

In August 1921, at the earnest solicitations of the leading citizens of the town of Shikarpur a meeting of leading citizens and the more important personages of the taluka was convened by Mr. Taunton, I.C.S. to consider the present political situation and the measures to be adopted to counteract the influences that might entail the ruin of India. About 760 people of all shades of opinion gathered together at 8.00 a.m. in the Assistant Collector's bungalow and had a friendly discussion. The following among others were present:- Mr. Murli dhar, President of the Municipality Mr. Hiranand, President of the Panchayat, Mian Ali Bux and Shaikh Taj Mohammad, the leading members of the Anjuman-e-Islam, Pirs Shamsuddin and Zia Mahsum Shah, R. B. Diwan Asardass, K.S. Jan Mohammed Khan, Sethe Lunidasing, Rajharam, Dwarkadass G., Harbhag wandass, Khan Mohammed Khan Pathan, Seth Sobraj Bundri, Seth Bulchand, Jeweller Seth Hassanand of Jagan, Seth Dharamdas of Chana, Syed Hajan Shah, Mian Gul Mohammed, Moulvi Rahmatullah, Seths Chellaram and Lachiram, Mukhi Rochadass of Khanpore, Mukhi Hiranand of Mian Sahib, Mukhi Gangaram of Kote Sultan, Messrs, Ghansham dass, Parsram, Lunidram, Bulchand, pleaders, and Mukhi Sanwaldas, Grain Merchant.

Mr. Taunton opened the proceedings and laid special stress on the fact that it was not the desire of the Government or of its officials, themselves to conduct the proceedings of Sabha to be constituted, and added that he would strongly wish that they should take place without the intervention of any sort on the part of Government officials. He showed the objects of the Sabha and made the following speech in Sindhi:-

Mr. Taunton's Speech.

We desire to start a society in Shikarpur similar to the Swaraj Sabha of Hyderabad. We may adopt the same name and similar objects. Mian Ali Bux has already started

a loyal society but he is willing to amalgamate it with ours. The present is especially the time to do some thing towards checking the spread of Non-co-operation. The misrepresentations on which it is based should be corrected, especially those which pretended to show that the Government is an enemy of Islam. Although Government is in favour of temperance and welcomes the spread of home industries, yet we think that methods of Non-co-operation in enforcing boycott of liquor and foreign, cloth are fraught with danger.

But we do not suggest that this society should support Government through thick and thin; mistakes in the administration are sure to be made and it should be the work of the society to expose them and get them remedied. All we ask is that the society should not sever connection with Government should work constitutionally, and should take advantage of the Reforms.

Pir Shamsuddin quoted several verses from the Kuran and showed that Non-co-operation with the Government was not sanctioned by their religion. He dwelt on the advantages India had from the British connection.

Mr. Murlidhar, the President of the Municipality spoke for over 20 minutes and kept the audience attentive to his logical and forcible arguments. He suggested that the Sabha should be called the Swaraj Sabha. This was adopted. He brought out clearly the Pit-falls into which the Home Rulers had fallen and said in clear terms that their goal was not different from that of the extreme agitators but that he preferred constitutional methods to secure it. The present Non-co-operation movement involving defiance of the law, he added, would result in chaos for India.

Mr. Murlidhar's Speech.

You all know the object which has brought us together today. The movement of Non-co-operation is in our midst and it is likely to assume dangerous aspect in the near future. We have therefore met to consider whether it is necessary to take any steps to counter act or check it. If you do agree that it is to our interests that we should do some thing, the question next will be what steps shall be take.

Non-co-operation means severance of all connection

with the established Government. It means defiance of law and order. It is for you to consider what will be the results if the movement were to succeed.

I for one shudder to think. There will be chaos and there will be anarchy. The movement will no doubt have the effect of undermining the prestige and authority of Government, for a time, but even that will mean ultimate harm and trouble for us.

