

# THE Servant of India

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## TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

The rejection of the Finance Bill by the Nationalist party in the Assembly was not the logical fruition of an obstructive policy, though it has been so represented by the Swarajist press, as the rejection of the Central Provinces budget was, for instance. Obstruction is advocated, no doubt, by the Swarajist members of the Nationalist party, as typified by Mr. V. J. Patel, but it is not the attitude of the Independents whose votes have been the deciding factor in the Assembly. It was by their vote, and even then by the very narrow majority of three, that the Finance Bill was thrown out the other day. That the rejection was not due to obstruction is made clear by the part taken by the Independents in the discussions of individual grants, the amendments they had proposed, and the part they took in the subsequent proceedings—in all which respects their action is in striking contrast with the action of the Swarajists in the C. P. Council. Why then did the Independents vote as they did? Call it accident, or stress of circumstances, if you like, but it was not due to obstruction. The fact is, as our Parliamentary correspondent has explained, the pressure of the Swarajists in the Nationalist party became almost unbearable to the Independents and they were about to resign their membership of the party over differences on the budget itself, when it was represented to them that by doing so they would be giving a fresh and humiliating demonstration of the Indians' lack of unity, which has been their greatest drawback, and enabling their enemies to point out triumphantly that even the members of the Assembly could not keep together as a

party for even so short a period as a single session. Rather than thus lower the Indian name in the eyes of the world, let them preserve their unity by throwing out the Finance Bill itself. For that step was not going to do so much harm. There was anyhow going to be certification of the four items that were refused on the first day of the demands. That certification might well be extended to the whole Bill, without great loss to the country. It was in any case the less of the two evils. The argument appealed to the Independents concerned, and we for our part cannot altogether blame them, though we recognise that the result is embarrassing to a certain extent to the Labour Government which is sincerely well disposed towards Indian aspirations.

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An Important Mistake.

That there is ground for hoping that this action of the Assembly will not be misunderstood by the Labour Government when all the facts get known in England, is shown by the leading article (reproduced elsewhere) which appeared on the 29th of February last in the *New Leader*, the official organ of the Independent Labour Party of which Mr. Ramsay MacDonald is the head. That article was of course addressed to the British public and written before the Finance Bill was rejected. But it is significant that it counsels patience and sympathy with the Nationalist demand for a round table conference which is to suggest the next step in constitutional advance. It emphasises that Lord Olivier's statement, despite caution, has on the whole been sympathetic to India and that the door is kept open for a conference, whether it be called in so many words a round table conference or not. That this is the fact, is now placed beyond all doubt by the statement made in the Council of State on Monday last by Sir Mahomed Shafi. He said that the statement of the Under Secretary of State in the House of Commons, that the Government did not contemplate a revision, of the Government of India Act before 1929, was made under a misapprehension of the question to which his statement was a reply. What he meant to say was that the abolition, not the revision of the Act was not in contemplation. The present position therefore is that an early revision of the Act is possible. What an amount of bad feeling and trouble in the Assembly could have been avoided if this mistake had not been made by Prof. Richards! Not to waste regrets over the past, however,

the position that is now made clear leaves no ground for the continuance of the Swarajists' policy of obstruction. They should suitably respond to the friendly attitude of the Labour Government, meet the latter half way in any proposals that may be made for consulting Indian opinion regarding the revision of the Act and above all abstain from doing anything that would weaken their hands against reactionary forces in England or here. The danger ahead is that a mistaken idea of their strength may make the Swarajists blind to opportunity. We fervently hope they will preserve their vision.

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A resolution of the C. P. Government sets forth the consequences of the obstruction policy followed by the Swarajists in the council. If the Governor had accepted the vote of the Council and not exercised extraordinary powers provided in the Act for emergencies, the whole of the Provincial and subordinate service as well as the ministerial and menial staff would have had to be dismissed and the Government would have ceased to function. That course though advised in some quarters has not been followed, and the "foreign" Government has shown greater responsibility for the welfare of the country than the Swarajist patriots. In the alternative the Transferred subjects have been resumed, the Ministers dispensed with and only such expenditure has been provided for as is considered absolutely necessary for keeping things going or on account of former commitments. That is to say, all new schemes for development have had to be postponed until the present Council changes its policy or a more reasonable one is elected. Berar suffers in particular, for in the budget provision had been made for expenditure on "new roads and bridges, educational buildings, improvements of water supply including boring operations, district health officers scheme, improvements of hospitals, appointment of an Industrial Chemist, experiments for improvement of sugarcane and so forth." These things are of course too trivial for the Swarajist politicians, but we hope the elector will make them understand that he takes a different view.

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It will be recalled that for nearly two months last year the Indian traders of Tanganyika Territory closed their shops in protest against the Profits Tax and Trades Licensing Ordinances, calculated to subject Indians to serious hardships. These Ordinances were distasteful to the Europeans also, but the latter objected to the taxes themselves, while the opposition of the Indian community was aroused mainly by the obligation which Ordinance No. 10 of 1923 imposed upon every person holding a trading license to keep books of accounts either in English or in Swahili in English characters. Indian traders, particularly small ones who perform a most useful function in providing

necessaries to the natives, found it difficult to discharge this obligation. All of them could not engage English-knowing accountants, but they pleaded that the Government itself could easily engage Gujarati-knowing auditors to examine the accounts of the Indian traders. This demand was eminently reasonable seeing that 95% of the mercantile community in Tanganyika is composed of Indians. But the Government remained adamant, with the result that it had upon its hands a big, protracted strike which involved Europeans as well as natives in much distress. The plea of the Government was that as all annual profits below 2,000 shillings were exempt from the profits tax, all small traders will automatically be free from the duty of keeping account books in English or Swahili, and there is no reason, the Government argued, why the bigger merchants should not employ English-knowing persons to fulfil this obligation. This reasoning is, however, more plausible than sound, for although traders who make a less profit than 2,000 shillings a year are not assessable to the profits tax, they are not exempted on that account from keeping their books in English or in Swahili (in English characters), for it is only when a man's account books are examined that it can be ascertained what profit he has earned. Under this arrangement therefore there is no guarantee that really small traders will not be called upon to produce their books in English or in Swahili (in English characters).

