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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

Women in Mines. IT is very gratifying that the Joint Select Committee on the Mines Bill have taken the first step towards prohibiting the employment of women below ground. We are told that a proposal was made by several members of the Committee to the effect that at the end of the next five years there should be a complete cessation of the employment of female labour in underground work, and it seems on its merits to have found favour with the Committee as a whole; but it was not adopted because it was felt that it would have necessitated the recirculation of the Bill. A compromise was therefore arrived at, and it was provided that the Governor-General in Council, who is hereafter to control the employment of women instead of the Local Governments, should consider this question in consultation with the Local Governments "with a view to prohibiting such employment either in all mines or in particular classes of mines at the end of a specified period, which the Committee think should be about five years." This, in the circumstances, is a good beginning, but if the disemployment of women who are already engaged in mines may take five years if the industry is not to be subjected to too great a strain, it should at least be possible to prohibit immediately the employment of new women on underground labour. The taking of women out of the mines is a most momentous reform, being the foundation, as we have repeatedly shown, of most other reforms, so very desirable, in labour conditions, and the credit of it is almost wholly due to the bold stand Mr. N. M. Joshi made in the Legislative Assembly on this question.

WHEN the proposal for Council entry was first mooted by Pandit Motilal Nehru in the All-India Congress Committee at Calcutta, it was thought advisable (though the course was one of doubtful expediency) so to phrase the proposition that all sections of Congressmen who had wearied of Council boycott might vote for it, irrespective of whether they were subsequently to work the reforms or to wreck them. "Whatever our internal differences, we must present a united front to the non-co-operators," that was the dominant feeling at the time. Consequently the proposition was studiously silent as to the manner in which the pro-change party would comport themselves in the Councils when they got there. Lest inconvenient questions should be asked as to their programme in the Councils, they merely replied that a special Congress session would be convened to prescribe a programme for them, whose decision would be accepted by all Council-going Congressmen as a mandate. It is open to question whether the unity preserved in the ranks of the Das-Nehru party by recourse to such a dubious expedient was not more of an embarrassment than a support. But be that as it may, the course which was conceivably expedient in the circumstances of the time could not possibly be so now, when those circumstances have passed away. There is no danger of the non-co-operators out-voting them now in the bosom of their new organisation. Despite their factitious unity, they were beaten in the Congress, and that is why they have formed a separate party. Here at last they are secure against a repetition of defeat, and therefore under no necessity, as before, of offering an unbroken front to the common enemy. That is to say, there is no further need for covering up their differences. They may therefore avow their intentions as to what policy they would pursue in the Councils after they have fought and won the elections. There will no longer be any justification for postponing a decision on this matter, unless the leaders wish deliberately to make a hotchpotch of their new party. If they still keep it the curious medley that it is now, they are apt to receive from the intelligent elector a reply similar to the one Pandit Nehru made to the non-co-operators. Panditji declared, somewhat ostentatiously, in a recent interview that he would not lift his little finger to collect a single rupee or enlist a single volunteer unless the majority party tell him what use they propose to make of these war-like prepara-

tions and in what manner they propose to carry on their civil disobedience campaign. So perhaps will the voter say: Unless you tell me what you wish to do after going into the Councils, I am not going to waste my vote on you."

Absolved from
Blame.

THE non-co operation programme has certainly gained much in consistency by the Congress refusing to sanction entry of non-co-operators into municipalities and local boards. If their creed requires non-co-operators to stand aside from the Government machinery on the higher plane, i. e. in the Councils it must require them all the more to stand aside from the Government machine on the lower plane, i. e. in the local bodies. The latter were till the other day less representative than the former, having a larger proportion of Government nominees and being elected on a higher franchise. The Government again had its finger much deeper in the pie of the local bodies than in the Legislative Councils, and the people's representatives wielded much less power. In these circumstances it was the height of absurdity for non-co-operators to seek entry into the local bodies and to taboo the Legislative Councils. The pro-Council party was not therefore slow to taunt them with having caught hold of the wrong end of the stick in serving on local bodies. The non-co-operators are now saved from the jeers of the Das party. But the coherence of policy thus secured only helps to place in bolder relief the hiatus, already deplorably great, between the professions and practice of non-co-operators, for several adherents of the Gandhian policy are still on the local bodies and several others are offering themselves for election to them, despite the Congress decision. Anyhow the official Congress policy is absolved from blame in one particular, the blame being now transferred to the workers.

Compulsory Edu-
cation in Bombay
Presidency.

WE hear that the Bombay Government are contemplating the appointment of a special officer for the purpose of putting in force the Compulsory Education Act recently passed. Such a step is absolutely necessary. The Government have now taken over from the local bodies the duty of introducing compulsion, and having done so, they must set about examining the extent of the ground that has to be covered by each local authority and measuring against it the resources which the local authority has now at command and which will be available by adding to the taxation. This examination will reveal that different localities are at different stages of preparedness for taking advantage of the Act, and on the basis of the information thus collected the Government will be able to make a rough plan of educational development so that within ten years the whole programme will be carried out. We hope that in the budget that will be presented to the legislature after a month or so provision will be made for

supplying a full one-tenth of the total educational deficiency of this Presidency and that plans will be in train for bringing as many municipalities as possible under the operation of the Act. We only hope that the officer to be selected for the purpose will be gifted with the saving grace of tact, for even if it is necessary to put a screw on local bodies (as indeed it will be necessary) that unpleasant operation does not dispense with the need of suavity in the officer who has to perform it.

State Socialism.

IN regard to education, sanitation, agriculture, and other nation-building activities of Government, the Retrenchment Committee of Bengal recommends a somewhat novel principle. It advises a transference to local control of a considerable part of such activities now undertaken by Government, mainly for the reason that such schemes of development are best financed by local taxation. The Government is only to make grants-in-aid for the purpose, and through the grants to exercise such control as is desirable. But since the amount of the grants is proportioned to the degree of local effort and the readiness of the people to raise funds by the levy of rates, there will be no guarantee under such a scheme that local authorities will supply the requisite public conveniences. In order to meet this objection, the Committee recommends that the Government should lay down a progressive policy and should insist upon a minimum of achievement by the local authorities, "pitching the minimum sufficiently high to demonstrate the real value of the scheme enforced." "In the event of failure to make the minimum advance, Government should be empowered to take the matter out of the hands of the local authority and to give effect to the law." This is quite a good bit of State Socialism, but the principle is adopted in England in the matter of town-planning and so forth. It is too much to expect that, unless there is the fear of compulsion at the back, any considerable number of local authorities will go in for large schemes of expansion in the nation-building departments.

