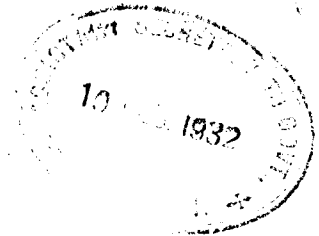
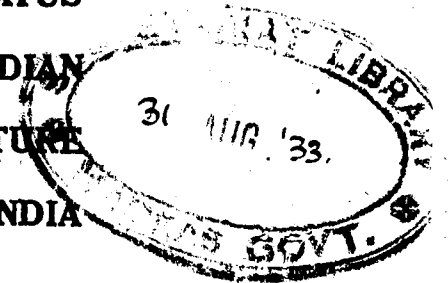


With the compliments
of the signatories



MEMORANDUM

ON CERTAIN QUESTIONS
AFFECTING THE STATUS
AND WELFARE OF INDIAN
WOMEN IN THE FUTURE
CONSTITUTION OF INDIA



Addressed to the Indian Round Table Conference



DECEMBER, 1930

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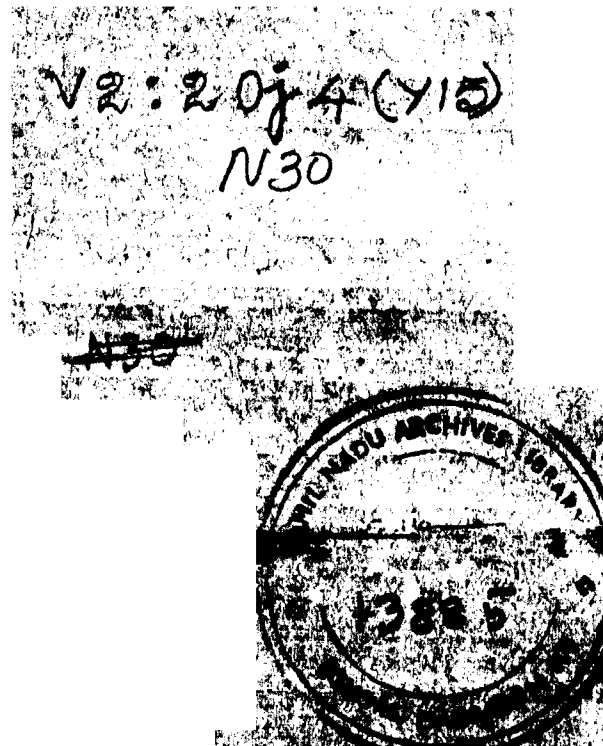


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MEMORANDUM

ON CERTAIN QUESTIONS AFFECTING THE STATUS AND WELFARE OF INDIAN WOMEN IN THE FUTURE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

INTRODUCTION.

1. Every proposal affecting the future constitution of India must, of course, concern both men and women as human beings. But the status and welfare of women, as apart from men, will also be affected, directly and indirectly, in at least three respects :—

I. Directly, in respect of the franchise rights to be conferred upon women for legislative or administrative bodies (central, provincial, and local).

II. Directly, in respect of the conditions of women's eligibility to, or nomination upon, legislative and administrative bodies (central, provincial, and local).

III. Indirectly, in respect to proposals which affect the structure of Government, or the efficiency of its working, in those departments which closely concern women.

2. It is sometimes argued that because women in India have already been admitted to the franchise and to eligibility for most elected bodies "on the same terms as men," their interests in these respects require no special consideration, since they already enjoy "a fair field and no favour." This is a superficial view. The conditions hitherto laid down for the exercise of citizen rights were devised to meet the needs of men and are based on property qualifications which an extremely small proportion of Indian women as yet possess. Women, therefore, do not enjoy "a fair field." We are reminded here of Æsop's fable of the Fox and the Stork : "Mr. Reynard invited Mrs. Stork to dinner. But she found that the feast consisted of broth served in a flat dish. Mr. Reynard lapped up the broth easily with his flexible tongue. But Mrs. Stork with her long beak could only peck at the dish and went hungry away." So it has been in the past with the women of all countries; so it will be in the structure of India's future constitution, if the needs of both sexes are not kept continually in mind by those who frame it.