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THE Ordinances in question have now undergone a change, extending the limit of profits on which the profits tax will be collected from 2,000 to 3,000 shillings, and making it plain that the language requirement will not apply in the case of any business the profits of which do not exceed 3,000 shillings. This does not, however, obviate the real difficulty, for the simple reason that a man's profits will be known to be less than 3,000 shgs. only after his accounts are checked. But in regard to the language obligation, an amendment has now been introduced, which permits account books to be kept in French as well as in English or Swahili, which makes the matter still worse for Government. It might perhaps have been argued before that all traders must keep their account books either in the language of the country or in that of the rulers, but when it allows French to be employed in writing books merely for the sake of the two or three Belgian firms that are there in Tanganyika, it becomes altogether inexcusable for the Government to make a similar concession to Gujarati which after all is the language in which from 3,000 to 3,500 shopkeepers keep their account books. Tanganyika is administered under a League of Nations' mandate which imposes a drastic veto upon any racial discrimination in the administration. Not only so, but India, not a whit less than Belgium, is a member of the League: how then justify this discrimination made between Belgian and Indian firms? Clearly this is a scandal which must be immediately done away with. In Malaya, Chinese traders are allowed to keep their account books in Chinese and Tamilians in Tamil; then why not Gujarati merchants in Gujarati in Tanganyika? The Tanganyika Government can certainly employ Gujarati-knowing examiners of accounts, as the Malaya Government employs Chinese and Tamil-knowing ones.

The C.P. folly and its consequences.

Ban on Gujarati.

The Tanganyika Profits Tax again.

**THE AGE OF CONSENT.**

WE hope we need not apologize for reverting yet once more to this subject. For not only is it of intrinsic importance and far-reaching influence in the direction of true nation-building; but the manner in which, necessarily, a measure is taken through the Legislature, does also not lend itself to impress on the casual reader the sequence and connected order of the process. We therefore believe, now that the official report of the Assembly debates has been published, that an account of what actually has happened and of where we stand at present, will not come amiss.

As we have explained before, the whole question arose out of a ratification in 1922 of a League of Nations Convention for the suppression of traffic in women and children. Mr. N. M. Joshi at the time took the opportunity, when the age of consent for the purpose of international immoral traffic was considered, of moving an amendment for the similar raising of the age of consent to illicit sexual intercourse within India. After a year's delay, the matter was brought to a head last year (March 1923), when both Legislatures passed an Act (No. 20 of 1923) which added a section, §366 A, to the Indian Penal Code, designed to make the procuring of women below the age of 18 a criminal offence, punishable with a maximum penalty of ten years' imprisonment. This measure was a great step forward, since commercialized vice, it is now agreed, can only be usefully attacked by a flank movement on all those third parties who make money out of the vice of others. But the Government, which had opposed the whole of this piece of legislation and was defeated in the Assembly, managed to get a commencement clause through the Council of State—thereby enabling it to hang up indefinitely the coming into force of this Act 20.

The reason given for this unusual procedure was that the Government felt, they could not add this §366 A to the law of the land, when cognate sections, to wit §§361, 372 and 373, retained an age of consent of 16 years only, and they therefore desired to consult once more Provincial Governments and public bodies generally, whether they agreed to the desirability of raising the age in all sections to 18. The manner in which they endeavoured to do this we commented upon in our issue of June 14th, 1923: suffice it now to state, that, in the words of Sir Malcolm Hailey—the great protagonist of *festina lente*—"convinced public opinion warrants our now proposing to apply one uniform age, the age of 18 years, to all four offences." So once more Sir Malcolm was proved to have been behind Indian public opinion. But let that pass. The point of importance is that hitherto nothing had been said or proposed in regard to the age of consent to licit sexual intercourse, i. e. marriage. The only question at issue was that of illicit sexual intercourse and it may perhaps be useful to tabulate the whole law on the subject, as it then stood,

as follows:

Section of I. Penal Code.	Offence.		Age of Consent.	Maximum Penalty.
	Description.	Object.		
361	Kidnapping ("taking or enticing out of lawful guardianship")	undefined.	16	7 years' imprisonment
366	Kidnapping or abducting ("by force compelling or by any deceitful means inducing").	to marry against her will or to illicit intercourse.	nil	10 "
366 A	By any means whatsoever inducing	to illicit intercourse with another person.	18	10 "
372 & 373	Selling, buying, letting, hiring or else disposing or obtaining possession of.	for the purpose of prostitution.	16	10 "
375	Rape.	Gratification of the offender's own passion.	18	Transportation for life.

Now § 375, as will be seen, never entered into any of these discussions at all: and § 375 is the only section which deals with married life. It is necessary to stress this point, since Dr. Gour has since introduced a private Bill designed to raise the age of consummating marriage, which still stands at 12 years. This is apt somewhat to confuse the present issue, which simply was to protect all girls under 18 years against being taken, or enticed, or abducted or otherwise induced, sold, bought, let or hired for the purpose of illicit intercourse. (§ 366 which deals also with compulsion to marriage of abducted person, was not specifically included.)

On February 1st, then, the Home Member introduced "a Bill further to amend the Indian Penal Code for certain purposes", which on February 4th was taken into consideration. This Bill really consisted only of the sentence: "In § §361, 372 and 373 of the I. P. C., for the word 'sixteen' the word 'eighteen' shall be substituted." Mr. Abdul Hays thereupon took the line of "religion in danger." Though the present Bill was merely a consequential amendment due to the passing of Act 20 of 1923, it would take the Code still further away from Muhammadan law, which made a girl *sui juris* the moment she reached puberty (!)—and therefore he tried to hang up the Bill by asking it to be circulated for opinion. Mr. Jinnah seconded this effort, but stressed more the general question of "kidnapping" for an innocent purpose. Anyhow Mr. Hays's amendment was negatived, and the Home Member instead agreed to refer the Bill to a Select Committee of the House. In the course of the debate Mr. R. K. Shanmukhan Chetty and Mr. B. C. Pal lamented the fact that §361 had been included in the Bill, since, in their opinion, the Bill, if merely including §§ 372 and 373, would have been certain of passing, as it deserved to

pass. Mr. Rangachariar's amendment to refer the Bill to a Select Committee was then adopted and on February 18th the Home Member proposed its personnel.

The Select Committee presented two reports—a majority of nine deleting "§ 361", a minority of three keeping "§ 361" in the Bill before them. But even the majority report admits that their decision, "by not making the offender punishable under section 363, will not provide protection for girls of 16 years of age and upwards from the nefarious class of persons known as *bardafarosh* who carry on, more especially in Northern India, a regular traffic in girls who are induced, otherwise than by means which would amount to abduction, to consent to marriage in proper legal form." ("Abduction" is defined in the I. P. C. as "by force compelling or by any deceitful means inducing a person to go from a place.") As a consequence, they are driven to advocate the insertion of an altogether new section.