A part from the dangerous nature of the movement itself, let us for a moment look at the workers in charge of this movement. I have great respect for Mr. Gandhi himself but he is only the director of operations. He has high ideals and has been constantly preaching non-violence but have his followers adhered to that? Have the followers the same spiritual mind, the same training and humility of the Mahatma? What has been done in Shikarpur and other places is well known to you.

No doubt there are several workers who do their best to stop violence but they do not often succeed. Mr. Gandhi first started the satyagraha movement. Non-violence was strictly preached by the author in that connection too but we all know what disaster resulted from that movement and Mahatmaji had to stop, it when I look ahead, I see that similar results will follow from the present movement too. We are more likely than not to have bloomed and the history of Ireland repeated here. Even Mr. Gandhi will not then be able to check the forces of disorder and violence.

The movement first started with the boycott of the new Councils. The voters were pressed not to vote and the candidates were asked not to alter themselves for election. Many suitable candidates were thus prevented.

I believed then and do still believe that the new Councils would have done much greater good ~~if~~ if candidates who had devoted their lives to political work for the country had not thus been kept out of the Councils. Men like Pundit

Madan Mohan Malaviya, Mr. Jinnah, Mr. Baptista have thus been kept out. But how far did the movement succeed in the boycott of Councils or in paralysing the Government? Did a single seat in our council remain vacant? Not that I know of. The next move of Non-co-operation was to ask the people to throw up their titles and give up services or the lawyers to give up practice and soon. This proved a virtual failure, because it was unnatural.

The third step moved was to withdraw boys and girls from all government and aided schools and colleges. No arrangements were side by side made to start other similar institutions where they could go.

The immature and inexperienced minds of the youths were impressed by the personality or eloquence of the leaders and thousands shattered their careers by abruptly withdrawing from the educational institutions but they were soon disillusioned and majority of them re-joined their schools and colleges. Municipalities were also asked to give up Government grants and nationalise the schools. Upto now I have not been able to understand what is really meant by nationalising the schools. I have asked several Non-co-operators to explain this but none has yet solved the question. If it is meant that there should be a change made in the curriculum. I think every Municipality and even the Educational Department will be ready to consider the question very favourably. But have the Non-co-operators come out with any curriculum which they want to be introduced in the National Schools? Not so far as I know.

I was present at the meeting of the Karachi Municipality when they took up this question on the motion of Diwan Wadhamal and Mr. Jeswani. So many councillors, shouted out that they should be told what National Schools really meant but none gave any real explanation.

With regard to the grant I don't think they affect the character of the institution or the teaching, so long the Municipality have the power of control. No doubt improvements and advancements or desirable in this direction; but those we can achieve through the Councils, as this is a transferred

subject and in charge of a minister. The grants are paid out of taxes collected from the people and it will make no difference in education if these grants received through Government (But from people's money) are replaced by direct contributions from the people.

The movement has also been directed to ask the people not to use intoxicants and to use country cloth. These are social and economical questions and have really nothing to do with Non-co-operation. The objects are undoubtedly landable but can we say the same about the methods employed to achieve them? Can any one deny that some of the workers in this cause resort to jeering and violence and all sorts of objectionable methods?

Only three days back, one Mr. Allamal complained me very bitterly of the Oppressions of some of the Non-co-operators. He had gone to the Sindh Canal for a picnic and had taken some mutton with himself. He was asked to throw it away but he would not do it. He appealed and entreated that he may be let off this time. He urged that some other rich men had also brought mutton and they too may be asked to throw it away but all to no effect. He told me that he was abused and assaulted and his mutton throw away. He said he had filed a complaint too but that he was being hooted and dishonoured by young boys who gathered outside the court. I shall give you one more instance. The local Municipality resolved that some encroachments made by some Bhogris in the Shahibagh should be removed. One Non-co-operator came to me and violently demanded that I ~~would~~ should desist from removing the encroachment, but I treated his threats with contempt. When I wrote to Professor Vaswani about it, he felt sorry for the Non-co-operator. Numerous instances of this nature could be cited where people are being terrorised. This is all against the principles of Mr. Gandhi, but I said before how can he prevent this? Numerous false statements are being issued to frighten or mislead the people. It is high time that they should be corrected. The next items in the programme of the Non-co-operator are "Civil Disobedience

and declaration of Indian Republic". You can well imagine what that means. It will indeed be an evil day for India if this happens. I shudder even to think of it. My dear friend Professor Vaswani has himself condemned this in strong term. Says he "I can not contemplate with indifference a day when India may be turned into another Ireland."

