

# ENSURING FREE ELECTIONS

## Constituent Body Adopts Article

From Our Special Representative  
NEW DELHI, June 15.

Radical and fundamental changes, proposed by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, in the draft constitution in regard to the election machinery with a view to ensuring free and fair elections, were adopted by the Constituent Assembly today.

Dr. Ambedkar made a spirited defence of the changes which seek to centralise the superintendence, direction and control of all elections to Parliament and provincial legislatures.

Under the draft constitution, it was proposed that there would be an Election Commission for Parliament and separate commissions for provinces. It has now been decided that there would be a centralised body, free from the executive interference, with a Chief Election Commissioner who cannot be removed except in the same manner as a Judge of the Supreme Court.

Dr. Ambedkar gave two reasons for the changes. He said, firstly, a centralised co-ordinated machinery would ensure free vote for every adult of 21 years as provided in the constitution; and, secondly, the provincialism rampant in certain provinces which discriminated against other linguistic elements in its jurisdiction impelled the proposed modification.

### KEEN DEBATE

There was a keen debate on the proposed changes. Mr. Patasker, from Bombay, while agreeing with the necessity of ensuring impartiality of elections and elimination of injustice to citizens, felt that each province must be allowed to have its own election machinery. He deplored the tendency which he had noticed in the last few months to drift away from the ideal of a federation and seek to make the Centre more powerful day by day. In his opinion, a strong Centre alone could not be a guarantee for freedom in elections or efficiency in administration.

Prof. Shibbanlal Saxena wanted the Election Commissioner to be appointed by a two-third majority of Parliament and not by the President.

The House, however, endorsed Dr. Ambedkar's proposals.

Earlier in the day, there was considerable discussion on a comparatively non-controversial chapter relating to property, contracts, liabilities and obligations.

### MINERALS UNDER SEA

Mr. Alladi Krishnaswamy Aiyar congratulated Dr. Ambedkar on the inclusion of a new Article declaring that "all lands, mineral and other things of value underlying the ocean within the territorial waters of India shall vest in the Union and shall be held for the purpose of the Union." He sought to dispel the fears of coastal provinces that the provisions could militate against their interests by declaring that the Union's jurisdiction was more legal than rigid.

Mr. Anantasayanam Ayyangar's suggestion that the Article should specify the Indian Union's control over territorial waters was not acceptable to Dr. Ambedkar.

Before the House adjourned, the President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, announced that there would be a five-week recess for the Assembly from tomorrow, during which contentious and controversial matters would be thrashed out outside the floor of the House. He indicated that only one-fourth of the constitution remained to be finalised and that a short session would be required at a later stage to pass the third reading.

(Details on page 3)