

Village Panchayats As Units Of Self-Government

AMENDMENT AGREED TO BY CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

From Our Special Representative

NEW DELHI, November 22.

THE Constituent Assembly on Monday accepted an amendment to the draft constitution by Mr. K. Santhanam, Minister of State, that "the State shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as would enable them to function as units of self-Government."

The Chairman of the Drafting Committee, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, whose disparaging remarks on the working of panchayat system in India had provoked unfavourable comment in the House earlier during the session, accepted the proposal in view of the majority view on the subject but made no reply to the debate on the amendment.

Members from Madras, the Central Provinces and West Bengal participated in the discussion. Mr. T. Prakasam, the Andhra leader asserted that the village republic was the answer to the rising spiral of inflation and even to the surging tide of Communism.

Prof. K. T. Shah made another attempt by means of three of his amendments to commit the State to a policy of full-fledged Socialism. He wanted that ownership, control and management of natural resources should vest in the State and that there should be no private monopolies in any form of production of material wealth, social service or public utilities.

DR. AMBEDKAR'S REPLY

Dr. Ambedkar, in a brief reply, emphasised that there was already provision in the directive principles of State policy that "the operation of the economic system shall not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment." The language in the draft, he said, was more definite and more extensive than the particular proposition to which Prof. Shah had expounded.

The amendments were rejected by the House.

Rev. J. D'Souza made an arresting speech today when he wanted that family as the primary social unit, which was the main characteristic of Indian society should be preserved and its stability insured by some provision in the Constitution. He said that in normal society the mother should have the freedom and leisure to look after children and maintain the sanctity of the family. He however, did not press his amendment as it would meet his purpose if the spirit of his amendment was enshrined in some part of the draft.

Over two scores of amendments were not moved at all today which enabled the House to concentrate on matters involving principles.

The Assembly commenced work ten minutes after the scheduled time owing to the late arrival of the vice-President who apologised profusely for having kept the House waiting although he could not help it.