3. Just because in India the lives of women are lived more apart from those of men than in Western countries, they present more specialised problems. This difference in social customs is sometimes used as an argument against the admission of women to political rights. Yet practically every recent Commission that has reported on various aspects of the Indian problem has dwelt on the urgent need of bringing the women up to the level of the men in education, and of improving their standards of health and hygiene, not only for their own sakes but in the interests of the whole country. How can this be achieved unless women are encouraged to think out, make articulate, and insist on attention to their own needs as—under a democratic constitution—only those can do who enjoy the full rights of citizenship? Hitherto, those wielding authority and influence in India have too often contented themselves with paying lip service to the claims of women.

4. In the Round Table Conference, those who represent special communities or interests will certainly weigh the probable effects, both immediate and remote, of every proposal on their particular clients. There are only two Indian ladies, in a conference of nearly 100 men, to perform this special service for their own sex.

It is, therefore, the more important that the reactions upon women of every proposal considered should be continually kept in mind by every member of the Conference.

5. The following observations are submitted in the hope that they may prove of some service to the Conference, when considering "the women's side" of the various problems presented to them.

I. THE FRANCHISE.

PRESENT POSITION.

6. In all the Governors' Provinces, the Provincial Legislatures have used the power given them under the Government of India Act, 1919, to pass resolutions enfranchising women on the same terms as men. As this provincial franchise carries with it (usually with a higher qualification applying alike to men and women) the franchise for the Legislative Assembly, the Council of State, which has not yet passed the necessary resolution is now the only legislative body for which women have not nominally been granted equal electoral rights with men.

7. Yet this, though "a gesture of high significance," (Simon Report, Vol I, p. 191), has in effect resulted in giving votes to an almost negligible proportion of women. The estimate given by the Simon Commission, based on 1926 figures, is as follows (Vol. I, p. 191):—

	Proportion of female electors to adult female population.	Proportion of male electors to adult male population.
	Per cent.	Per cent.
Madras	1·0	11·6
Bombay	·8	13·4
Bengal	·3	9·7
United Provinces	·4	12·4
Punjab	·5	11·9
*Bihar and Orissa	·2	4·6
Assam	·2	14·2
*Central Provinces	·2	5·2
Governors' Provinces, excluding Burma	(for 6 provinces) ·6	10·4
Burma	4·6	60·3

*The Central Provinces and Bihar and Orissa have enfranchised their women since 1926.

The reason for this disappointing proportion is the property qualification, which excludes "nearly all women and the general body of the poor" (*idem*, p. 191). A few women are enfranchised through the University qualification. As to the numbers actually voting, the Simon Commission's Report says:

"In 1926, when the last Assembly election was held, 22 per cent. of the women with votes in Madras, 12 per cent. in Bombay and the Punjab 9·6 per cent. in Bengal, and 4·5 per cent. in the United Provinces voted. This is by no means an unpromising beginning in view of the fact that, in many provinces, women are only just emerging from the seclusion which has been their lot for generations." (Vol. I, p. 223.)

PROPOSALS.

9. The attitude of Indian opinion towards women's enfranchisement is shewn not merely by the above-mentioned "gesture," but also by the fact that not only the Simon Commission's Report but also that of the Indian Central Committee (Nair Report) and the All Parties Conference (Nehru Report) recommend an immediate and large increase in the female electorate.

Here we need only say that the Simon Commission suggest that in addition to whatever property qualification is adopted there might be an educational qualification applicable equally to men and women; further, that there should be two special qualifications applying to women, *viz.* : "(1) being the wife, over 25 years of age, of a man who has a property qualification to vote, and (2) being a widow over that age, whose husband at the time of his death was so qualified" (Simon Report,

Vol. II, pp. 92 & 93). The Nair Report proposes an immediate doubling of the electorate, followed by three decennial increases, culminating in complete adult suffrage in 1961 at latest¹. The Nehru Report declares for immediate complete adult suffrage².