The debate on this report took place on February 27th. Mr. Abdul Haye, it is true, once more spoke for "the provisions of my personal law which is as dear to me as my own life" and made himself ridiculous by threatening to kidnap and marry a girl of between 15 and 18, at once or sooner. But nobody else took up this line. Religion was dragged in, is it true, by a sidewind—Mr. Rangachariar introduced it as an instance of a "lawful purpose" for which a missionary might take away a would-be convert from lawful guardianship—and thereafter this illustration was used again and again. But the main argument was that §361 dealt with all taking (and enticing) out of lawful guardianship, including such, as was innocent and even laudable; as for instance, the protection of a minor against ill-treatment by her own guardians. Mr. Jinnah displayed all his legal acumen in trying to convince the Assembly; Sir Malcolm Hailey treated it to a long exposition of the law; but surely Mr. Jamnadas Mehta pricked the whole of this formidable business by saying that, "if the law thinks that honourable intentions are a sufficient answer, then abolish §361 altogether". Dr. Gour similarly later on rightly complained about the arguments adduced, viz. that they were not arguments against his amendment, but against the existing law of kidnapping.

The real kernel of the case is, whether helping a minor to leave his or her lawful guardianship (technically called "kidnapping") is an offence or not. The present law says it is and nobody in his senses really wishes to abolish this law. The point at issue is the definition of "minority," i. e. when the helping third party may plead, "He or she came of her own accord." Now what it really came to was that most of the speakers tried to make out that if the purpose of the taking was innocent, the plea was legitimate, but if it was evil, the plea would be inadmissible. When the whole point is just, whether a person

below a certain age is able to gauge the difference between an innocent and an evil purpose and the full consequences of either. This unfortunately was not clearly brought out. Mr. Joshi spoke before the advocates of the majority had opened the floodgates of their eloquence, and therefore could not anticipate the confusion of issue then indulged in. He briefly and to the point dismissed the religious plea ("I cannot persuade myself to believe that any religion can be strengthened by kidnapping"); and the plea of rescue from ill-treatment by the retort that a law should be provided for that purpose—as indeed it exists already—as Dr. Gour interspersed. All Mr. Joshi and his friends were out for was, as he put it, to "save the freedom of a girl between 16 and 18" by curtailing it, until she "understands how far she wants her freedom to be curtailed." The real question of course is not at all, whether a guardian should have unlimited power over his ward, but whether the determination of guardianship should, between the ages of 16 and 18, be reserved to the State, or should be left to private enterprise. This was the real issue, and it is melancholy to reflect, how little our legislatures considered it.

In the end the inclusion of §361 was negatived by 61 votes to 16, with the result that the age of consent is raised to 18 only in §§372 and 373 (selling, hiring &c. for prostitution). Now what is the consequence of this? The offence of *bardafaroshi*, 'an offence admittedly rampant and causing enormous harm' (we are quoting Sir Malcolm Hailey), is left untouched, until a new Bill to meet it is introduced—a Bill, the drafting of which, we are already told, will be very difficult—in order that it may "apply only to that offence without penalizing innocent transactions". Now all this delay and all this difficulty would not have existed, if the law had been amended, as originally intended by making punishable any private effort to determine guardianship before the age of 18. For of course the *bardafaroshi* traffic, as all such traffic for the gratification of the sexual appetite (whether licit or illicit), depends on the youth of the girl victim: hence the higher the age limit, the less the possibility for such traffic to be a "paying proposition."

Not only so; another, at least quite as serious, evil has also escaped through this unfortunate Assembly vote. The evil we mean is that of "cases, well known" (we quote Dr. Gour), "where *fakirs* and *bairagis* decoy young lads of 14 to 16 and afterwards train them to purposes which I need not describe in detail". For, as §361 stands, the age of minority for leaving lawful guardianship is, in the case of boys, not 16, as in the case of girls, but even less, viz. 14! The provision, as it stands, is a perfect disgrace, in fact—and yet, when the Assembly had a chance of putting the law, both for boys and girls, on an equitable basis; when it had a chance of scotching, not imaginary or merely theoretical, but very real and admittedly rampant, evils: 61 members of the Assembly

(including the whole strength of an 'enlightened' Government) are found to rank themselves against it and on the side of vague prejudices, social inertia, and muddy thinking. And Sir Malcolm Halley, this leader of the House and Western trustee of a benighted continent, true to the colours in which he appeared last year over a cognate moral question, actually boasts in his concluding words (of having gone back on his own original intention (of including §361 in the scope of this Amendment Bill) and of having thereby got "many new friends into my lobby." Many a true word is said in jest: hence, even if professably nothing but a piece of banter, this parting shot of the Home Member can but leave a very bitter taste in the mouth of all who would fain rank the moral claims of the Nation above the political manoeuvres of party.

### THE DELHI SESSION.

(BY OUR PARLIAMENTARY CORRESPONDENT.)

DELHI, 22nd MARCH, 1924.

THE Rubicon was crossed on Monday last when the Finance Bill was rejected by the Assembly by 60 votes to 5; and the rejection confirmed the next day, when the bill was reintroduced in the 'emasculated' but certified and recommended form. The attenuated chances of co-operation still lingering after the hesitant ultimatum of the previous week have been completely blown to the winds this week. The reforms have been flung back in the face of Parliament as an unwanted fraud and sham. The Parliament's right to be arbiter and to determine the form and process of India's constitutional fate has been challenged in an unequivocal manner. How will Parliament, under a Labour Government, reply?

The final catastrophe was the result of sudden and dramatic changes in the shifting policy, rather policies, of the Nationalist party. The Swarajists have not only a policy of their own, but also a policy as to what to do with the Independent Nationalists. They accepted no compromise for any length of time, but pressed their policy on the latter with a sustained pressure that was only just short of adding the last straw which would break the Independents from their strained alliance with the Swarajists. One may not approve of the policy for which Pandit Motilal stands, but one cannot withhold a meed of praise for his consummate generalship of the centripetal Nationalist party, which he led repeatedly to success on the floor of the Assembly, with its strength undiminished. But the proudest feather in his cap is his conversion of the redoubtable Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya into a confirmed Swarajist; which change of faith the venerable Pandit signalled by a three-hour's unmitigated denunciation of the British rule in India, as he solemnly moved the rejection of the Finance Bill.

Late on Sunday night, the Nationalist party had decided to move amendments to the Finance Bill in order to reduce the salt tax as low as pos-

sible, and to reduce the postal rates and cotton excise duties. The reductions, proposed, if carried, would add to the popularity of the Nationalists with the masses, and if restored by Government by certification, it would only bring the Government into greater disrepute with the masses. Either way it would pay. This proposal outraged certain Independents and budget purists. If these reductions were carried out the budget would not balance, and having sanctioned the expenditure the previous week, it was incumbent on them to sanction the revenue this week. Thereon it was argued that the Assembly voted but a very small part of the Budget and had, therefore, no responsibility to find money for the non-voted expenditure. Such arguments were too much for some Independents—who threatened to resign their membership of the Nationalist party. This was on Sunday night. But by Monday morning, when the Assembly met, not only were there no desertions in the Nationalist camp, but there was a sudden change in the decision itself towards an extreme Swarajist position, viz. to throw out the Finance Bill. And to top it all, it was Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the erstwhile non-Swarajist, that fathered the motion in the Assembly!