THE Indian States Act, which is yet to receive the royal assent, is designed to give protection to Princes against attempts made in British administered India to excite disaffection towards them. In the course of the debate on the Bill it was pointed out that the whole basis of that measure was unsound, since there can be no question here of "disaffection," as such a relation can subsist only between ruler and ruled, but not between the subjects and allies of the British Government. In support of this contention R. vs. Antonelli (1905) may be cited, in which Phillimore J. said: "Seditious libels are such as tend to disturb the Government of this country, and in my opinion a document published here, which was calculated to disturb the Government of some foreign country, is not a seditious libel, nor punishable as libel at all. . . . To hold otherwise would be to hold that all the strong language used against the Government of Turks at the time of the Bulgarian rebellion was seditious libel, and it would make many of our great statesmen guilty of seditious libel, and those persons also who espoused the cause of Italian liberty."

RETRENCHMENT IN BENGAL.

THE *Englishman* tells us that the general feeling produced by the report of the Retrenchment Committee of Bengal presided over by Sir Rajendra Nath Mukherjee is one of bewilderment. One can well believe that in the quarters represented by our contemporary the Report has caused not only bewilderment but alarm. For the Committee has made recommendations which, when carried out, will effect a saving in expenditure of close upon two crores. In a Budget where the present scale of revenue fluctuates between 9 and 10 crores, these economies represent a recurring saving of 20 per cent. From the first the non-official members of the Bengal Council had insisted upon retrenchment and had urged the appointment of an expert Committee to ascertain what economies were possible; but invariably the official members protested that all that was possible in the direction of economy was being done by the Government and warned the public that a Retrenchment Committee would only involve delay and cost and would possibly recommend an increased outlay of money. Only in March last, the Finance Member said:

I fear that such a general retrenchment committee trying to cover the whole field of administration would find it impossible to come to any definite conclusion within any period that is measurable by months if not by years, and also that a general retrenchment committee, like the standing committees, is much more likely to recommend an increase in expenditure or anything of that kind It has been suggested that we should go in for heroic measures such as have recently been propounded in England by the Geddes Committee. But can it be seriously contended that conditions are the same or that there are the same opportunities for heroic measures in Bengal as in England?

But the new Governor, Lord Lytton, is a man of greater sympathy and imagination, and he concluded that the whole expenditure of the Government must be thoroughly overhauled, and unfortunately for the Finance Member used the very same analogy of the Geddes Committee of which the latter had been so utterly contemptuous. In July the Governor said to the Legislature:

Remembering, however, that the British Government had derived very real and valuable help from the Retrenchment Committee which they had appointed and knowing that the taxpayers of Great Britain had good cause to be grateful for the labours of Sir Eric Geddes and his colleagues, I suggested to my colleagues in this Government that similar advantages might possibly result from the appointment of a similar committee here.

We shall be surprised if Sir John Kerr does not regard the conclusions of the Mukherjee Committee as somewhat similar to those of the Geddes Committee. It is in every province the same story, that retrenchment investigations are at first resisted by Government, and when the low state of the finances makes them inevitable it is discovered that very drastic cuts are feasible.

The specific recommendations of the Committee require a more detailed consideration than can be given here; but *prima facie* the Committee's investigation seems to be thorough, and anyhow the cuts it proposes begin at the top. This

is necessary not only in the interest of justice, but because the spirit of economy which the public wish to see imparted to the administration cannot be so imparted unless the impulse proceeds from the persons who "run the administration." Thus economies are recommended by the present Committee in the personnel of the Government. A Cabinet of seven for work which was formerly done by a Cabinet of three is an intolerable burden as we have said before, and we rejoice to see that the Bengal Committee advises retrenchment of three—two Executive Councillors and one Minister. The reduction of the number of Ministers is a step of doubtful utility, but two executive councillorships can be abolished without the least danger of the impairment of efficiency. Their salaries also must be cut down. The Retrenchment Committee of the Central Provinces recommends this measure, but not that of Bengal. The Secretariat also comes under the pruning knife of the Committee, and the principle on which the pruning is to be effected is that of making the head of a department work as Secretary in his department to the member of Government in charge, the separate offices of the head of department and the secretariat being merged. The Committee has also recommended retrenchment in the posts of deputy and assistant secretaries. This will save not only expense, but superfluous routine and correspondence work which an unnecessary duplication of the administrative staff entails.

As in the Central Provinces, the Bengal Committee has recommended the abolition of Divisional Commissioners. It says drily: "We feel that, in spite of its age, the post of Divisional Commissioner, as an administrative authority of an intermediate character between the districts and Government, requires justification." The principle on which this long overdue reform is based is better stated and more widely adopted by the C. P. Committee, which says:

The province is divided into units of districts, and the districts into units of sub-divisions, or tahsils as they are usually called. The administrative authorities should therefore be the provincial authority for the whole province, the district authority for the district, the tahsil authority for the tahsil. The intermediate authorities for the agglomerations of districts known as divisions or circles, and for the agglomerations of tahsils known as sub-divisions seems to us to involve considerable duplication or even reduplication of work and can well be eliminated, the powers of such intermediate authorities being either decentralised to the authority next below or centred in the authority next above, as circumstances may dictate. . . . The principle embodied in it may be described as the centralisation of those functions which are really central, the decentralisation of the rest, and the elimination of intermediate grades of authorities unassociated with definite territorial or political units of area.

It will not be possible here to follow the Mukherjee Committee in any more of its recommendations for the simplification of procedure and the reduction of administrative establishments. But some comment may be made on its recommendation for the Indianisation of the services, which necessarily occupies an important place in any scheme for

substantial retrenchment. On this matter the Committee feels that the development must be in the direction of a provincial service, recruitment being for the most part direct and the conditions being such as to attract the best men of the province. Now, this means, we suppose, the discontinuance of any further recruitment of Europeans to the services in normal conditions. If Europeans are required, they should be recruited on special terms and on short-term contracts. Considerable economy will result if, alongside of the stoppage of recruitment of Europeans, all the Indian cadres are organised on the pay-scale applicable to the provincial services. At present the salaries of the all India services have been fixed with reference to the necessity of obtaining European administrators "who require compensation for exile and other disadvantages of residence in India" and if such men are not to be recruited in future it will be uneconomical to maintain the present rate of pay for future Indian entrants into the services. The Sloccock Committee of the Central Provinces has laid down this principle in no uncertain terms. This reform is also likely to lead to a further saving. As the Sloccock Committee observes, one further result of the present system has been that the pay-scale of the Provincial Services also has been put rather unnecessarily high, in order to avoid too great a difference between the pay of Indian officers of an all-India service and that of officers of a Provincial Service.

THE FISCAL COMMISSION'S REPORT.—IV.