10. Most of the Committees appointed by the Provincial Legislative Councils to co-operate with the Simon Commission assume that complete adult suffrage is the ultimate goal. The Bengal Committee recommends immediate extension, under which "the franchise percentage of the adult male and female population would rise from 4.8 to more than 8." The Punjab Committee proposes to reach complete adult suffrage by three or four successive stages, culminating within 15 or 20 years. The Bihar and Orissa Committee consider that "adult suffrage is the ideal to be reached as soon as possible," but do not recommend any half-way house. The Assam Committee declare for immediate adult suffrage. The Committee of the United Provinces (this should be specially noted), after remarking that "under Hindu law very few women can inherit property in their own right," make the same proposal as the Simon Commission with regard to the enfranchisement of wives over 25 on the husband's qualification, subject to the restriction that the wife should be enfranchised only if the husband's property, tax, or rent qualification amounts to three times the present minimum qualification. This recommendation was unanimous, even the minority report of a Muslim member giving his express approval to the Committee's franchise proposals.³

11. In view of the above consensus of opinion in favour of a wide extension of the women's franchise, we have read with surprise and disappointment the expression of dissent in the Government of India's Despatch on Constitutional Reforms of 1930 (Cmd., 3700). Alluding to the Simon Commission's proposals to enfranchise wives and widows on the husband's qualification, the Despatch "doubts whether they would be acceptable to any considerable section of opinion in the country" and suggests "that it would be unwise to attempt to force upon India measures for the enfranchisement of great numbers of women." It reminds us that the Joint Select Committee of Parliament which preceded the Government of India Act, 1919, "felt that it was not desirable that they should attempt to settle the question themselves," because "the enfranchisement of women goes deep into the social system and susceptibilities of India, and is therefore a question which can only prudently be decided in accordance with the views of Indians constitutionally expressed." The Government of India therefore

recommend "that this matter should continue to be left to the decision of the Provincial Councils." They say, however, that "so long as the principle set out by the Joint Select Committee is maintained, we think it to be a proper course that the suggestions of the Commission for the special enfranchisement of women should be further investigated by the Franchise Committee." They further note that "in their replies to the present reference, the majority of the Provincial Governments have taken somewhat the same line." (See Government of India's Despatch, par. 29.)

The views of these Governments are expressed in the "Despatches from Provincial Governments in India containing Proposals for Constitutional Reform" (Cmd. 3712, 1930.)

THE CASE FOR THE IMMEDIATE AND WIDE EXTENSION OF WOMEN'S FRANCHISE.

12. In the preceding section, we have briefly summarised a great body of testimony in favour of a substantial and immediate increase in the women's vote. We have to set against this only the above-mentioned adverse opinion of the Government of India and of the majority of the Provincial Governments. The Government's Despatch completely ignores all the favourable testimony we have quoted, with the solitary exception of that of the Simon Commission. We are left to infer that neither the Nair Report, nor the Nehru Report, nor the Reports of those Committees of the Provincial Legislative Councils which we have quoted as favourable to a wide immediate extension, represent "any considerable section of Indian opinion," and that the adoption of the Simon Commission's proposals would therefore have to be "forced upon India." The Government of India prefers to follow the precedent set by the Joint Select Committee of the Imperial Parliament.

13. We desire to point out that this analogy between the present situation and that which preceded the Government of India Act contains a number of misleading implications. It ignores the fact that the Joint Select Committee was a purely British body, whereas the Round Table Conference to which the recommendations of the Simon Commission are submitted is predominantly Indian. It ignores the fact that since the findings of the Joint Select Committee ten years have passed, during which Indians have taken every means constitutionally open to them of shewing that the idea of women's entry into political life gives no such shock to their susceptibilities as was before almost universally anticipated in British circles. It ignores the fact—most important of all—that "the wishes of Indians" cannot be adequately voiced through bodies on which women, who form nearly

⁽¹⁾ Loc. cit., p. 37.

⁽²⁾ Loc. cit., pp. 91-94 and 104.