But the chapter of surprises does not end there. When the bill was thrown out on Monday, it was as dead as a door nail. But the Government were prepared for such contingencies and had already surprised the Legislature with a new set of rules of procedure on Saturday last.

Acting under these new rules, the Government surprised the Assembly on Tuesday morning further by reintroducing the Finance bill, certified and recommended, with the salt duty reduced to Rs. 1-4 and with some other minor variations. The Government had also promptly filled up the nominated place left vacant by Mr. K. C. Roy by nominating a 'safe' person; a procedure which the Pandit could not imitate. It was, again, surprising to hear Pandit Motilal complain of short notice, in scant haste, suggesting sharp practice on the part of the Government, and give one the impression that his supporters present in the House were too few to ensure victory to him. All the same he opposed leave to introduce the Finance bill. It was put to vote. Then came the greatest surprise of the season. The Government lungs were unaccountably weak and the Government did not challenge a division. The Finance Bill was thrown out a second time, within two consecutive days!

The resolution to reduce or abolish the cotton excise duties, which came off for discussion on Thursday last, proved a very trying question to the Nationalist Party. There were the protagonists of pure, i. e. handspun and hand-woven, khaddar, who saw in the present excise duties an element of protection to the khaddar industry. They were, therefore, opposed to doing away with the excise duties. There were others, who, while willing to do away with excise duties, stipulated that guarantees should be provided that the benefit of the reduction

would be shared by the consumer and the workers engaged in the mill industry. It could not therefore be made a party question. And loosening of party ties just now would demoralise the party. It was therefore sought to postpone the matter till the September session. Further, the resolution, even if accepted by Government just now, could not be put into operation till the framing of the next budget. There was therefore, no emergency about the matter. But more than this, members were keen on discussing two subsequent resolutions on the agenda which demanded the repeal of all existing repressive laws and the unconditional release of all political prisoners. The sponsor of the cotton excise resolution could not, however, be prevailed upon to drop his motion for the present. He was responsible to his constituency and not the Nationalist party. So he moved his resolution. Soon after that a motion was brought forward to postpone the debate on the resolution. Representatives of the Government, labour and the commercial interests,—all minorities in the House—protested against such procedure and appealed to the *de facto* leader of the Assembly, Pandit Motilal Nehru, to temper the power of the majority with some consideration for the minorities. But relentlessly the steam-roller rolled on and the debate was postponed. Protection for the cotton industry may be a necessary evil for India for a time. But it is gratifying that the cause of the consumer and the worker is receiving very strong advocacy in the Legislature.

Once this thorny resolution was put out of the way, members lashed themselves into a fury over the repressive laws still on the statute book. Lord Morley had condemned them. So had the Repressive Laws Committee and its recommendations were accepted *in toto* by the Government of India. Public opinion unanimously demands their repeal and suggests recourse to ordinance or special legislation as occasion demands. Indeed the case for repeal, in spite of the recrudescence of revolutionary propaganda in Bengal etc., is unanswerable. The Government stoutly opposed the resolution, but it was nevertheless carried.

The Honourable Mr. Natesan has brought to the Council of State, an amount of fresh energy which has helped it to some brilliant achievements. Last week it was Kenya and this week it was South Africa. He made a speech full of weighty and learned quotations. Mr. Sastri spoke with unusual warmth, in challenging Sir B. N. Sarma's assertion that His Majesty's Government were acting on the side of the Government of India and the people of India in the matter of Indians in South Africa. The Kenya decision was a complete refutation of the assertion. Mr. Sastri wished for the happy day when the Governor General and his Council would say within the moral hearing of the civilised world that if they could not protect their subjects from insults in other parts of the

Empire they would resign their places. Such a political explosion might rouse the dormant conscience of the Britisher to remedy the wrong. This suggestion sounded revolutionary and irresponsible to Sir Maneckjee Dadabhoj and to Sir Dinshaw Wacha, who severely denounced it; while Mr. Raza Ali, Mr. Rangaswami Iyenger and others solidly supported Mr. Sastri. Sir B. N. Sarma thought that he could serve India better by standing by his all-too-troublesome post than by throwing up his hands and resigning. The resolution, however, was carried and thus brought an eventful debate to a close.

### A LETTER FROM LONDON.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

LONDON, FEB. 28th, 1924.

THERE must have been something more than a smile of amusement, and, perhaps, irritation on the face of the member for Taunton, Mr. Hope Simpson, when, having tried to listen to the inaudible Mr. Richards, for whose behoof a Labour member rudely suggested that the India Office might provide a loud speaker, he was told by the Prime Minister, in reply to a suggestion that, as Lord Olivier was making a statement on Indian affairs in "another place", a similar statement should be made by the Under-Secretary for India in the House of Commons, that the Secretary of State was not going to make a special statement on the subject, but was only replying to a question which had been addressed to him by another noble Lord. Mr. MacDonald went on to add that answers to questions in the Upper House were given in a fuller and more lengthy form than was customary in the House of Commons. Mr. Hope Simpson must have rubbed his eyes with amazement, on reading his Hansard, on Wednesday morning, to find that the "reply" to Lord Clarendon's question filled no less than twenty-four columns of the official report, and that it had taken an hour and a half to deliver. What the Prime Minister would call a "special" statement, after this wonderful effort, it would be interesting to discover. The very form of Lord Clarendon's question was "to ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any statement to make with regard to affairs in India." One can only presume that Lord Olivier's statement was quite an "ordinary" one!

Lord Olivier's statement will certainly be taken in India as halting and dubious. That, in the nature of things, is almost inevitable. But what else could he have said? Looking dispassionately at the situation, one is bound to recall that this is a new Government, not broad-based upon the people's will, but actually in a minority in the House of Commons, and with a representation in the other House that is almost microscopic. It can remain in office, let alone power, only with the good will of one or other of the two oppositions. It must be remembered, too, that the smaller opposition is, too, in a comparatively small minority in the

Lords. It has held office but a few weeks. The Secretary of State for India is new to his work, for which he has had little previous experience. The problems of India are vast and complex. The major obsessions of the Government at the moment are the restoration of better feeling between this and foreign countries and the achievement of real peace in Europe and the economic problem, involved in the former, of finding employment for the huge army of unemployed skilled workers, which alone, in the long run, can permit the development of social institutions along lines of peaceful evolution, which alone will provide the machinery of reconstruction after the disaster of the War. It is not to be expected, therefore, that the present Government can have come to final conclusions as to ways and means, however sympathetic they may be, in general terms, with the ideals and aspirations of politically minded India. I am certain that it would be worse than useless to attempt to rush them into a premature and hasty declaration of fundamental policy, as it would be at once repudiated by the other two parties; and it would either remain a mere expression of pious opinion, without the possibility of practical expression, or it would involve the immediate dismissal of the Government from office on a motion of non-confidence.