THE COTTON EXCISE DUTY.

ONE of the most ticklish subjects on which the Fiscal Commission had to pronounce judgment was that of the cotton excise duty. Their considered opinion is: "That the existing Cotton Excise Duty in view of its past history and associations be unreservedly condemned, and that Government and the Legislature start again with a 'clean slate' regulating their excise policy solely in the interest of India". The Commission have felt it necessary to enter into the whole history of the Indian cotton duties, import as well as excise, in view of the fact that "this tax has from the first been regarded in India as a conspicuous example of political domination being used for purposes of economic domination." They deserve the best thanks of the country for having stated in an authoritative manner all the important and relevant facts in their historical survey of the question. Any reader of those pages in chapter X of the Report can see that the Indian view of the matter is grounded on facts. The Commission could not help unreservedly condemning the cotton excise duty. So far so good. But in recommending the action to be taken in "cleaning the slate", the Commission, or rather the Majority, appear to have blundered very badly. They say that "the first essential step appears to us to be that the British Government should announce its intention of al-

lowing the Government of India to decide the question in agreement with the Indian Legislature". But there is no need of any fresh announcement of such intention. As the Minority point out in their Minute of Dissent, the Secretary of State has already accepted the principle, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, in his despatch of 30th June, 1921. The majority have themselves referred to that despatch in paragraph 4 of the Report.

Once the slate is cleaned, the Majority appear to be nervously anxious that it should at once be written on. In fact, their recommendation about cleaning the slate appears to be practically conditional upon the Legislature agreeing voluntarily to impose the excise duty as before. It is like Prince Rukmi allowing his sister Rukmini to choose her husband herself from among the princes assembled, only provided her choice fell on his friend Shishupal. In order to make out a case for the reimposition of the cotton excise duty, the Majority dwell on the financial difficulties of the Government of India. Whether the financial difficulties of the Government of India ought to be met by increasing the tax-revenue or by cutting down the expenditure was not a subject for consideration before the Fiscal Commission. So the Majority would have done well not to assume anything in regard to that question. Even supposing more revenue has to be raised, why hit just upon one industry, viz. the cotton industry? Why not have a corporation tax on all industries—cotton, jute, coal, oil, tea, iron and steel and all the rest of them? Is it the last word of wisdom on the subject when the Commission lay down dogmatically that there is no further room for direct taxation in this country? The Majority take an excursion into economic theory in order to prove that in the interest of the consumer it is better to lay a 5% excise and a 5% import duty on an article than to lay a 10% import duty alone, when the local production and imports are equal and demand is inelastic. But another part of economic theory, viz. the theory of taxation, disapproves of excise duties altogether except when imposed deliberately for the purpose of checking the consumption of an article or when imposed on an article of luxury.

Revenue, however, hardly seems to be the motive behind the recommendation of the Majority in favour of re-writing the cotton excise duty on the clean slate as soon as it is cleaned. As the Minority point out in their masterly chapter on this subject in their Minute of Dissent, the recommendations made in various parts of the Report, for the abolition of various duties, imposed purely for revenue purposes, would lead to the loss of nearly twice as much revenue as the cotton excise duty is likely to bring in. It must be remembered that the Rs. 2¼ crores which the cotton excise brings in at present is an abnormal figure due to the high prices temporarily ruling for cotton goods. The pre-war average was less than half a crore. It is admitted by the Majority that the cotton excise

European joint stock companies that are likely to seek some form of governmental aid may not be considerable. In fact this question depends entirely on whether the Government would offer sufficient to tempt large concerns to take aid from them.

The chief forms in which aid is proposed to be given under the Act are (1) Loans, (2) Cash credits, (3) Subsidies for the purchase of machinery, (4) Subscription for shares and debentures, (5) Guaranteeing interest on part of the capital, (6) Grants of land, raw materials, firewood, water, etc. on favourable terms. All loans that are advanced are sought to be secured by a mortgage or floating charge upon the whole assets of the enterprise subject to prior encumbrances. Provision has also been made to enable the Government to make inspection of the premises, plant, stock and accounts of the concern and to obtain, whenever needed, returns of its production and any other special accounts or statements. In the case of loans exceeding two lakhs, provision has been made for the exercise of control over the concern by the appointment of Government Directors or otherwise.

These provisions do not call for much criticism. Much would depend upon the manner and the spirit in which the regulations are worked. For instance, in the matter of the control exercised by Government Directors, there is an element of danger arising from the fact that Government Directors, fearing to take responsibility on themselves in many questions, might always like to refer them to Government, with the result that a long delay would become inevitable. Hence, unless Government Directors are given considerable discretion and free hand, the business of many large concerns is likely to be hampered.

It is no doubt obvious that each kind of aid mentioned above has its place in the industrial conditions of Madras. But one form of it in preference to others may be specially applicable to some industries so that the rule must be that each individual case must be judged on its merits. But with regard to the furnishing of capital to industrial concerns, one suggestion may be ventured. The Industrial Commission Report has rightly laid stress on the need and possibilities of Industrial Banks in India. It may be premature to start, straight away, an industrial bank for the Presidency of Madras because the question is not free from difficulties. But the goal that must be kept in view is the formation and starting of such banks in the future. For that purpose the way in which cash credits are placed at the disposal of industrial concerns, is bound to afford a valuable lesson. When the Board of Industries is satisfied that a particular manufacturing firm is entitled to a cash credit and therefore recommends it for the same to, say, the Imperial Bank it does no more than what the industrial department of an

Industrial Bank of Germany or Japan does. Hence the manner in which this provision is worked out will be a good guide for the future and, if successful, it is not too much to expect that some of the banks that would not give cash credits on the assurance of the Board of Industries would themselves be inclined either to open an industrial branch to their operatives or start an industrial bank itself.

There remains only one more question to be considered. The bill has been passed into law, but it may prove to be a perfectly useless one unless sufficient funds are made available. This important aspect of the matter will be all the more realised when we remember that there is a new provision found in the Act, not found in the original bill, that "no aid shall be given by the local Government to any industrial business or enterprise except in accordance with the provisions of this Act"; so that it comes to this that all the industries of Madras will have to depend entirely upon the funds made available to work out this Act. On the point on which depends the success of the whole scheme, we have nothing but the indefinite and vague assurances offered by Government. It cannot be reiterated too much that whilst the definite enunciation of the principle of State aid to industries is good as far as it goes, the industrial development of the Presidency will rest on the spirit in which industries are helped and this can only be exhibited by voting sufficient funds for the purpose and by a judicious administration of the same, holding the balance evenly as between the various industries concerned.

P. S. LOKANATHAN.

W A T E R .