⁽³⁾ The Reports of the Provincial Committees are contained in Vol. III of the Simon Report. The passages referred to are as follows: Bengal, p. 173; Punjab, p. 403; Bihar and Orissa, p. 543; Assam, p. 600; United Provinces, pp. 258-260 and Minority Report, p. 304.

half the population, are most inadequately if at all represented. Exactly the same argument as that used in the Despatch might equally be applied to the depressed classes or to labour. The question of caste also "goes deep into the social system and susceptibilities of India." Yet the Despatch does not propose to leave the electoral rights of the lower castes to be decided wholly by the higher.

14. It is, however, rather for practical reasons than from distrust of the future Legislative Councils of the Provinces that we deprecate the proposal of the Despatch. It is obvious that when the main constitutional structure of India has been re-formed as a result of long negotiations and much give and take between contending interests, it will be far harder to secure adequate consideration of women's claims to extend political rights than if these are considered side by side with those of other claimants. Periods of inertia, even of reaction, inevitably follow periods of reconstructive effort. It is during the next few years that women will be most needed to take full part, both as electors and as elected persons, if the waters of national feeling and aspiration which now run so high are to be guided into channels that will irrigate and make fruitful those great tracts of women's lives which now lie relatively barren.

15. In this opinion we are supported by most of the recent Commissions and Committees, whether Indian or British, from which we have quoted. For example, the Simon Commission says:—

"We desire to see a substantial increase in the present ratio of women to men voters. If this is not effected now, the situation will later on be reached when so large a proportion of adult men are on the register, and so few women, that a further extension to bring the number of women voters more nearly to an equality (even if the provincial councils as then constituted proposed it) would necessitate the sudden admission of vast numbers of women with hardly any increase in the number of men. It is far better to proceed gradually and steadily, and a further step in developing women's suffrage in India should be taken now. Some qualification other than the present one is needed, and it is very difficult to suggest the most satisfactory method." [Then follows the suggestion already quoted as to the enfranchisement of certain wives and widows.] "Many will be disposed to say that Indian wives and widows are so largely uneducated or living in seclusion that their enfranchisement to this extent is premature and extravagant. We do not think so. The beginning of a movement among certain Indian women, however, comparatively few in number they may yet be, to grapple with problems which specially affect home and health and children is one of the most encouraging signs of Indian progress, and we believe that this movement would be strengthened by increasing the influence of women at elections. Some general idea of the proportion of female to male voters which would probably be attained under the above suggestion may be gathered from the fact, deduced from the census, that married women over 25 are about one-half of the number of men over 21. We limit our proposal to wives and widows of 25 because, on practical grounds, we are anxious to avoid introducing at this stage too heavy a proportion of women in the electorate." (Simon Report, Vol. II, pp. 93-94.)

16. The Indian Central Committee, although divided on many other issues, submitted no note of dissent on the subject of women's franchise, apart from that of the electorate generally. But the Chairman, Sir Sankaran Nair, and two of his colleagues, in arguing the case for an immediate measure of adult suffrage, at least in Bengal, expressly point out that:

"It would seem difficult, if not impossible, to do justice to the claims of Muslims, women and the depressed classes without universal suffrage. The depressed classes are in favour of adult suffrage and the evidence before us shews that there is a general feeling throughout India in favour of adult suffrage. . . . Women want it for purposes which need not be elaborated to an English Parliament." (Central Committee's Report; Memorandum by Sir Sankaran Nair and two colleagues, p. 150.)

and elsewhere

"Adult suffrage would be the best means of emancipating women. The women, irrespective of their religions, will combine to advance their interests and the interests of their children." (*Idem*, p. 153, par. 133.)

and

"The Muslims seem to be generally in favour of it, and we doubt whether the claims of women, of the Depressed Classes and the tenants and ryots can be adequately met except by adult suffrage." (*Idem*, p. 155, par. 137.)