One of the great difficulties facing those anxious to place the facts fairly before the Indian public is the general ignorance on your side of vital conditions here. Your public men are too far away; hardly any of them are acquainted with the methods of British public life or the way to make an effective appeal to British public opinion whilst those that have had some experience are to-day entirely out of touch with the new conditions that prevail here. I am aware that exactly an analogous argument can be put up by those on your side who complain that we here do not understand the Indian situation. I admit its validity without hesitation. But it only adds to and does not in any way detract from the difficulties that obstruct a better mutual understanding. Speaking broadly, Britishers are less wedded to form than to facts, once these are known, and they will not devise remedies until the disease has been correctly, or reasonably, diagnosed. To expect, after a partial experience of its working for barely three years, during which a large proportion of the intelligentsia have resolutely refused to attempt to work it, the British Parliament to consent to an immediate and thorough overhaul of the Indian Constitution is to expect the impossible, and to show a complete ignorance of the mental processes that distinguish these people from most others and that have brought them to their present pre-eminence in political wisdom. To expect a change of principle, before the detailed effect has been inquired into and made known is to lead average Britishers to ask whether Indian politicians have forgotten the first principles of logic. What the British Parliament will want to

know, before it consents to take action at all, is how the present constitution has worked, whether and in what respects it has failed, and in the latter case, whose is the responsibility. For that reason, it would be premature to anticipate that Lord Olivier or his colleagues in the Cabinet would be prepared to jettison the Montagu Act and to submit something else in its stead of whose probable effect they could only guess, with little if any experience to guide them. And even if they were of opinion that some radical change is needed, they could not hope to convert others to that view until they had fortified themselves with the fullest possible information as to the facts that have led up to the present situation. In the circumstances, I do not think that Lord Olivier's statement, when carefully analysed, need cause so much disappointment as it is likely to have caused upon receipt in India of the telegraphic summary.

There is another point to which attention ought to be directed by those here who are responsible for giving an honest view of the facts on this side. We have been brought up in this country in the spirit of democratic institutions. That this democratic spirit has not always received adequate expression in our public life need not be argued. It may be frankly admitted. Never the less, it must be conceded that our institutions are increasingly animated by the spirit of democracy, for good or evil. Mr. MacDonald and his Party owe the fact of their holding office to-day, not to the belief that they will do better for the country than the predecessors, but to the fact that it is recognised that they have deserved office by their adherence to constitutional methods and by the logic of events. It would have been easy for the Labour Party to become non-co-operators, on the ground that their vote was not effective. They preferred to co-operate, and meanwhile to increase steadily their hold upon public confidence. In just the same way, even if the Kenya Indians were in a small minority as regards representation in the Legislative Council upon a common register, they would be most unwise and politically unjustified in holding aloof from the Council. The justification for their present abstention lies solely in the fact that they cannot accept inferior racial status. These considerations weigh heavily with a constitutional party like the present Labour Party, and they will and do say that they are hopelessly embarrassed in any attempt that they may desire or be prepared to make to proceed to the next stage on the journey towards Swaraj, if the Indian leaders demand impossible speed and the ignoring of internal disunity and other urgent problems that reveal an absence of the democratic spirit. Lord Olivier's statement does not unduly emphasise this aspect of the situation. Had he left things unsaid, they would have been said more harshly and unsympathetically by his opponents, and he would have been obliged to sit in silent acquiescence.

It is not sufficient to say that the rate of

progress is too slow. It is not sufficient to say that India cannot afford to wait until she has advanced to a democratic state of political development, as these things are understood here. It is not sufficient to say that Englishmen are unimaginative, unsympathetic, and selfish. All these things may be true, more or less, though they are not unmingled with truths of quite a different kind. To the extent that it is sought to carry conviction, it is essential that there should be personal contact, and that contact should be established by leading Indians of all parties, of ability and character, and particularly of experience, who should come here and make their views known in person to those who alone are capable of influencing public opinion in this country. It is essential, too, that there should be some degree of unanimity in the facts stated and the demands put forward. I have said many a time, and I repeat it as emphatically as ever, that the time for sterile, sullen complaints, shouted from hill-tops six thousand miles away, is long since gone by, if ever it were appropriate. Is it not possible for the Indian leaders to take advantage of the remarkable new situation that has opened up here, in the interests of their country, and as little as possible associated with errors and omissions of the past on either side? Lord Olivier intended to make as friendly a gesture as possible. He had watching him Lord Curzon, who ended a bad speech—the only really good part of it, for which much may be forgiven him, was his condemnation wholeheartedly of the Dyer debate in the Lords—with an unconcealed threat. Lord Curzon can make that threat effective if the Indian leaders do not come to the rescue and provide their friends here with the arguments and the assistance without which the present opportunity may pass, without the possibility of its speedy recapture.

In view of the fact that the only practical proposition at the moment appears to be the official inquiry announced by Sir Malcolm Hailey, with the approval and authority of the Cabinet, atempt has been made by those here who are well informed of the Indian situation and the great need of going outside the official circle in an inquiry such as is to be set up, to induce the Cabinet to associate with the official element a small independent non-official British mission that would enable the result of the inquiry to be received with a certain amount of confidence as the product of disinterested investigation. It is yet early days to say whether this suggestion will be well-received; but its having been referred to by Lord Olivier in his statement indicates that it will be carefully considered, when the best means of assuring closer contact with Indian opinion comes up for further discussion in the Cabinet.

The Indian Parliamentary Committee met last evening at the House of Commons to discuss the situation revealed as a result of the House of Lords discussion. It was decided to ask Mr. G. P. Gooch to give a short address at the next

meeting of the Committee on the 19th March. In the meantime the Committee is issuing a bulletin, for which Major Graham Pole takes sole responsibility, the first issue of which is a reprint of Sir M. Visvesvaraya's Presidential Address at the Economic Conference, which is packed with the most valuable material for questions in Parliament. Together with this Bulletin will be circulated extracts from Sir Tej Bahadur Sarda's Presidential Address to the Liberal Federation and the resolution of the Federation Conference on constitutional reform, and Mr. Sastri's telegram to Mr. George Lansbury, who is rendering yeoman service through the columns of the "Daily Herald."

## REVIEW.

### MALARIA AND MOSQUITO.

MEMOIRS. By SIR RONALD ROSS. John Murray, 1923. 8" x 5". Pp 547. 24 s.