Hydro-Electrics. THE exhaustion of all available coal and petroleum deposits as a danger imminent within a century or two, is a commonplace of modern science and one of the prime reasons why attention is so much concentrated now-a-days on the exploitation of water power. Hydro-electric schemes are everywhere in the air and the substitution of central electric power stations for the present wasteful individual generation of power and light in each factory, railway train, household, &c. is bound to come—perhaps sooner even than most people would think. The electrification of railways is going on apace and in certain specific cases, such as suburban traffic and mountain railways, electric traction already is found cheaper and more efficient than steam traction. For long distance travel there enters of course the question and cost of transmission; but even here transmission by wireless may solve the problem at which applied science is now busily working and thus make true Sir M. Visvesvaraya's dream (*vide* his recent utterances at the Lucknow Science Congress) of mills at Cape Comorin driven by power generated in the Himalayas. Sir Dugald Clerk, in his recently published "Water Power in the British Empire" (Constable, 3s. 6d.), computes the aggregate hydraulic power available in the British Empire alone at seventy million continuous H. P.

The Wastefulness of Fuel. THAT this is not only a stupendously large amount—but what essentially distinguishes the transformation of the flow of water on the earth's surface into power from the transformation of fuel into power, is the fact that in the former case man only manipulates, whilst in the latter he destroys, the resources placed at his disposal by nature. As long as the sun will evaporate the water of the oceans and winds will deposit these vapours at higher levels of the earth in the condensed form of water, so long will the flow of water seeking its level in the ocean provide man with a lasting reservoir of power. For it is not the water itself which is being transformed—as oil and coal is constantly being used up, without the possibility of replacing these materials; but only the energy represented by the flow of water. This living on its capital, so typical of mankind hitherto, may therefore presently give way to a more worthy form of stewardship: which change would usher in a new and far higher stage of civilization, than the present stage of greed, improvidence and indifference, when the greatest reward does not go to the man who leaves the world richer than he found it, but to the one whose selfishness can impoverish it most rapidly. This paper has often taken occasion to point out the almost incredible wastefulness displayed by capitalism in the exploitation of petroleum, coal and other minerals, but quite apart from this, it is important to realize also that all utilization of fuel must necessarily be wasteful, since it consumes what it uses, without replacing what it has consumed.

The Results of Deforestation. THE worst instance of this sort of crude savagery is no doubt furnished by the increasing deforestation of the world's surface; and curiously enough, it is a seemingly so irrelevant discipline as archæology, which more and more demonstrates the appalling folly of the destruction of forests and points to the doom of mankind, unless it will learn wisdom and turn and be saved. For archæology is almost daily unearthing for us new treasures of long vanished ages and cultures—treasures which have come down the millenia unscathed because of the dry climate of the regions where they are being discovered. But if this excessive dryness has made it impossible for the micro-organisms of decay to thrive on these therefore so perfectly preserved specimens of man's handiwork, the same dryness has also made life in these regions impossible for man himself. And since these great archæological finds of past, but highly developed civilizations of course imply that man must once have flourished, where to-day he is either altogether absent or else only maintaining a precarious nomadic existence of no cultural pretensions: the thoroughly disquieting conclusion is inevitable, that the regions in question are not merely arid, but have become arid—and that within historical times! Take Mesopotamia, the wealth of which was at one time seemingly inexhaustible; a country which made possible the great and wonderful civilizations of Babylonia, Assyria, Media, Parthia and of the Baghdad caliphate. To-day all that is gone and nothing remains but a few tribes of wandering Arabs, a few dwindling and undistinguished towns, sand, and—ruins.

Dried up Civilizations. EXACTLY the same process can be discerned in North Africa, for there in Roman times the great

provinces of Cyrene, Carthage, Numidia and Mauretania flourished, where to-day the sandy wastes of Tripolitana, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco stretch endlessly. Three hundred wealthy cities are known to have existed in the district of Carthage alone, where to-day not a single one of them remains. And this drying up process in the Mediterranean basin is of so recent date, that one is seeing it going on under one's very eyes. Sicily, once the garden of Europe, for the possession of which twelve nations in succession fought, is to-day so much subjected to spells of drought of increasing severity, that sometimes for a whole year scarcely a drop of rain will fall. Spain quite obviously is drying up too, as is Southern Italy. Nearer home, in the once world-famous kingdom of Gandhara (centring in the modern Peshawar) we have a country which to-day is quite arid and incapable of any high culture, let alone luxury, whilst only 1000 years ago it was still the centre of a great civilization, which, then pulsating with rich life, to-day is reduced to melancholy museum specimens. Persia too is visibly drying up and becoming less easily inhabitable. In classic antiquity the whole chain of deserts which now stretches from Mesopotamia across Persia, Afghanistan, Turkestan and Tibet to China proper was a highway of the world's commerce, along which Syrian factories imported their raw silk from China and exported their own manufactured luxuries.

From Marsh to Desert. ALL the countries along that highway were flourishing in those days, and the discoveries of such recent explorers in Central Asia as Sven Hedin and Aurel Stein prove that busy marts and smiling countrysides must have existed where to-day there is absence of all, not alone human life. Colonel Haig in an interesting article in the January number of *Discovery* mentions that Sir Aurel Stein could only penetrate into the Lob Nor desert at all, because he travelled in winter and thus could carry camel loads of ice! The same writer mentions the Arab proverb that "once one could walk from Mecca to Morocco in the shade." And the phenomenon we now consider is not restricted apparently to the old world, but can be studied in America as well—the empire of the Aztecs and Incas extending into what now-a-days are well-defined deserts. What then can one conclude from this association of present deserts and past civilizations, but that increasing dearth of water first stimulates man into high endeavour and great culture and finally exterminates him by the same process of progressive desiccation? Indeed all human progress seems to start from a point where there is superabundance of water—marshes and swamps, lakes and rivers—with its concomitant vegetation of jungle and sudd and its equally concomitant stage of human savagery. At this point clearly man lives by hunting and fishing, dwelling in clearings—as the ancient Germans are described to us by Tacitus as living, and as the aboriginals of the Congo and Amazonas basins still live to-day.

Nature's Equilibrium, Man's Interference. THE water-logged state may well be the original and "natural" condition of all land—a state where nature seems at a perfect equilibrium, which neither fauna nor flora can disturb. Into this stagnation let us think of man being thrown, an—at least potentially—rational being, who by his reason has the power of making nature sub-

dtuy was never really imposed for revenue purposes. It is recommended that in order to allay the general resentment and suspicion surrounding that particular tax, the slate should be cleaned. Would it not be wise, then, to leave the state clean at least until the feelings of resentment and suspicion, nearly half a century old, have had time to subside ?