17. Further, nearly every recent Commission or Committee which has studied social conditions in India has stressed the urgency of women's needs in matters of education, of health and of relief from certain oppressive social customs. The All-India Women's Conference, which more than any other body represents the organised opinion of progressive Indian women, has repeatedly passed resolutions at its annual meeting, shewing their deep concern on these subjects. The Indian women's movement may be relatively small, but its influence extends far beyond its numbers and it may yet justify the prophecy made about it by the Simon Commission, that

"the women's movement in India holds the key of progress and the results it may achieve are incalculably great." (Report, Vol. I, p. 53.)

18. In view of all this, it is indeed "a gesture of high" but lamentable "significance" that the sole passage of the Government of India's Despatch which concerns itself specially with women is devoted to belittling the need for any special measures to make their citizenship more effective. The result can only be to discourage the more ardent spirits among Indian women, many of whom have already joined the

Congress Party. Their attitude is represented by one of the most prominent among them, Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi, late Deputy President of the Madras Legislative Council, who says in letter to the Women of India Survey Group:

"The British Government in my opinion and in the opinion of the majority of our public men and women, has not been helping our moral and social progress and has been adopting a policy of utter indifference, neutrality and sometimes direct opposition to all our social reform measures. Hence even we women have come to realise that a foreign Government has no sympathy with the legitimate aspirations of the people, and can never actively help in mending our defective social system."

19. There can be no doubt that this opinion, whether justified or not, represents a view widely held by Indian reformers, both men and women. It should be borne in mind when considering the opinion both of the Central and of the Provincial Governments, in whose eyes technical and administrative difficulties are likely to bulk more largely than in the minds of those brought more closely into contact with the lives of the mass of Indian women.

20. We do not ignore the real difficulties caused by the illiteracy of the majority of women. But on the other hand, we believed that their enfranchisement would in itself provide the strongest stimulus to the movement for extending women's education. There is strong evidence that hitherto the importance of this has been insufficiently appreciated by the Provincial Governments. The Report of the Education Committee of the Simon Commission (Hartog Report)—while recording its opinion that "the importance of the education of girls and women in India at the present moment cannot be overrated. It affects vitally the range and efficiency of all education"—shews that

"the public expenditure on girls' education is still small compared to that on boys' education; that the disparity between the amounts spent on the two is increasing; . . . and as a consequence, there is a growing disparity between the number of educated men and educated women."¹

It is obvious that where there is a contest for a share in the funds available for education, the needs of the unenfranchised are more likely to be overlooked than those of the enfranchised. Was it not Lord Sherbrooke who, after one of the great extensions of the British franchise, remarked: "We must now educate our masters"?

¹ Interim Report of the Indian Statutory Commission (Review of Growth of Education in British India by the Auxiliary Committee), p. 150.

RECOMMENDATION.

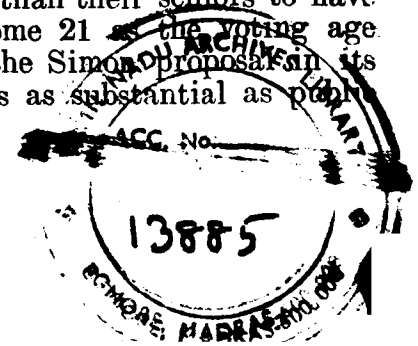
21. The proposal of the Simon Commission appears likely to be the best immediately obtainable, namely, that in addition to whatever property qualification is adopted there should be an alternative educational qualification applicable equally to men and women; further, that there should be two special qualifications applying specially to women: "(1) being the wife, over 25 years of age, of a man who has a property qualification to vote, and (2) being a widow over that age, whose husband at the time of his death was so qualified."

We think that the proposed educational qualification would be valuable as likely to stimulate the more backward communities to push forward the education of their women, as a way of increasing their communal influence. But no literary qualification would by itself increase the number of women electors rapidly enough to fulfil the object we have already outlined.

22. As to the enfranchisement of wives on the husband's qualification, we are not impressed by the objection raised by the Government of the United Provinces, namely, that this would favour unduly the lower castes and those communities where the women do not observe purdah, and are therefore more likely to go to the poll. If the proposal gives women an inducement to come out of purdah, this in the eyes of many would be in its favour; but if the difficulty be regarded as serious, it could be met by making special voting arrangements for those in purdah.