These ideas might tickle the fancy of our youths but I ask them in all earnestness to pause and consider what will be the consequences thereof. There will be no safety of life person and property and there is bound to be bloodshed.

In Sind, the only political body has been the Sind provincial conference and its Committees. All its ex-presidents Seth Harchandrai Vishindas, the Honourable Mr. Bhurgri, Seth Ghulam Hussain Chagla, Mr. Jamshed Mehta, Mr. Hiranand Khemsing and myself have all kept themselves clear of the movement and or against it. Is it not thus very significant that these leaders elected by the people of province to fill the highest post in their keeping, have not joined the movement of Non-co-operation. Upto now, they have mostly remained in different to this movement of Non-co-operation but I would appeal to them now to shake off their indifference and bestir themselves.

I know that the Hon. Mr. Bhurgri has formed as association called "The Swaraj Sabha" with the help of some other gentlemen and their objects are exactly similar to ours. I trust they will start their work in right earnest.

It is after very anxious thought and careful consideration that I have come to the conclusion that we must raise our voice and use our efforts to take the dangerous items in the programme of Non-co-operation and I would earnestly appeal to you to do the same, before it becomes too late. It will be our duty to raise our voice against Government whenever necessary but we shall do so by all constitutional methods. We do not yield to the Non-co-operators in our desire for Swaraj for India i.e. to say Home Rule on the dominion lines. But while they want to resort to Non-co-operation for that end and their methods are fraught with great danger and

bloodshed, we want to do the same by constitutional means through the new councils.

Several other leaders also spoke viz, Mian Ali Bux, M.L.A. Mr. Lalomal, Retired Mukhtiarkar Seth Hassanand of Jagan, Rao Bahadur Asardass, Shaikh Taj Mohammed Khan, Babu Tarasing, Seth Chellaram, Secretary of the Dharam Sabha, Seth Dharamdas of Chana, Seth Sanwaldass, Mukhi of grain merchants, Messrs. Najumuddin and Naraindass Khubchand and Mr. Hiranand, President of the Shikarpur Panchayat.

Mr. Ali Bux made it clear to the audience that the Aman Sabha would now be merged in the new Swaraj Sabha and to this no objection was raised. His speech was as under:-

Messrs. Taunton and Murlidhar have informed you of the object of today's meeting and of the reasons of organize this Sabha. I do not therefore wish to waste your time by repeating the same thing, but I think it is necessary to bring it to your notice that we are not going to abolish the Aman Sabha nor do we disagree with the principles of the Aman Sabha started here on 20th June, 1921. Mr. Murlidhar's remark that an Aman Sabha was not going to be started might lead to a possible misunderstanding. Hence I make the matter clear.

The non-co-operation movement has been going on here for the last four or five years, when it was noticed that this movement had spread far and wide and the illiterate, innocent and young boys and students joined without any fore-thought and many students ruined themselves and their careers by giving up their schools and colleges. The well-wishers and the leading citizens who were silently watching the affairs so far realized their duty and thought of devising some means of which true facts might be brought to the notice of the misguided people so that their wrong notions might be dispelled.

For this reason Mohammadans of Shikarpur convened a meeting on 20th June, 1921 and started a Sabha, the objects of which were:-

- (1) The Sabha was not against the objects of the Khilafat.
- (2) The Sabha was not against the holy places of Islam.

(3) The Sabha was not against further political demands provided this was done constitutionally.

(4) The Sabha was not against Non-co-operation and violence.

