There were five Sikhs, four from the Punjab and one from the United Provinces, a number of Scheduled Caste representatives, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians (one of whom, Mr. Frank Anthony, was nominated provisional Deputy Chairman), Parsis and 10 women.

Long before the appointed time members gathered in the specious semi-circle of the Assembly Chamber, exchanged greetings and conversed in small groups, photographers' spot lights playing criss-cross across the hall.

The seats were arranged according to provinces on cushioned benches of fine wax-polished teak in eight blocks fanning out from the President's chair to the curved wall of the chamber on a gradually rising floor covered with thick green carpet.

Members of the Congress "High Command," Ministers of the Central Government and the provincial Premiers occupied the front row. The Congress President, Acharya J. B. Kripalani and Pandit Nehru sat right in front of the presidential chair; to the right of Pandit Nehru was the vacant seat allotted to Mr. Jinnah. At the far back were seats kept vacant for representatives of the States to come in at a later stage.

The Chamber, which has practically no windows, was well lit with electricity. In addition to concealed lighting, a huge chandelier suspended from the inside of the high dome flooded the hall with bright light. All six galleries, some 30 feet above the floor, were filled to capacity. Among the visitors were Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, a number of Europeans and officials. The chaprasis in smart new green liveries with the letters C. A. embroidered in gold lace on the chest and arm, mixing with the red and gold liveries of the Secretariat peons of Premiers and Interim Government Members, added to the colour of the scene.

PROVISIONAL CHAIRMAN

At the stroke of 11, Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha, the provisional Chairman-designate, walked in from the President's room and sat in a chair next to the presidential cupola on the dais. The Congress President, after a brief introductory speech in Hindustani, escorted him to the chair amidst cheers. Dr. Sinha read out messages of congratulation and good wishes from the Acting Secretary of State of the United States, the Foreign Minister of the Chinese Republic and from the Government of Australia. After deferring till the election of the permanent president the dispute over the election of Baluchistan's representative, the provisional Chairman delivered a lengthy inaugural address on the work before the Assembly, quoting precedents and appealing for a spirit of compromise and vision. All the members present then presented their credentials and signed the register, led by Mr. C. Rajagopalachari and ending with the representative of Coorg. Prominent leaders, provincial Premiers and women members were cheered as they walked up to the Secretary's desk in front of the dais. This was over before lunch, and the Assembly adjourned till 11 a.m. tomorrow.

The agenda for the second day will probably consist of two resolutions. The first, which will be moved by Mr.

J. B. Kripalani, will lay down rules for the election of President; the second will propose the formation of a committee to frame rules of procedure.

Opinion in influential circles has crystallised in favour of electing Dr. Rajendra Prasad as Chairman of the Constituent Assembly. At a meeting of the Congress representatives in the Constituent Assembly and those elected with Congress votes it was unanimously decided to nominate him as a candidate for this office. It is expected that Dr. Prasad will be elected without opposition.

This meeting also appointed a committee of about 30, including members of the Congress Central Executive, to scrutinise the business of the Constituent Assembly, regulate resolutions, amendments etc. and generally to act as an advisory body.

Other members of the committee the *Associated Press of India* says include Dr. M. R. Jayakar, Sir N. Gopalaswamy Iyengar, Mr. Frank Anthony, Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, Mr. Jagjiwan Ram, Pandit H. N. Kunzru, Mr. Muniswamy Pillai, Mr. Nicholas Roy, Mr. Syama Prasad Mookherjee, Dr. Profulla Chandra Ghosh, Dr. Gopichand Bhargava and Mr. Jajramdas Daulatram.

(Details on page 5).