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23. Our own criticism of the Simon proposal would rather be that it is difficult to find a logical justification for the higher age limit of 25 imposed on wives and widows. The same form of qualification was tried successfully for ten years in Great Britain (being subsequently replaced by complete equality) and in one or two other European countries. But here the higher age limit was defended on the ground that women are in a majority of about two million. In British India, on the contrary, there are about seven million more men than women. Further, the younger women are more likely than their seniors to have received education. Hence we should welcome 21 as the voting age for both sexes. Nevertheless, we welcome the Simon proposal in its present form as securing an advance perhaps as substantial as public opinion is likely to accept as a first step.



II RIGHTS OF ELIGIBILITY FOR OR NOMINATION ? LEGISLATIVE BODIES

PRESENT POSITION.

24. Women are eligible to stand as candidates for, or to be nominated as members of, the Legislatures of all the Governors' Provinces except Bengal and Assam. They are also qualified in the same seven provinces to stand as candidates for the central Legislative Assembly or to be nominated upon it. So far no woman has sat in the Assembly either by election or by nomination. Several provinces (*e.g.*, Madras, the United Provinces, Bombay, the Punjab, the Central Provinces) now have or have had one nominated member on their Legislative Councils, but no woman has yet secured election to any of these Councils (See Simon Report, Vol. I, p. 223.)

PROPOSALS

25. The Nair Committee recommend that :

(a) In a revised Legislative Assembly of 300, five seats shall be allotted to women "to be contested in joint electorates" provided that "should election by joint electorates present any insuperable difficulty, recourse should be had to indirect election under such rules as may be framed by the Government of India." (Report, pp. 65, 66.)

and also state that

(b) "We are unanimously of the opinion that steps should be taken to secure the representation of women in the provincial legislatures. Except in the case of certain advanced parts of India, it seems clear that women cannot at present expect to obtain representation to an adequate extent through the general constituencies. We, therefore, consider that in every province five per centum of the total seats in the Provincial Legislatures should be reserved for women. We should leave it to the local governments to determine how these seats should be filled. We would prefer that the method of election should be either through joint or separate electorates, but if this be found impracticable, we think that women might obtain representation by nomination." (Par. 93.)

Women are also presumably intended to be covered by the recommendation in par. 69, which says :

"We would at the same time leave the members of a minority community free to contest seats in the general constituencies over and above those reserved for them."

26. The All Parties Conference covers the question of women's place on legislative bodies simply by including in the "Fundamental Rights" proposed to be made part of the constitution, the following clause :

"(XIX) Men and women shall have equal rights as citizens."

27. The Simon Commission, while they "consider it to be highly desirable to facilitate the inclusion of women in the Provincial Councils," reject the proposal "that a certain number of seats in each Council must be held by women." They object to this on the ground that "their admission to the Council ought to depend on the vote of a constituency composed of electors of both sexes," and also that it would be very difficult to decide in what communities or in what circumstances the suggested principle should apply. They also consider it

"equally impracticable and undesirable to propose that a certain number of seats should be 'reserved' for women, if by a reserved seat is meant a seat filled by election for such a seat can only be reserved in a multiple-member constituency, under a provision that whatever may be the order of preference indicated by the result of the poll, one seat must be filled by the woman who gets more votes than any other woman candidate. But how is it possible to decide which are to be the constituencies selected as areas specially required to return a woman member?"

They therefore propose merely to "leave to women candidates a fair field and no favour," with a further suggestion that the Governor, in exercising his powers of nomination, should supplement the number of women (if any) returned as members of general constituencies, if he thinks this advisable. (Simon Report, Vol. II, p. 78).

28. With regard to the Federal Assembly, which the Simon Commission propose to take the place of the present Legislative Assembly, the Report says :

"Anyone, man or woman, who was on the electoral roll for the province, might stand for election as a member of the Federal Assembly representing that province." (Vol. II, p. 113.)

