

somewhat the franchise law a few years ago, and endeavoured to enact a Federal franchise which would be applicable generally throughout the Dominion. They provided that women, for example, should have the right to vote in Federal matters. Those of us who had held to a recognition of provincial enactments opposed that attitude. We said it should still be left to the provinces to determine as respects the franchise to be given women, as in all else, what they thought best. However, the Government at that time did carry a provision which made the law in this matter of the exercise of the franchise by women generally applicable. Notwithstanding, that very Government, having regard for the conditions in the Province of British Columbia, in order to avoid a serious situation arising there which might have been misunderstood in other parts of the Empire, found it necessary, as regards certain of the provisions affecting the Federal franchise in the case of British Columbia, to make an exception to this general application. I mention this because it discloses how in one province a particular question may become a burning political issue. For the Federal Government to try and deal with it in a manner which would be regarded as coercing any province would give rise to an entirely new question. For example, if the Federal Government had tried in respect of all persons resident there to impose on the Province of British Columbia certain obligations—such, for example, as the right to vote under the Federal franchise—the issue would not in public discussion have been a question of the franchise at all; it would have been a question of coercion by the Federal Government of a Provincial Government, and you would have had a political battle fought on the basis of what we speak of as “provincial rights.” I am sure all at this table will appreciate that that kind of political conflict is one of the most dangerous a country can be faced with. It is as though Britain were to try and impose certain obligations on Canada or some other part of the Empire. In dealing with the provinces we of the Federal Government seek, as far as we can, to prevent anything in the way of coercion. I think it is as well to mention this because it helps to explain why in one province it has not been possible, up to the present, to concede the franchise to the Indians who are there.

#### **Question best dealt with on Reciprocal Lines.**

As to how Canada's action may be viewed in India, it seems to me to be very much a matter of interpretation, and the spirit of interpretation. I could go to India and say with truth that every citizen coming from the State over which His Highness the Maharajah of Alwar rules has rights of citizenship in my province which I have not in his. That is a point which cannot be brought out too clearly. In eight provinces out of nine in Canada every Indian resident there has the same right as other Canadian citizens; but that is not equally true of Canadians resident in India. If this aspect is put before the people of India they will see that the reciprocal method of dealing with this question, as pointed out by General Smuts, is one which perhaps presents the line along which we can proceed most satisfactorily. So far as Canada is concerned, we would not ask for our citizens resident in India any right which we are not prepared equally to concede to Indians resident in Canada. I think you may take that as the fundamental basis on which we would be prepared to deal with this question; we hold to this reciprocal point of view because in all things we have found it to be one of the most satisfactory methods of dealing with questions of this kind.

#### **Problem in British Columbia an Economic one.**

So far as British Columbia is concerned, the problem is not a racial one—it is purely an economic problem. The Labour forces in British Columbia are very strong. That province has had industrial problems of a character which no other province in the Dominion has had, and what the Labour people are aiming at is, I think, to maintain certain industrial standards which they had sacrificed much to acquire. As respects some of those who have come from other countries, they are rather fearful, until at least they have resided for some time in Canada and have acquired our method of living, our customs, habits, and so forth, that to give them the rights of franchise in full may mean that the standard already maintained may be undermined. I would like to make this clear.

#### **Possible Political Consequences of giving Franchise to Indians in British Columbia.**

It may seem I am straining a little in emphasizing the possible political consequence of giving the franchise to resident Indians in British Columbia. But take the actual situation as it is in Parliament to-day. When we came into office I had a majority of one behind me in the House of Commons. I think we have a majority of three at the present time. Many of the constituencies were very close. It is conceivable that in British Columbia the difference in the result might be material by increasing a certain vote in some of the constituencies. In other words, were the subject to become one of political discussion, I think it would be possible for a political orator to make it quite apparent to the people of British Columbia that the fate of the Federal Government might depend upon the vote cast by Indians resident in that province. It would not be an exaggeration, it would not be a figure of speech; it is a literal and absolute truth. It is conceivable that the complexion of Parliament as it is to-day might be entirely changed. The consequence might be that one Government rather than another would be in office by the vote of those who, neither in their own country nor in Canada, have ever exercised the franchise. That is the situation which exists at the moment. I do not expect it will exist very long, but it all helps to show the difficulty which we are confronted with when we contemplate, in any immediate way, results which we all hope will be effected in the course of time. It is for that, among other reasons, that I appreciate the method of approach which Sir Tej has adopted in bringing his suggestion before this Conference. He has appreciated, I think, our difficulties as well as his own; and in suggesting there could be a conference between representatives of India and representatives of Canada, I think he has had in mind enabling the citizens of India to appreciate