

## READERS' VIEWS

# The Cabinet's Statement

To The Editor, "The Times of India"

Sir,—In your leading article yesterday morning, you say that the statement issued by the British Government makes the "way clear" and that the Constituent Assembly will now go ahead. On a careful consideration of the statement and its implications, as well as the Cabinet Mission's statement of May 16, I venture to say that the way is far from clear and that the task of framing the Indian Constitution is rendered much more difficult than before.

In their announcement of May 16 last, the Cabinet Mission, after going into the population figures, observed that the "setting up of a separate State of Pakistan on the lines claimed by the Muslim League" was not the proper solution. They therefore decided on a common Centre, vesting in it only Defence, Communications and Foreign Affairs and making the provinces fully autonomous. They, however, proposed that the Constituent Assembly should deliberate in three sections, each section containing certain groups. There was controversy regarding the interpretation of these provisions about sections and groups which is now set at rest by the British Government statement, leaving it open to any party not satisfied with the interpretation of the British Government to get the matter referred to the Federal Court. The British Government in the present statement say: "Should a constitution come to be framed by the Constituent Assembly in which a large section of the Indian population has not been represented, His Majesty's Government could not of course contemplate—as the Congress have stated they would not contemplate—forcing such a constitution upon any unwilling parts of the country."

Supposing the Muslim League delegates to the Constituent Assembly refrain from attending the sessions of the Constituent Assembly, the question will arise in what parts of the country the constitution framed by the Assembly is not to be enforced. In the Punjab, Muslims and non-Muslims are respectively 52 and 48 per cent. or thereabouts. In Bengal, the relative figures are approximately 58 and 42. If the Muslim League representatives of these provinces do not participate in the Constituent Assembly, then are the 48 and 42 per cent. non-Muslim populations to be kept out of the constitutions passed by the Constituent Assembly although their delegates to the Constituent Assembly have approved of the new constitution? In other words are the non-Muslims in the Punjab and Bengal to be coerced to go into Pakistan? From the North-West Frontier Province there are three delegates, all of them Muslims, two being Congress and one League.

Now if the one Muslim League delegate does not attend the Constituent Assembly, is the constitution framed to be applicable to the North-West Frontier Province or not? Similarly, from Assam, there are ten representatives, 7 general and 3 Muslims. Assuming that all the three Muslims belong to the League and they absent themselves from the Constituent Assembly, is the constitution framed not to be applicable to Assam? Moreover, the Muslim League leaders who went to England and their associates in India have definitely declared that nothing short of the division of India into Hindustan and Pakistan would satisfy them. The declaration that if the League representatives do not participate in the Constituent Assembly, then the constitution framed would not be enforced in certain parts is calculated to afford encouragement to the League to persist in its policy of boycotting the Constituent Assembly. It is hoped that the League would not persist in its refusal to participate in the Constituent Assembly in order to gain a temporary party advantage and that the Congress would make it easy for the League to participate.

(Sir) CHIMANLAL H. SETALVAD.

Bombay, December 10, 1946.