29. On this question we greatly prefer the proposal of the Nair Committee. It is possible that in the course of years, women will readily secure seats in open contest with men. But for the present it seems universally agreed that this is most unlikely. Even in Great Britain, where women have for many years taken an active part in public life and political work, it was several years before any woman took her seat in Parliament. But it is during the next few years that the life of India will be running into new channels, forming new moulds. It is essential

that women should do their part in influencing these. Mere voting rights are not enough. The good will of men towards women is not enough, because—far more than in Western countries—women live a life apart and their problems are specialised problems. Nor does it meet the case to suggest that in default of election women may be nominated by the provincial Governor, if he thinks it necessary. The need for women members will be greatest just in those provinces where the Government is unsympathetic or indifferent about women's problems and such a Government will be likely either not to exercise the power of nomination, or to exert it only on behalf of "a nice woman, not likely to give trouble."

30. We recognise the difficulty of reserving seats which arises from the fact that women are not a separate community like Muhammadans, but that the sex division is a cross division affecting all communities. On the other hand, for that very reason, the question is unlikely to arouse hot communal feeling, and it is not even suggested by the Simon Commission that the purely administrative difficulties are insuperable. The precise form of solution would have to be determined in relation to whatever other arrangements are decided on with regard to electoral qualifications and constituencies. But we have considered and agreed on the following suggestions:—

RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. That women should be free to contest seats in the general constituencies, subject to the same qualifications as apply to men.
2. That in addition to any seats thus secured by women, a certain number or proportion of seats (say five per cent., as suggested by the Nair Committee) should be reserved for women in each Provincial Council, at least for a trial period of, say, three general elections; that these should be filled in any of the following ways, arranged roughly in the order of preference:—

- (a) By the Council after its election, through the method of proportional representation. This would ensure that those chosen would be unlikely to disturb the relative strength of political parties or communities.
- (b) By the same method as in the preceding paragraph, but out of a panel of names submitted by women's organisations, officially recognised for the purpose, after consultation with the heads of the various parties or groups in the Council.

- (c) By election by the ordinary electorates. (This proposal may seem complicated, but does not present any insuperable difficulty, even assuming the existence of communal electorates for all other members than those in this category. Let us suppose for the sake of example that the ordinary members in a given province are elected by 65 Hindu electorates and 35 Muhammadan electorates. For the seats reserved for women the constituencies would be subdivided territorially into 5 groups so that 13 Hindu electorates and 7 Muhammadan electorates voted to fill a single woman's seat. The electors would exercise their votes for the women's reserved seats at the same time and place that they voted for the ordinary candidates. Every elector would be presented at the polling booth with two voting papers, one on which to record his vote for the general constituency, in which the candidates might be men or women, and one on which to record a vote for the special enlarged women's constituency.)

- (d) By the nomination of the Governor or other head of the Executive Government, out of a panel of names submitted by women's organisations, officially recognised for the purpose, after consultation with the heads of the various parties or groups in the Council.

Any of the above proposals would, we think, escape or meet the administrative difficulties suggested by the Simon Commission.

31. We considered the possibility that the seats to be filled by any of the above methods should only be so many as to bring up the number of women (if any) elected through joint electorates to the minimum number reserved for women. But this is open to the objection that it would leave indeterminate the total number of seats in the Council.

32. It may be objected that our proposal would give women candidates two chances, that of direct election and that of secondary election or nomination. But so long as the proportion of women who are enfranchised is decidedly inferior to the number of men who are enfranchised (and under the Simon proposal male would outnumber female voters by two to one) (Simon Report, Vol. I, p. 94), there seems no practical danger and no theoretic injustice in allowing women this advantage, at least till it is proved that they can secure adequate representation through general constituencies.

RECOMMENDATION.

33. With regard to ensuring the inclusion of women on the central legislative bodies, it is impossible to make detailed recommendations, without knowing what shape these bodies may assume, but we suggest that the same general principles as those outlined above should apply.

III. INDIRECT EFFECTS.

34. Proposals which seem at first sight to have no special bearing on the needs of women may prove in effect to have an important bearing. It is impossible to discuss here the vast field to which this observation applies. The following are cited merely as examples, which might be multiplied indefinitely, of the kind of question we have in mind:—

Thus, the presence or absence of a particular administrative provision, such as a Bureau of Education in connection with the Central Government, or a Ministry of Public Health in each Provincial Government, may have a great bearing upon the probability of improved administration of the social services.