IMPERIAL PREFERENCE.

In 1903 the opinion of the Government of India was asked for by the British Government, on the subject of Imperial Preference, from the standpoint of Indian interests. As in the case of the cotton duties controversy so in this case also, the views of the Government of India coincided with the Indian opinion on the subject. After an exhaustive survey of the trade of India, the Government of India came to the conclusion in 1903 that "from an economic standpoint India had something, but not perhaps very much, to offer to the Empire, that she had very little to gain in return, and that she had a great deal to lose or to risk." The Fiscal Commission have gone once again into the question in a general theoretical manner and also from a special Indian point of view and they, too, have come to the conclusion: (1) that the actual and possible gain to India from preference is small (para. 238); (2) that India cannot grant extensive preferences without serious loss to herself (para. 239). So, then, from the economic point of view, there is no reason why India should go in for the adoption of the principle of Imperial Preference. The Commission recommend "that no general system of Imperial Preference be introduced". But, considering the subject from an imperial point of view, e. g. considering that unless the export trade of the United Kingdom is maintained, the heart of the Empire will weaken; considering also that the United Kingdom maintains the British Navy which guards the communications of the Empire, the Commission "firmly believe that India should not turn her back on the principles which have been adopted in the greater part of the Empire." They agree that the decision must rest with the Legislature and that in the application of the policy "no preference given should in any way diminish the protection required by Indian industries", also that the preference given should not on balance involve any appreciable economic loss to India. To say after this "that any preferences which it may be found possible to give to the United Kingdom be granted as a free gift" looks pretty empty generosity. The whole case for giving preference to Great Britain rests on sentiment or political expediency. The Dominions that have adopted the principle gave the preference as a free gift, out of sentiment, and even at the expense of their consumers; only they took good care to protect their own manufacturers even as against those of Great Britain. So far as sentiment in India goes, the following sentence in the Report shows it clearly: "we have been impressed throughout our enquiry by the almost complete unanimity

with which Indian witnesses opposed the principle of Imperial Preference." The Minority demand in their Minute of Dissent the same footing of freedom as that enjoyed by the self-governing Dominions and so want the whole question to be decided by the non-official members of the Legislative Assembly. This kind of procedure is nothing new, and if preference to Great Britain is to be adopted in principle as a matter of political expediency, it would seem to be equally expedient to leave the decision entirely to the non-official members of the Indian Legislature by convention, if not by legislation.

As regards preference to other parts of the Empire, the Commission are in favour only of mutually advantageous agreements. The Minority are not in a mood even to consider these until the Dominions recognise the right of Indians to a status of complete equality and repeal all anti-Asiatic laws so far as they apply to the people of India, which means that the thing must wait a good long while yet. The Minority undoubtedly reflect the Indian sentiment in the matter much more correctly than do the Majority.

EXPORT DUTIES.

The Commission have rightly recommended: "That no export duties be ordinarily imposed except for purely revenue purposes, and then only at very low rates; but that when it is considered necessary to restrict the export of food grains, the restriction be effected by temporary export duties and not by prohibition." It is quite certain that the way to conserve and increase the food-supply of the country is not to impose export duties or other restrictions on the export of food-stuffs. That would merely lead to the substitution of higher-priced non-food crops for food crops having their prices artificially depressed. As an exceptional measure, exports of food may have to be restricted and then export duty would be the least objectionable method of bringing that about.

Even as a revenue measure, the experience of civilised countries is against the use of export duties; so the caution enjoined by the Report is thoroughly justified.

But by far the most important effect of the pronouncement of the Commission in this matter is that it has sounded the death-knell of that nefarious principle, lately introduced, of giving preference to Great Britain through export duties on hides and of encouraging the Indian tanning industry through them. For two years, it is well known, the export duty on hides was 15% and there was a drawback of 5% on hides exported to Great Britain. So the Indian tanner got a protection of 5% against the British tanner while the latter got a protection of 10% against the foreign tanner. That is preference, indeed, with a vengeance! One hopes that if Protection and Preference are to be adopted at all as a permanent policy, that will not be the way, in future, of applying it.

FOREIGN CAPITAL.

'Among the subsidiary recommendations of

the Commission is the following one of vital importance: "That no obstacles be raised to the free inflow of foreign capital, but that Government monopolies or concessions be granted only to companies incorporated and registered in India with rupee capital, such companies to have a reasonable proportion of Indian Directors, and to afford facilities for training Indian apprentices." The Minority tell us in their Minute of Dissent that it was against the consensus of Indian opinion as reflected by witnesses, that this recommendation in favour of foreign capital was made. A tariff wall is the surest invitation to foreign capital to come and start industrial enterprises inside it. Hence the conditions on which the entry of foreign capital should be allowed ought to be very carefully scrutinised. One wonders whether incorporation and registration in India, rupee capital, 'reasonable' proportion of Indian Directors on the Board and 'reasonable' facilities for the training of Indian apprentices are sufficient and sufficiently definite conditions. But whatever the conditions decided upon, they ought to apply to all the industrial enterprises starting operations in India henceforward and not merely to those to whom Government monopolies or concessions are granted. Otherwise the competition of enterprises started and run by foreigners inside the tariff wall will be much more difficult to face than that of enterprises in foreign countries; and the remedy of protective tariffs will prove worse than the disease.

CONCLUSION.

Protective tariffs are at best an inadequate and uncouth method of encouraging the industrial modernisation of a country. The Majority of the Fiscal Commission seem to hold that view, though they do not say so. Only they are not very enthusiastic about other more direct and more effective methods either. Nor do the Minority lay much stress on these latter; but they have declared their belief in Protective Tariffs in no uncertain manner. In fact, that is the main difference between the Majority and Minority recommendations. The former are of a halting character, otherwise called expedient or diplomatic; the latter are direct and logical and hence open to the charge of being uncompromising. Attempts have been made to show that there is really no substantial difference between the views of the Majority and Minority. That is quite untrue. The Minute of Dissent in the Fiscal Commission's Report serves the same important function of supplying the necessary corrective to the Report proper that the Dissenting Minute of Mr. Justice (now Sir) Abdur Rahim and the dissenting notes of Sir. M. B. Chaulal did in the Public Services Commission's Report, that the Dissenting Minute of Pandit Malaviya did in the Industrial Commission's Report and the Dissenting Minute of Mr. Dadiba Dalal did in the Babington Smith Committee's Report.

R. M. J.

(Concluded.)

THE MADRAS STATE AID TO INDUSTRIES ACT.