Mr. Lloyd George, when characterising the Indian Civil Service as the steel frame of the Indian constitution, unconsciously hit upon two qualities common to all superior Indian Services, namely hardness and coldness. Rare indeed are the instances when the superior Service men forget the chromatic barrier that exists between themselves and those who are placed in their charge. The few points of contact are seldom enlivened by any human touch. The educated Indians look upon them as unwanted intruders with capacious and elastic pockets, exogenous graftings on the Indian body politic. To the illiterate poor masses they are beings who above all must be feared. Isolated in black humanity the white Service men become unuly conscious of their racial difference and live a life of "splendid isolation." Before the Indians they always appear "in character."

An opportunity, therefore, to look at the human side of these officials should be of interest to Indians, and specially so if the official happens to be a distinguished one. Sir Ronald Ross's Memoirs are very interesting in this respect. They show him not merely as a member of Indian Medical Service but as a man of broad human sympathies with nobler ideas than increment of pay, allowance and pension.

For Sir Ronald Ross is not only a great scientist but is a poet and mathematician. Before he undertook the investigation of Malaria he had great enthusiasm for poetry and mathematics—an enthusiasm which he always felt in varying degrees. To him "a proved proposition was like a perfectly balanced picture. An infinite series died away into the future like the longdrawn variations of a sonata; and the Binomial Theorem or Integral Calculus was like the crash of the Illiad or of the so-called sonata pathétique."

Chesterton somewhere remarks that it is quite possible to write a poem on anything almost—on a railway train buffer, for instance. It is not known if any poet has attempted that subject; but it is certainly possible to write a poem on Indian Fevers, and Sir Ronald Ross has written it:



"The painful fates ask, can we not cure?  
We answer, No, not yet: we seek the laws.  
O God, reveal thro' all this thing obscure  
The unseen, small, but million-murdering  
cause."

But Sir Ronald wrote other poems also which are not 'sanitary' and were praised by literary critics.

"The million-murdering cause" did at last reveal itself to him. The story of the discovery of the mosquito malaria theory reads like high romance. If one were to suggest an alternative name for the Memoirs, it would perhaps be the Anophelesiad, the fact that it is written in prose notwithstanding. It is true that before Ross some people had some vague idea that mosquito had some relation to malaria, just as some people had thought of the existence of America even before Columbus. But it was left for Columbus to cross the Atlantic and reach the shores of America. So also it was left for Ross to prove the mosquito malaria theory and he proved it before any one else.

Ross has proved that malaria is not caused by inhalation of emanations, chemical or organic, from marshes, nor by drinking infected water; and that the mosquito conveys the disease from man to man. But the more difficult part of the investigation was to "discover two unknown quantities simultaneously, the kind of mosquito which carries the parasite and the form and the position of the parasite in it". He discovered that the mosquito is the Anopheles and the parasite lives in or on its gastric wall. He also discovered how the 'germinal rod' enters the Venio-salivary gland of the mosquito which injects it into the blood while biting.

Ross has many just complaints against the Government of India. He was frequently interrupted in his work by the Government which did not appreciate his work. Once when he asked the Government to publish a 14 page pamphlet of his, he was told that the previous sanction of the Secretary of State was necessary! He writes, "From that time to this I have never received any recognition from the Government of India. I have never been consulted even on my own subject by that Government or by the India Office; never placed on any committee connected with it; never been asked officially for my advice." It was no small provocation under which he wrote in one of his letters, "Remember always two things—that the Government of India is a mule as regards science. It won't do anything unless driven."

This apathy of the Government of a country in which more than a million and half die annually of malaria, surely does not prove that Government are the trustees of the people. The Government of Bengal is said to have shelf-loads of reports and schemes relating to malaria in that province. As it is, malaria is difficult enough to eradicate, but entrenched behind the reports and schemes, it has become well nigh impregnable. The expert in 'hante finance' will raise the question of expenditure. We are to wait till there is financial prosperity in the country. But financial prosperity will never drop down from the blue heaven. In the last analysis it depends on the insurance, strengthening, and stimulating of the factors of production. Common sense suggests that no sound financial system is possible on the basis of such death rate and sickness in the people as are now prevailing. One has only to read Ross's Memoirs to know how much is possible and how little has been done in India towards the eradication of malaria. Not

one tenth of Ross's programme has yet been adopted, but other Governments in other continents have adopted it and benefited by it. Wiser judges than the Government of India, such as the Nobel Prize Committee, acknowledged the importance of the discovery and Ross was awarded the Medical Nobel Prize in 1902. His success roused the jealousy of many, notably of some Italians, who claimed to have discovered the mosquito malaria theory 'indipendentimente da Ross'. Generous in acknowledging his debts, Ross has thoroughly established his claims beyond all doubts.

Ross has given to the world the means of eradicating one of the greatest scourges of humanity. If the world is foolish and does not adopt them, the blame is not his.

J. B. SEN.

## MISCELLANEA.

### MR. SASTRI ON SOUTH AFRICA.

SPEAKING on the Resolution moved by the Hon. Mr. G. A. Natesan in the Council of State on the 19th March 1924 regarding Indians in South Africa, the Right Hon'ble V. S. Srinivasa Sastri said as follows:—

Sir,

The speaker Col. Sir Omer Hayat Khan who has just sat down occasionally startles us by a stroke of genius; he has done so to-day. He said the people of India and the Government of India have, in the matter of disabilities of Indians overseas, been doing and have done all that could be done. All that is open to them, according to him, is begging; and in that art they are perfect masters. The Honourable Member in charge of the subject, in a speech characterised by much thought and statesmanlike caution, has informed us that Government is aware to the full of the developments in South Africa and that everything that could be done is being done. He said in the course of his remarks that he would much like that the hands of the Government were not weakened and their advocacy embarrassed by any statements made by speakers and writers, whether in the Council or on the public platform outside, calculated to show bitterness of feeling or hostility towards the South African Government; and amongst the reasons that he urged in favour of this course of moderation and reasonableness, I came upon a statement which I must challenge without any compunction. He told us that in this matter the Government of India has the full support of His Majesty's Government. Now, Sir, I am not here to accuse people unreasonably or without a sense of responsibility. I do make no statement that I cannot substantiate. It is perfectly true that His Majesty's Government are in a sense in full sympathy with our case in South Africa, and would, whenever it suited them and was not otherwise inconvenient, put in a mild word of reproof at the unreasonable ways of the democracy, as it is called, but what is the narrowest oligarchy in the world, in South Africa. How the British Cabinet is handicapped in this matter, everyone knows. They cannot honestly stand up now for the maintenance of any pledges that the South African Government may have made in this behalf. Having themselves been a party to the violation of the spirit of the Resolution of 1921 in regard to Kenya, their appeal to the good sense of the South African oligarchy is bound to fall miserably flat. Moreover, not only where they are themselves the final arbiters, but where they are the trustees holding a mandate from the League of Nations, which at all events, for moral purposes, is on a much higher and much more unassailable ground, as in the territory of Tanganyika, they have permitted the Local Government to discriminate against Indians in a manner that the Hon. Member opposite, who seems to scowl at me, does know. My friend, the Hon. Sir Deva Prasad Sarvadikari alluded to a telegram. It will be published, I dare say, in the papers. Then my Hon-