It was decided to request the Hindus of the town as well as the Zamindars of the Taluka to join the Sabha and after they had done so it was intended to convene a large meeting when the permanent name of the Sabha would be fixed and in the meantime it was provisionally called the Aman Sabha. Today is the day when all people Hindus and Mahomedans big and small, from the town or the taluka have collected. This is the same Aman Sabha whose name is being altered to Swaraj Sabha. I shall now deal briefly with Non-co-operation. It means severance of all connection with the Government. If you exercise a little thought you will find that it is impossible to sever all connections with the Government. For example Government servants and pleader's whose sole livelihood depends on their service or profession or Zamindars who are day and night dependent on Revenue or public Works Departments can not do so. How can Zamindars give up their lands? Bankers and traders can not do without Government. How can people decline to go to police or to civil and criminal courts and suffer crimes to be committed? How will things get along without Railways and Telegraphs?

There are a thousand and one other things in which we are connected with Government. How can we give up all these? It is quite in practicable. The Non-co-operators have devised impossible and disagreeable method to secure this. I have great respect for Mahatma Gandhi but he does not wish that there should be riots and compulsion and violence should be used to bring about people to do impossible things are to use bad language towards Government, or to incite them to oppose Government. I hope you will consider all these facts and will try to save the country from ruins.

R.B. Assardas and Mr. Hiranand on behalf of the Panchayat declared in unequivocal terms their opposition to

to Non-co-operation and loyal support to the Government. Great enthusiasm prevailed at the gathering, especially when it was made clear that the Sabha would not be servile to Government but would criticize the mistakes or the unnecessary repressive measures of Government as well as the dangerous items of the Non-co-operator's programme. People of all shades of opinion declared their unanimous belief that the Swaraj Sabha indicated above might be brought into existence immediately, so that the reasonably minded people who could not in its absence, make their voice felt, might come forward to dispel the unturn both from the press and the platform.

The meeting then unanimously elected Mian Ali Bux as the Secretary of the New Swaraj Sabha and also elected the following members of the Managing Committee and also the Vice-Presidents from each body representing district interests.

Managing Committee.

Mian Ali Bux, Mr. Bhagwandas, Shaikh Taj Mohammed Shaikh Abdul Rasul, Moulvi Rahmatullah, Shaikh Mahboob Ali, K.S. Jan Md. Khan, Pir Zia Masum Shah, Seth Bodaram, Seth Tirathdas, Mr. Ghulam Kadir, Mr. Gul Hassan Khan, Khan Mohammed Khan Pathan, Seth Dharamdas, Mr. Lochiram, Mr. Murlidhar, Mukhi Sanwaldas, Mr. Wadhmal, Pir Shamsuddin Syed Hajan Shah, Mr. Allah Dino Khan, Mr. Lalumal, Mr. Persram, Mir Ahmed, Totula Khan, Fakir Dost Mohd., K.S. Haji Mohammed Umar Shaikh, Abdul Kadir Azizullah Khan.

Vice-Presidents.

Seth Bodaram, Seth Dharamdas Mian Ali Bux, K.S. Jan Mohd. Khan, Mr. Murlidhar, Pir Shamsuddin, Shaikh Taj Mohd., Seth Atmaram, Mr. Bhagwandas, K.S. Imam Bux Khan.

The work of electing the President was left to the next meeting. (D.G. 18 August, 1921, p.9).

rootout the mischief and to promote the best interest of the people and to save the poor and unfortunate persons from the clutches of the Non-co-operators. Speeches were made by Mr. Dingomal Secretary of the Aman Sabha in the Badin Taluka who had been invited to attend the meeting and by Mir Yar Mahomed Khan, Seth Wassandmal, Secretary of the Sabha and Mir Kaim Khan. Mir Yar Mahomed Khan drew to the attention of the audience to the falsehood which is generally being spread by the opponents that the British **had** thrown bombs over the sacred places of the Moslems. He asked the audience not to pay heed to such false rumours which are generally created by the Non-co-operators and other swaraj fanatics in order to serve their own ends. The President in his concluding remarks said that he hoped that the audience would maintain their implicit loyalty and co-operate with Government in every possible way. The meeting terminated after the singing of National Anthem.

(D.G. June 29, 1921, P-4).

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