

# Indians' Civil Liberties

## ARTICLE PASSED

### *Draft Constitution Debate*

From Our Special Representative  
NEW DELHI, December 2.

The Constituent Assembly to-day adopted an important article in the Draft Constitution which enumerates the civil liberties of citizens.

Although a large number of amendments were moved, the House accepted only three of them seeking verbal changes, including elimination of the word "sedition" from a clause which outlined the grounds on which freedom of speech could be restricted.

Criticism by a score of members who participated in the debate centred on the grounds that, first, restrictive provisions in the article took away the rights contained in the opening paragraph, secondly, personal laws to which Muslims attached the greatest importance were sought to be encroached upon, thirdly, there was no specific provision guaranteeing freedom of the press, and fourthly citizens had been denied the right to bear arms.

#### DR. AMBEDKAR'S REPLY

Both Mr. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar replied at length to these criticisms.

It was pointed out that the checks specified in the article were merely intended to ensure that freedom did not reduce itself to licence. As regards Muslim objections Dr. Ambedkar remarked that the conception of religion in India covered aspects of life from birth to death. Unless their hard-won freedom was utilised to remove social injustice and inequalities, it would not have been purposeful. He hastened to assure Muslims and other minorities that it was not their intention to make inroads into personal laws, but that the clause merely empowered the authorities to pass legislation if and when necessary.

#### FREEDOM OF PRESS

The Law Minister maintained that no specific provision to guarantee freedom of the press was necessary as the press had no special rights besides those exercised by the ordinary citizen.

As regards the demand made by Mr. H. V. Kamath and others for the right to bear arms, Dr. Ambedkar emphasised that circumstances had changed since the Congress sought this right under British rule. "What we ought to insist upon, he added, "is not the right but the duty to bear arms. When an emergency arises, or an insurrection breaks out or stability or security is otherwise endangered, the State should be entitled to call upon every citizen to bear arms in its defence." The Law Minister concluded that the clause as amended removed the faults of the original provision and struck a golden mean.

(Details on page 3)