THERE can be no doubt that it must be the normal function of the State actively to assist in the establishment and development of industries in India. That this duty of the State to aid industries has come to be recognised—though rather late—may clearly be seen from the action taken in many of our provinces to render aid to the industries. The U. P. Government, which appointed a committee to enquire and report upon the advisability of starting an Industrial Bank for the province and which found that at the present stage of industrial development it would be premature to establish one of its kind, have finally decided to establish a Board of Industrial Loan Commissioners which will have the power of considering all applications from industrialists in need of funds and of recommending them to the Government. A sum of five lakhs of rupees with a promise to have it increased next year has been made available for the purpose. In the Punjab, too, similar action has been taken. In Madras an attempt has been made to take action on somewhat more comprehensive lines by the passing of an Act called the Madras State Aid to Industries Act. The chief provisions of the Act, especially those with which we need concern ourselves, are easily told. The industries to which State aid is to be given must be those that have an important bearing on the economic development of the country and must be (a) new or nascent industries, (b) industries to be newly introduced into areas where such industries are undeveloped, and (c) cottage industries. Whilst it is probably not easy to alter the wording of the clause relating to the nature of the industries to be aided, the Board that is constituted under the Act to deal with applications for aid must be careful to interpret it neither too mechanically nor too broadly. It is not often an easy matter to decide what are new and nascent industries. Brand new industries are not easy of creation at once and if they are it is doubtful if they will be quite successful. Hence a liberal interpretation must be given to this. On the other hand, "areas" is too vague. What is to be the amount of distance between one area and another that will justify the aiding of the industry by the State? The Board must therefore be largely guided in its actions by the special circumstances of each case.

The Bill as published originally was modified in one important respect by the Select Committee. It was the establishment of the principle that State aid would be given only to those of the joint stock companies that were registered in India on a rupee capital and had on their Board of Management a few *Indians*. Steps have also been taken under the Act to ensure that apprentices will be trained by those industries that seek governmental assistance. Even with such safeguards, however it is doubtful if Indians will be able to get trained in large numbers, for the number of big

servient to his purposes. The more his reason develops, the more man interferes in the existing order of things and thereby upsets the existing equilibrium. Man makes clearings, *i. e.* destroys one kind of vegetation, and artificially provides instead a forcing ground for another flora, cereals, vegetables and fruit-trees. As his clearings grow in size, he can exterminate one fauna, that of the wild animals of prey, and substitute for it another one, that of his domesticated animals and their hangers on. In an ever accelerated tempo each change results in further, more and more profound changes. The land becomes drained, marshes disappear, rivers are cleared of obstacles and provide lines of communication. But as the land gets drier, less rain falls; as less rain falls, the vegetation grows less dense; as vegetation is thinning, man can multiply and more easily spread; as man grows in numbers and skill, all vegetation and all animals, that appear to him of no immediate use, are the more rapidly destroyed. It is distinctly curious that the presence of moisture should attract moisture; but it is an established fact, as can be easily proved in a place like Malay, for instance, where a tropical water-logged country has within a few decades been transformed into a drained and markedly deforested one. In such districts the annual rainfall has dropped—probably it is not too much to say by half, *i. e.* from 150-200 inches to 75-100 inches.

From Opportunity to Necessity. THERE can be no doubt that the reduction of an original super-abundance of water to a manageable size gives man a great scope for sharpening his wits, enlarging his knowledge and engaging on creative work. The pastoral and agricultural civilization, which a steady and somewhat moderate rainfall makes possible, is as far above that of mere hunter, as the life lived by men of the type of the present Russian peasant is above that of the Andaman Islands. But—apart from modern Western civilization—that stage of agricultural fertility resulting from an adequate rainfall does not mark the highest cultural development. As we tried to show above, all ancient civilizations seem to have been bound up with such a serious further reduction in the rainfall, as to make the husbanding of all available water and its utilization by way of irrigation a necessity. Thus man had to develop new capacities if he was to live, and this new necessity resulted in the construction of tanks, canals, wells, dams and aqueducts and thus first drove man to engage in engineering works. Apparently, however, in all these previous highest stages of civilization, further continuing desiccation has not led to any higher stage of culture being evolved. Apparently man has hitherto always preferred to follow the line of least resistance and has gradually migrated from such districts, the growing aridity of which made life too uncertain, to surrounding ones, still better favoured in regard to water conditions. Here in India the process is of course going on under our very eyes. The rapid desiccation of the Central Asiatic plateaux quite obviously accounts for the succeeding waves of invaders who have been attracted to the well-watered lands further south—Aryan, Scyth, Hun thus coming to India and being pressed further and further into the very apex of the peninsula.

From Exploitation to Stewardship. THAT this process has within a thousand years led to the transformation of this great sub-continent from a forest-haunt of what we

now-a-days call "hill tribes" to the home of one of the most highly cultured people, admits of no doubt. Even to-day we see increasing scarcity of water in say, the Ahmednagar district, followed by a migration of its famine-stricken inhabitants into Poona, Bombay, &c. But if the whole of this sub-Continent is getting drier every year—what will happen to its 32 crores of inhabitants? Will they be able to find a refuge in Central Africa, in South America? Or will they just die off, as the millions of Russian peasants died last year—will aggravated famines carry off a larger and ever larger proportion of its people, until district after district, province after province becomes a graveyard of buried cities and vanished villages? Or else will the very fact of the universality of the problem, which is no longer merely Indian or Mediterranean or Central American, but world-wide: will it, we say, by making an easy way of escape by way of migration impossible, force the human brain to devise a new solution, involving as much higher a civilization over that which has come down to us, as the latter is over that of our ancestral forest-folk? We began our considerations by rejoicing at the vast new powers made humanly available to-day by modern engineering; we felt even greater satisfaction that the old system of heedlessly destroying our capital resources of coal and petroleum should be about to be succeeded by a new outlook bent on the conversion of what nature so bountifully, but not inexhaustibly, places at our disposal, of which surely by far the most important is water. Can it be that out of our latter-day tribulations, and the colossal selfishness of our civilization of limitless exploitations, there will emerge the New Age when man will but deem himself the steward of God?

H. C. E. ZACHARIAS.

A LETTER FROM LONDON.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

LONDON, JANUARY 4

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

THE calendar has changed this week, recording a new year's advent. "This scribe," accordingly, takes the occasion to wish his readers a very happy and prosperous New Year. It is no empty wish, for we all need it. Mankind has, for the last eight years, suffered terribly and is still suffering. It is to be presumed, from the fact that this is so, that mankind has brought upon itself and deserved its suffering. But one has the hope—and surely our guardian angels are not less merciful than ourselves—that the time of tribulation and purgation is almost at an end. At any rate we are entitled to hope for the best, seeing that things could scarce get worse or even remain as they are, without ultimate disaster. It is at times like this that we should take stock of ourselves and our aspirations and see whether we are in very truth faring forth upon that voyage of discovery that leads to the land of International Brotherhood and Human Understanding that is the goal of our lives, according to all fundamental religious and philosophical teaching. Are we realising in a greater degree than heretofore the existence of Universal Brotherhood? If so, we have no reason to fear the future. But if not, there is too little

time to change course, if we would avoid shipwreck. There are not wanting signs that men and women are beginning to recognise this fact. *O si sic omnes!*

ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE SERVICES.

