

initiative for abolishing reservation of seats for all minorities except for the Scheduled Castes should have come mainly from minority representatives is a tribute to the sense of statesmanship which inspired the Committee generally. Faith is the foundation of progress, and this individual and collective demonstration of mutual confidence is an encouraging augury for the future. A voluntary renunciation of evil speaks well for the minorities' faith in themselves and the majority. With the elimination of the communal canker, quietus should be given to all talk of majority and minority, to religious, communal and compartmental claims. The essential and abiding unity of the India we live in should be the guiding star of patriotic endeavour throughout the country. If there are still among our people some who believe in the dead doctrine of separatism their place is obviously elsewhere. No responsible politician or for that matter any citizen can expect politically to eat his cake and have it.

HISTORIC DECISION

With the Constituent Assembly's decision to abolish the reservation of seats for all minorities except for the Scheduled Castes for a limited period of ten years the communal virus, it is to be hoped, has been effectively ejected from the country's body politic. Communalism, with its concomitant political evils, has logically no place in a secular State. It belongs, as Pandit Nehru truly remarked, to the old order of things, to domination not equality, to a sense of mistrust not of confidence. One notable feature of the decision was that it was arrived at with the cordial support and goodwill of the minorities. That is at once a compliment to the reasonableness of the majority community as it is to the patriotism of the minorities. The only rift in the lute was the discordant note struck by a Muslim League member from Madras who, like the Bourbons, is evidently determined to learn nothing and to forget nothing.

A sordid chapter has been closed with this historic decision. That the system of separate electorates was motivated by the old Roman dictum of divide and rule is abundantly evident from the history of the past four decades. The Muslim delegation, headed by the Aga Khan, which waited on Lord Minto to press the claims for separate representation was later described by Maulana Mahomed Ali as "a command performance." So it was, as the pages of Lady Minto's diary and other documents testify. The evil it wrought found tragic fulfilment in the partition of the Indian sub-continent, which, though now rightly regarded as an accomplished fact, might never have been. Communal electorates congealed political progress and rivalries into distinct grooves. To expect secular nationalism to evolve from these disparate forces was illogical and unfair. Unless the nerves and arteries of the human body co-operate the blood stream cannot flow. Equally a secular State cannot emerge from the vicious doctrine of separate communal representation.

In this, as in other political matters, Sardar Patel, who was Chairman of the Minority Advisory Committee, played a notably realistic role. That the