

[Sir Malcolm Hailey.]

Punjab. The Government of India have therefore consulted the Government of the Punjab upon the proposal and they have also consulted the Chief Commissioner of Delhi.

(2) (a) Yes.

(b) For the present Government must await the replies from the Local Government and the Chief Commissioner.

FRANCHISE FOR WOMEN.

Mr. Bhubanananda Das (Orissa Division: Non-Muhammadan): Will the Honourable the Home Member kindly answer the following four questions of which I have given him private notice:

"1. Have Government seen the proceedings of a meeting of ladies of Bombay on 13th instant demanding full enfranchisement of the women of India?

2. (a) Is it not a fact that the women of Madras do exercise the right of voting for election to the Central and Provincial Legislatures?

(b) Why is it that their sisters of other Provinces are denied similar privileges?

(c) Will Government take early steps to revise or amend the franchise constitution so that the women of India may exercise their just rights of voting?"

3. (a) Are Government aware that under the rules no woman can be nominated as a Member of the Assembly?

(b) Will they take an early opportunity of amending the rules and of nominating a lady to the Central Legislature for any vacancy that may occur hereafter among nominated members?

4. Have Government received any representation on this subject:

(i) at the time of the consideration of Reforms in 1919?

(ii) at any subsequent date?"

The Honourable Sir Malcolm Hailey (Home Member): 1. Government have seen a newspaper report of the proceedings of the meeting of ladies of Bombay referred to by the Honourable Member.

2. (a) As far as the Government of India are aware, the sex-disqualification for registration on the electoral rolls was removed in the case of Madras, Bombay and the United Provinces Legislative Councils. It was never imposed in the case of the reformed Burma Legislative Council.

(b) and (c). Under Rule 7 of the Provincial Legislative Councils, women are not entitled to have their names registered on the electoral roll of a constituency; but if a Resolution is passed by the Council, after not less than one month's notice has been given, recommending the removal of the sex disqualification for registration, the Local Government is required to make regulations providing that women or a class of women shall not be disqualified for registration by reason only of their sex. The question is, therefore, one for the Legislative Councils concerned and not for the Government of India.

As the Honourable Member is aware, a Resolution on the subject was passed in the Legislative Assembly in February 1922. Under the second proviso to sub-rule (1) of rule 7 of the Legislative Assembly electoral rules, the adoption of this Resolution has had the effect of removing the sex

qualification for registration on the electoral rolls of constituencies of the Assembly for women generally or a class of women if the disqualification has been removed for the Provincial Councils. That is, women are now eligible, if otherwise qualified, to be electors for constituencies of the Assembly in Madras, Bombay, the United Provinces and Burma.

3. (a) Yes.

(b) Government are unable to give any such undertaking at present.

4. The question was discussed in paragraph 8 of the Franchise Report and the views of the Government of India are contained in paragraph 3 of their fifth Despatch on Reforms. Several witnesses including Mrs. Sarojini Naidu gave evidence before the Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill on the subject. The recommendations of the Committee are contained in paragraph (c) of the report on clause 7 of the Government of India Bill, and have been given effect to in the provisions of the rules which I have summarised in my answer to part 2 of the question. A representation on the subject was received in 1920.

Mr. Bhubanananda Das: Do Government realise that one-half of the population of India—the better half of it—have no representation either in the Provincial or in the Central Legislature of India? It is not registration of women as voters I ask for, but I ask for the privilege for women to be elected as Members of the Central and Provincial Legislatures.

The Honourable Sir Malcolm Hailey: I have already given some information regarding the extent to which they are eligible as electors to the different Councils in India.

Mr. Bhubanananda Das: Are the Government aware that there are lady members in different Municipalities of various large cities in India and whether they have any objection to their becoming Members of this Assembly?

The Honourable Sir Malcolm Hailey: I am aware of the fact referred to in the first part of the Honourable Member's question. As regards the second part, I myself have no personal objection to the admission of the ladies to this Assembly. I am not sure however that there is a general desire for the alteration of the Legislative Rules to admit this.

Mr. Bhubanananda Das: Will Government take steps to amend the Rules?

The Honourable Sir Malcolm Hailey: Not, as at present advised.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

Dr. H. S. Gour (Central Provinces Hindi Divisions: Non-Muhammadian): Sir, I beg to ask for leave to make a motion for an adjournment of the business of the Assembly for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance of which I have given notice both to the Honourable the Home Member and to the Secretary of the Legislative Assembly. The matter of urgent public importance to which I refer is as follows. Honourable Members will remember that the Union Government of South Africa have recently drafted and placed before the Union Parliament a measure known as the Class Area Bill, the intention of which is to restrict, for purposes of residence and trade, areas of the municipalities of South Africa, and thus segregate persons of non-European domicile. The first reading of this Bill took place on the 5th of this month and a discussion took place in another place and the Honourable Sir Narasimha