friend will come upon a statement which will be a surprise to him—how, time and again, where Indians are concerned, the British Cabinet falls below its accepted and avowed standard. From them, therefore, I expect no sort of assistance in this matter. Sir, my friend the Hon. Sir Narasimha Sarma, echoing with new-born enthusiasm the words of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, asked us to believe that the heart of South Africa is still sound. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu herself took care to say that, while the moral heart of South Africa seemed to be sound, the political heart of South Africa is corrupt to the core. I do not wish, Sir, to go into personalities. I was much struck, however, by the way in which Sir Narasimha Sarma still believes in the possibility of getting round General Smuts. He does not know General Smuts. He has not met him. I have met him. If Sir Narasimha Sarma and the Members of the British Cabinet also believe that they can persuade General Smuts to forget the necessities of the situation and act in pursuance of those mighty truths of humanity and brotherhood of the world of which occasionally he does speak with the eloquence which takes the similitude of conviction, then all I can say is that they entertain a delusion of which, I am sure, they will all too soon become aware. In this matter of the disabilities of the Indians in South Africa, General Smuts has given the world and India in particular many a promise in the past. Declarations that, if India and Indians took a certain course, namely, restricting their emigration to South Africa, all would be well with those who were domiciled in his Dominion, have been frequent. Although emigration from India to South Africa has in point of fact ceased for a good long time now, as the Hon. Sir Narasimha Sarma knows well—even better than I do, for he has access to secret documents which he seems to make his exclusive property—the difficulties, disabilities and humiliations of his countrymen are only increasing from year to year in the Dominion of South Africa. In 1911, in 1914, in 1917 and again in 1918 General Smuts said that nothing would be done to damage the interests of Indians resident in South Africa. This is a false promise which he made to my knowledge and which has been broken, torn and scattered to the winds of heaven. I will not say much further. It was said by the Hon. Sir Deva Prasad Sarvadhikari that we have just now sent off with our good wishes an unofficial committee of Indians and Europeans on whose labours we wish the blessings of Heaven, who is a source of all justice and good living in this world. Let me say nothing that will embarrass him. But in this matter concerning South Africa solely, which is excluded from the scope of their deliberations, I think a word or two may be said without fear of any harm resulting to their labours. I have for some time now believed that in South Africa our countrymen have, at least for a generation, no hope whatever. We have to carry on the struggle, it is true. But so long as the Government of India continue to believe that they can bring about amelioration of the conditions of Indians in South Africa merely by remonstrance, by diplomatic representations and by dignified protests which are made in public and withdrawn subsequently, they will find that they are letting themselves in for the most bitter disappointment. The country had lost all hope of improving our conditions in South Africa. The bitterness is there. Our efforts must all be concentrated on the evil not spreading beyond South Africa. Kenya, and while it is not too late, Uganda and Tanganyika, must be protected from the infection of this Boer menace of hatred of coloured people. The Hon. Sir Narasimha Sarma must be aware as well as I am that General Smuts resents the imputation that he is against Indians. And for a wonder, would the Council believe me when I say that General Smuts's claim is that in this matter of prejudice towards Indians, that in this matter of hostility towards Indians, that in this matter of desiring to rid the African region of Indians, it is not the Boers, it is the British people who are more responsible? He said so deliberately at the last Imperial Conference. He said so to me in person. This is what he said. "It is in Natal, where the white population is predominantly British and not Boer, it is in Natal that the worst troubles have recently arisen". And he says that the enemies of Indians are not

his countrymen but Britishers. I respectfully pass on the compliment to the British people. Let them decide, Boer and Britisher, in amiable rivalry to whom should fall this laurel of the most rooted hostility to their Indian fellow subjects. I will not attempt to decide the dispute between them. But that is the trouble. It has now reached very acute dimensions in Natal where the Britisher is in power, and General Smuts says, "If it were the Boer I could go for him. But as it is the Britisher in Natal whom I am bound to protect, I cannot interfere with his liberty." Sir, I must say that the Government of India must in their heart of hearts have come to the same conclusion that I have come to, that the problem in South Africa is beset with so many difficulties of a moral character, involving the whole psychology of a people, the entire upbringing of an arrogant white race, that the weapons which they have hitherto used and to which Sir Narasimha Sarma still sticks with pathetic simplicity would not do. I really do not know what Colonel Sir Umar Hayat Khan has in mind when he says begging won't do. What else is there in our power? We cannot use the bullet—which he once recommended in this Council. Sir, I will only conclude with this confession. Along with Mr. Andrews, along with Mr. Gandhi, along with Mr. Polak, and along with many others who have tried to judge of the situation in South Africa from a level of statesmanship and humanitarian conviction, to which most hard-hearted politicians round me might be foreign,—along with them I have come to the conclusion very reluctantly that there might be some awakening of the British conscience in this matter, some rousing of a deeper sense of responsibility which we have not been able hitherto to touch in the British nation, if on some happy occasion in the future, the Governor General in Council—I will not say the Viceroy, remembering your ruling sir—if the Governor General in Council of India should say to the listening world, "It is impossible for us as representatives of His Majesty's Government to govern India. If within His Majesty's Dominions we are unable and His Majesty's Government are unable to protect the just rights of the Indian subjects of His Majesty"; when a statement of that kind could be made in the moral hearing of the world by the Governor General in Council and the Governor General and his Council of that day resign their offices because they could not protect their subjects from the insults of another class of His Majesty's subjects, when that step is taken—very far from the bullet which Colonel Sir Umar Hayat Khan recommended the other day—I think something would be done which might touch the conscience of the British People. I still have faith in them: they have a way of throwing up their hands when the last extremity is reached and saying "We did not know; we never realised there was so much feeling in India; why did not somebody say so? Why did not your Indian Member resign? Why did not people do this or do that?" They have a way of remaining deaf and blind until something in the nature of a political explosion takes place and a crisis is reached. Well, I am not asking anybody now to resign. I am only saying that between the limit of the begging line that we have taken up and the beginning of the bullet line recommended by Colonel Sir Umar Hayat Khan, there is a large margin of high-minded, of brave, and of responsible statesmanship which we have got to traverse, and God willing, we hope that the interests of the British Empire, its dignity and its high mission in this world, in which I still have faith, disappointed as I have been sorely in one or two matters, that these would still be maintained while we are traversing that margin.