The *Times* to-day makes the demi-official announcement that Lord Peel has decided to recommend that the whole question of the position, prospects, and grievances of the Indian Public Services be examined by a Royal Commission. The details are, it is stated, now under discussion between Whitehall and the Government of India, and an official announcement may be expected at an early date. It is recognised, says the paper, that from the point of view not only of continued recruitment of young Englishmen of the right stamp, but also of mere justice, the undoubted grievances of the Services must be met by prompt inquiry and amelioration. For this reason every possible step will be taken to expedite the work of the Commission. The statement adds that it is not improbable that, pending the completion of the inquiry and action thereon, provisional measures will be taken to mitigate some of the more obvious grievances, such as the almost prohibitive cost of the passages to and from India.

It is also announced to-day that the Secretary of State has, after an interval of about three years, decided to resume the sale of drafts on India, the first offer to be made of fifty lakhs of rupees in Council Bills and telegraphic transfers by competitive tender on Tuesday next. Subsequent sales and the amounts to be offered will depend upon conditions of exchange. The resumption of the sale of these drafts has, it is stated, been decided upon in order to strengthen the Secretary of State's sterling resources against his requirements in the coming financial year. During the period of suspense he has been able to cover his sterling requirements out of loans and the recovery from the Imperial Government of large advances made in respect of expenditure in Mesopotamia, &c., but these advances have now fallen to very small figures, hence the need for the resumption of Council draft sales. Owing to the fact that this is the busy season for Indian trade, it is not expected that these sales will have more than a minimum effect upon the exchange. The warning is given that it should be clearly understood that the sale of these drafts does not involve any question of exchange policy, nor does it foreshadow any modification of the Government's scheme announced three years ago. Conditions, it is said, are still too abnormal to permit of a definite and wise decision on exchange and currency policy in India.

INDIAN CONGRESSES.

We have had lengthy telegrams telling us of the happenings at both the Gaya Congress and the Nagpur Conference. Singularly enough, nothing has reached here direct from either of those places. Press correspondents in Calcutta, Allahabad and Simla appear to think that they know all about

what has been happening elsewhere without any personal knowledge of events. I think that I will describe the next General Election in this country on the basis of telegraphic reports received by me in the south of France or Egypt. If less accurate, it will be certainly more pleasant. The Allahabad correspondent of the *Times* thinks that his pontifical utterances are all that is necessary to explain great events to the uninitiated in England. Mr. Sastri's address was disappointing, for it shows that Liberals are not facing realities, so he says. The Simla scribe is no happier. When will these good gentlemen realise that to differ from their point of view does not necessarily mean that one has taken leave of his sanity? As to the Congress decisions, that to abstain from all connexion with the Councils will be taken philosophically, since it is recognised that much will happen before the next elections are due, and people here are not likely to enthuse at the prospect—however unreal it may be—of Mr. Das and his henchmen entering the Councils with the object of destroying the Reforms from within. It is altogether another matter when the Congress announces its decision not to recognise any financial commitments of the existing Legislatures in the future. That will be roundly denounced as simple Bolshevism and if the Congress people wish to lose all public sympathy here, including that of the Labour Party, they could not more effectively secure their object. No party here can possibly approve of repudiation of public obligations, and the decision will operate in many ways to the detriment of India.

MR. MONTAGU ON THE SERVICES.

One of these is in connection with the proposals made by all parties in India for the more rapid Indianisation of the public services. On Monday, the *Times* signalled its change of editorial control—Mr. Geoffrey Robinson replaces Mr. Wickham Steed—by restoring Mr. Montagu to a place of honour in its pages. Hitherto the anti-Semitism of the editor-in-chief had been a very powerful factor in relegating Mr. Montagu to a position of obscurity. He is now, however, permitted to publish a couple of remarkable articles on the question of the Indian public services and their recruitment, as well as the political implications of the Reform Scheme embodied in the Act of 1919. I do not propose to quote from these articles, for they are susceptible of copious quotations and they will doubtless be reproduced in full in the whole Indian press. The *Times*, whilst forecasting the imminence of the appointment of a Royal Commission to investigate the whole subject, remarks that something more than the rather vague assurances of an ex-Secretary of State are required to enable the members of the Indian public services to feel a sense of security or to attract the right type of Britisher with the object of giving adequate effect to the reforms. The decision of the Congress to repudiate future liabilities contracted by the Legislatures is seized upon by Sir Michael Fenton to support the thesis of the

Times in this respect, and doubtless the Sydenham-O'Dwyer-Hewett group here will make the utmost use of the munitions of war so generously supplied by the Congress majority. A few elementary lessons in propaganda would apparently not come amiss in Congress circles.

MISCELLANEA.

SIR T. B. SAPRU'S VIEWS.

INTERVIEWED by the Associated Press, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru expressed his views as follows on the current political questions:—

The first topic of discussion was the reforms. Dr. Sapru said: I think we should make a serious attempt at understanding the value of the present constitution, and more than its potentialities it seems to me that it must be realised by the people and also by the Government that the centre of political responsibility has in point of fact, though not in law, been shifted from Whitehall to Simla and Delhi. The framers of the present constitution appear to me to have thought that it was desirable to have a strong Central Government, and while I do sympathise with that idea and honestly believe that a strong Central Government is a most important factor in Indian unity and progress, I also think that what is needed more than anything else is a greater measure of independence for the Government of India. The amount of control that is exercised by the Secretary of State over the Central Government is enormous. It is a real living control exercised from day to day, and the basis for that is that the Government of India and the Secretary of State are responsible for the good government of this country to Parliament. The position of the Government of India under the present constitution must continue to be one of extreme difficulty. It has got to satisfy an Assembly with a solid non-official majority, it has also to satisfy the rising aspirations of the country, and at the same time it must take its order from the Secretary of State. The present position instead of making the Government of India strong tends to make it distinctly weak, and as regards the responsibility to Parliament the average Member of Parliament, and for the matter of that the average British voter, knows little about India and cares to know less. It is the "dile-hard" member of Parliament who is interesting in India or administrators whose Indian experience is wholly out of date and who are unable to visualise the day-to-day changes in Indian sentiment and Indian situation. It is for this reason that I am an advocate of greater freedom for the Government of India from the control of the Secretary of State, and greater responsibility of Government in this country to the Indian Legislature.