Again, the nature of the administrative machinery set up, both at the centre and in the provinces, and the arrangements for its recruitment may affect the question as to whether competent women are likely to secure entrance to those services where their help is specially desirable.

Or again, it may be proposed (as by the Nair Report) to lay down in the constitution general principles intended to safeguard those sections of the community judged least able to protect themselves, when the question of including women as needing such safeguards may be relevant.

IV. CONSIDERATION OF WOMEN'S INTERESTS BY THE ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

35. As the incidence of these and other possible reactions cannot be foretold until a concrete proposal is actually being weighed, we suggest that on every Committee or sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference likely specially to affect the interests of women, the co-operation of women should be secured.

36.

We should regard it as deeply regrettable if the Conference were to break up without giving adequate consideration to the questions dealt with in this Memorandum, which affects so vitally nearly half the population. We therefore suggest that a committee should be set up without delay to deal with the question of the franchise and the method of securing the inclusion of women on legislative bodies, with which could be coupled (if necessary) similar questions affecting other sections of the community.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS.

(1) FRANCHISE.

We approve the recommendation of the Simon Commission, namely, that in addition to whatever property qualification is adopted there should be an alternative educational qualification applicable equally to men and women; further, that there should be two special qualifications applying specially to women: "(1) being the wife, over 25 years of age, of a man who has a property qualification to vote, and (2) being a widow over that age, whose husband at the time of his death was so qualified."

But, if it is practicable, we should prefer that the age qualification of 21 should apply to wives and widows as well as to other voters.

(2) INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN PROVINCIAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCILS AND OTHER ELECTED BODIES.

We propose:

1. That women should be free to contest seats in the general constituencies, subject to the same qualifications as apply to men.

2. That in addition to any seats thus secured by women, a certain number or proportion of seats (say five per cent., as suggested by the Nair Committee) should be reserved for women in each Provincial Council, at least for a trial period of, say, three general elections; that these should be filled in any of the following ways, arranged roughly in the order of preference:—

- (a) By the Council after its election, through the method of proportional representation. This would ensure that those chosen would be unlikely to disturb the relative strength of political parties or communities.
- (b) By the same method as in the preceding paragraph, but out of a panel of names submitted by women's organisations, officially recognised for the purpose, after consultation with the heads of the various parties or groups in the Council.
- (c) By election by the ordinary electorates. (This proposal may seem complicated, but does not present any insuperable difficulty, even assuming the existence of communal electorates for all other members than those in this category. Let us suppose for the sake of example that the ordinary members in a given province are elected by 65 Hindu electorates and 35 Muhammadan electorates. For the seats reserved for women the constituencies would be subdivided territorially into 5 groups so that 13 Hindu electorates and 7 Muhammadan electorates voted to fill a single woman's seat. The electors would exercise their votes for the women's reserved seats at the same time and place that they voted for the ordinary candidates. Every elector would be presented at the polling booth with two voting papers, one on which to record his vote for the general constituency, in which the candidates might be men or women, and one on which to record a vote for the special enlarged women's constituency.)
- (d) By the nomination of the Governor or other head of the Executive Government, out of a panel of names submitted by women's organisations, officially recognised for the purpose, after consultation with the heads of the various parties or groups in the Council.

With regard to ensuring the inclusion of women on the central legislative bodies, it is impossible to make detailed recommendations, without knowing what shape these bodies may assume, but we suggest that the same general principles as those outlined above should apply.

(3) CONSIDERATION OF WOMEN'S INTERESTS ON THE ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE.

We suggest:

1. That on every Committee or Sub-Committee likely specially to affect the interests of women, the co-operation of women should be secured;

2. That a committee should be set up without delay to deal with the question of the franchise and the method of securing the inclusion of women on legislative bodies, with which could be coupled, if necessary, similar questions affecting other sections of the community.

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