#### THE INDIAN DECISION.

OF all the problems which face the Labour Government in its external policy that of India is at once the gravest and the most hopeful. No other makes the same claim upon our undivided responsibility. Our party has come into power at a turning point at India's destiny. It arrived with the decision of the Swaraj (Home Rule) party to depart from the purely negative tactics of Mr. Gandhi, and to test their strength by putting up candidates for the provincial and national assemb-

ties. They polled heavily, but they nowhere won a majority save in the Central Provinces. The sequel, however, has shown that theirs is the leadership which India will follow. The Moderates, whether they call themselves Independents or Liberals, have fallen obediently into line behind the most resolute of the nationalist parties. The news is all of defeats inflicted on the Government, now in Bengal, again in Bombay, and, above all, in the National Legislative Assembly. All parties are uniting in a demand for full responsible Government and for a new Constitution which shall embody it. There may still be shades of opinion, for some realise more clearly than others that it would be impossible without a period of preparation and transition to hand over the army at least to an Indian Dominion Government. But in the main demand all seem to be united. It takes the form of a request for a Round Table Conference, which is to draft a Constitution, for submission first to the Indian Legislative Assembly and then to the British Parliament. The form of the demand is significant. India is no longer begging us to use our superior wisdom to sketch a plan of reform. She asks to be allowed to do her planning for herself. What she proposes is a conference composed in the main of her own representatives. The "round table conference" means, in plain English, a drafting committee to prepare an Indian Constitution. It is a startling demand. It confronts us at last with an adult India, which, in her own estimation, has attained her majority at these elections. She is using the democratic instrument with which the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms endowed her in a manner which follows Western precedents. We made the skeleton of a nation when we fitted those reforms together. At last the breath of life is in it. It moves and wills.

The first response of the Anglo-Indian Government was a slight and temporising concession. It took its stand on the present half-measure of reform. This and no more was what Parliament had conceded. The time for any fundamental change is to come at the end of the ten years' period, according to the Act, and no sooner. But admittedly it is not a perfect instrument of Government, and therefore a Departmental Inquiry was proposed to recommend minor adjustments and improvements. There followed the vote which defeated the Government by 76 to 48, figures which mean that the elected Indian members must have voted almost solidly against the European and official members. If the Indian Government reckoned on dividing the Assembly, and rallying the moderates to its own side, by a small concession, it evidently miscalculated. The outlook is disturbing. For a majority to which the Government has refused to concede its central demand has the constitutional remedy of refusing supplies. It is vain to use hard words about obstruction. These Indians have studied Western history. They know all about ship money: they may recollect the precedent of the first Russian Duma. It is obvious enough from what is happening in Bombay and Bengal, that they will not co-operate any longer with the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy on the basis of the half-autonomy, the divided responsibility of the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme. In a few weeks, or at most months, if they remain united, they may compel us to do one of two things—either to suspend the reforms, to close down the elected assemblies, and to tax and govern in the old autocratic way, or else to meet them by granting the essence of their demand. That is a sufficiently grave dilemma for a Labour Government, and yet it is well to realise that even this may not be the worst. Provocations like the deplorable shooting of the Sikh devotees at Jaito may drive that warlike race out of its fidelity to pacifism and non-resistance.

Lord Olivier, in his cautious but sympathetic speech on Tuesday, left us in some doubt as to his future policy. He may be wise to wait for further information from India, before he takes a decision which may govern the whole future of the Peninsula. He realises that the offer of a Departmental Inquiry into the working of the present Constitution is inadequate. His speech seems to mean that he sees the need of preparing even now for the next step. Two new facts emerge from the Indian papers which are now arriving by mail. The

first big fact is that the Swarajists are setting the pace, leading, dominating, almost absorbing the other parties. There is now for purposes of action one great Home Rule party. The other new fact is that this party has outgrown the stage of petitioning us for reforms. It means to shape its own reforms. There is nothing to our thinking unconstitutional or revolutionary in this attitude. Even the extremists do not talk of dispensing with the consent either of the Government in Delhi or of the Parliament in Westminster. What they ask is for leave to sketch the first draft of their own future Constitution. Currents in the stream of history will seldom run an even course at a prescribed pace. One cannot set a timetable for a nation's aspirations. Lord Olivier dwelt frankly on some of the causes which have quickened this current—the Amritsar massacre, the Kenya folly, the affair of the Salt Tax, and the apparent duplicity of Mr. Lloyd George. We cannot undo this past. The Coalition gave the Montagu reforms, but in granting them it destroyed their moral effect. The consequence is that to wait until 1929 before we even begin to inquire into the next step towards responsible Government is unthinkable. We must either step forward or backward, and we must take our decision promptly. Lord Olivier is still considering various alternative procedures—the Round Table Conference, a mission to India, or an invitation to Indians to send their own Delegation to London. The latter suggestion does recognise, though not perhaps adequately, the new sense of responsibility and self-respect in Indians, which leads them to claim the initiative. It is to our mind a proper attitude, an attitude which in itself gives some proof of their maturity. The fatal posture for us to assume would be, in this new hour of India's history, to drop by habit into the old pose of the ruling race, which in its benevolent wisdom will do all the thinking and planning that India needs, and will in the end "grant" reforms. That day is over. We would venture to suggest that Lord Olivier might possibly combine two of these methods. Might not the Delhi Assembly first of all nominate a committee (it matters nothing by what name it is called), which would first hammer out its provisional draft of an amended constitution in India, and then send a delegation to London to discuss it with the India Office and the Cabinet? But whatever expedient is adopted, the essential is to leave to Indians, we do not say the decision, but the initiative in making proposals. We cannot resign our own responsibility for what India is to become. It may have been the love of gain that took us there, it may have been the economic motive which kept us there, crushing some things that were old and ugly with some things that were good, building all the while, for our interest, in our way, training and shaping, fostering and deforming, in the process of creating an unstable and unfinished civilisation which is neither ours nor theirs. We cannot shuffle off our responsibility. It is our duty to see that the next big step towards self-government is made in an orderly way with the minimum of risk. But in the act we must treat the men who will govern India to-morrow as equals and adults. There was one argument in Lord Olivier's speech which we would beg him to reconsider. The religious dissensions among the uneducated masses are indeed a terrible handicap to India's political development, which recalls, as Lord Olivier said, the case of Ireland. But did he really mean to argue that self-government must wait until, by the lapse of time and the slow spread of education (which is not even yet compulsory or free), these religious dissensions are healed? That was never the Labour doctrine about Ireland, nor even the Liberal doctrine. We are not going to apply to India that Unionist argument which all but destroyed Ireland, and made our rule a by-word throughout the civilised world. Labour did not foresee the swift development of the new political force in India. An historic moment has surprised us. We dare not wait on events, nor drift into courses which may commit us to tactics of coercion. We must go boldly forward, seeking our inspiration not from the tenets of those who have always looked on India as their estate, but from our own doctrine of self-determination.

(The New Leader, Feb. 29th 1924.)

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