WEAKNESS OF THE PRESENT CONSTITUTION.

Asked to state his view of future advance, Dr. Sapru said: I am persuaded that the present constitution cannot endure for very long, and the question to my mind is how best to curtail the period of probation which is prescribed by the statute. Frankly I do not expect much advance in the near future. At the same time I see absolutely no reason why those who believe in constitutional progress should not put their heads together and work for it. From what I have seen of the Legislative Assembly I can say that it has given a very good account of itself. It is easy enough to criticise it, but it seems to me that neither Government nor the people had any right to expect that it would perform miracles within two years of its existence. I do not, however, base any claim for further advance on the experience gained by the Assembly. To my mind the strongest argument in favour of it is the inherent weakness of the present constitution.

Here Dr. Sapru paused. Being questioned as to whether he could indicate a definite direction for advance, he resumed: It is impossible for me to be dogmatic about the line of advance. But I feel sure that it would be a great mistake to demand, and a great mistake to give, anything like diarchy in the Central Government. The machinery of the Central

Government is so huge and its parts so closely connected with one another that I am afraid an arbitrary division into reserved and transferred departments would throw it out of gear. Besides it would sensibly affect the position of Indian members of Government. I think the question of constitutional advance requires to be carefully thought out and worked out by a body of constitutional lawyers and experienced statesmen, both Indian and British. The problem, though difficult, is not insoluble.

INDIANISATION OF SERVICES.

The interview then turned on the subject as to whether the August announcement promising increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration was being given effect to both in its letter and spirit. Invited to express his view on this aspect of advance, Dr. Sapru said: I am a firm believer in a more rapid process of Indianisation. It does not mean that we shall dispense with the European element in the Service which exists at present. The question is essentially one of future recruitment, and I think the time has come when the Government in India and in England should make up their mind about the minimum of British element which they require in the Imperial Services in future. As regards the Indian element, I am distinctly of opinion that all recruitment of Indians in the Imperial Services should take place in India with an Indian scale of salaries and that proper facilities should be brought into existence for the training in India itself of Indians in the higher branches of administration.

As the conversation proceeded on the subject of the services, Dr. Sapru was asked as to what view he held on the question of the grievances of the services and the reported appointment of a Royal Commission. He answered: I know nothing as to what has actually been decided by His Majesty's Government, but I am afraid a Royal Commission instead of solving the matter will still further complicate it and distinctly weaken the position of the Government of India. I don't see a reason why, if there are any legitimate grievances of the Imperial Services, they should not be sifted and remedies suggested for them by a committee appointed by the Government of India itself. A Royal Commission appointed by the Secretary of State will, I am afraid, evoke much resentment in this country, and although I do not profess to represent the service point of view yet at the same time I think the Services themselves will not gain much by it and may substantially lose by creating a strong opposition in India.

THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION.

Sir Tej Bahadur again paused and resumed with greater emphasis than hitherto: To my mind the question of the Indianisation of the commissioned ranks of the Army is even more important than any question of immediate constitutional advance. Without an efficient Indian Army officered by our own nationals self-government for India must be a very unreal and shadowy thing. It is for this reason that I have always laid the greatest possible stress upon the subject of the Indianisation of the Army being tackled by the Government of India seriously. I realise that we cannot Indianise the Army as quickly as some people could wish. At the same time it cannot be postponed indefinitely or for a very long time. If I were a non-official member of the Assembly I would concentrate all efforts in bringing pressure to bear upon the Government to bring into existence a proper machinery for the training of Indian officers in this country and if it involved any heavy expenditure I would willingly submit to it. The real thing is that not only must a scheme be presented without loss of time, but means should be found for giving effect to it seriously and honestly. The country is entitled to know from the Government what the programme of Indianisation of the Army is and above all it must have a definite idea as to the period in which that programme is to be fulfilled.

OUTLOOK MORE HOPEFUL.

The conversation then drifted to the consideration of the present political situation in the country. Dr. Sapru declared: In spite of the fact that there is much in the situation to cause anxiety both to Government and to the people. I think

the outlook is distinctly more hopeful than it was some time ago. Barring of course some high Tories, I do not think that among people of this country there is any difference as to the goal or as to the desire to achieve that goal speedily. The difference is one of methods. I do not most certainly believe either in the principle of direct action or in its expediency. But it seems to me that public opinion must assert itself most unmistakably in favour of the fulfilment of the pledges of His Majesty's Government at an early date. The present constitution has not materially changed the situation that a reasonable amount of pressure with a clear indication that it is not our object to go out of the British Commonwealth but to remain a member of it on terms of equality, with no desire to shirk our responsibilities and obligations as a member of that Commonwealth, should secure for us dominion status or something very near it within a reasonable distance of time. I say something very near it because I feel that the ultimate attainment of dominion status depends upon our capability for self-defence and that may take some time.

Before concluding the interview, Dr. Sapru's attention was drawn to the position taken up by the Congress at Gaya and he was asked whether he had any word to say on the Council controversy. Dr. Sapru said: I would like everybody to do his utmost to make the next election a reality. I thoroughly approve of Indians of different schools of politics coming into the Councils. When they have come into the Councils they will probably realise that further progress depends on working the reforms and not wrecking them.

"But do you believe that non-co-operators can wreck the Councils even if they choose to?" asked the interviewer. "As for the claim that they can wreck them," replied Dr. Sapru. "I am afraid they cannot possibly wreck them. To my mind the Government of India Act and rules and regulations thereunder amply provide for any such contingency. A mere policy of obstruction or wrecking, far from making the position of Government more difficult than it is already, will substantially strengthen it."

TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

A Railway Station in Poona. AN influentially signed petition is being submitted to Government protesting against the rumoured idea to abandon the construction of what has locally come to be known as the Bhamburda flag station in Poona. Those who are familiar with local conditions know only too well that the absence of such a railway station is already hampering suburban development on the Bhamburda side and causing considerable inconvenience to people residing in Kasba Peth and on the river bank. It was to help the first and remove the second that the construction in question has been so strongly urged. The local municipality undertook to bear a portion of the expense of building the Shaik Salla bridge on the clear understanding that there would be a railway station in its vicinity. To come out now with a proposal, after the bridge is nearly completed, to give up the station is extremely unfair. The present station moreover is known to be serving not too well the needs of residents of the far-off Narayan Peth and Amrai Camp. We hope therefore that the Government will stick to the original idea and push on the construction of the Bhamburda flag station, as much as possible.

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