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## CONTENTS.

	PAGE
TOPICS OF THE WEEK ... ..	181
ARTICLES :—	
Transfer of Power ... ..	184
Education As a Transferred Subject ... ..	185
The Divided Purse ... ..	186
SPECIAL ARTICLES :—	
First Impressions of the Reform Committee's Reports. By Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer, K. C. S. I.	187
The Franchise Committee's Report. By the Hon'ble Principal R. P. Paranjpye ... ..	189

## TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

THE folly of the new Amir of Afghanistan in violating the traditional friendship of his nation with the Government of India is equalled only by his madness in persisting in hostilities in the face of imminent disaster to his people. His one aim in invading Indian territory seems to have been to divert his country's attention from domestic affairs, and he was concerned more with personal interests than with those of his people. This explanation satisfactorily accounts for the insane and futile enterprise of the Amir, though we now learn that enemy influence in Afghanistan has been at work for time some past and is also responsible for the mad freak of the young ruler. Whatever that may be, it is as clear as noon-day that the might of British arms will crush Afghan aggression in no time and that those who were responsible for the unprovoked attack will be brought to book. Military operations in Afghanistan have to be carried on in difficult conditions, but British aeroplanes are overcoming obstacles, which to the ignorant Afghan may appear insuperable. Reports received from the front show how our forces are steadily progressing and how the enemy has already lost his morale. We may hear the news any day that the enemy has received a crushing defeat and that he has sued for mercy. The splendid offers of assistance which the Government of India is receiving from our Princes and the attitude of warm co-operation shown by the people generally, must cause disagreeable disillusionment to the Amir and the enemy intriguers as they dashed the hopes of Germany on the outbreak of the world war.

THE Durbar speech which Sir Michael O'Dwyer made on May 12 was of the type to be expected of the Punjab hero. He declared with a great flourish that he cared naught for "outside criticism,"

which indeed he had made manifest long before he prohibited Mr. Andrews from entering his province, and the "inside criticism" which he loves to hear is only that which comes from those who are loud in their praise of "the extreme forbearance" and "the greatest restraint" showed by the troops in repressing disorder. If the outside world yet asked for evidences of the "open rebellion," it was enough to say that those who were critical of Government and condemned martial law "did not wish to know the facts." For was it not a patent fact that "within the last few months a deliberate attempt had been made by evil men, many of them men of education, to arouse in the Punjab a feeling of hatred towards all Europeans as tyrants and oppressors?" Should anyone still entertain a doubt whether Lala Dharamdas Suri, Dr. Manohar Lal and Mr. Kali Nath Roy could be guilty of such a heinous crime, Sir Michael had now an excuse ready to his hand in the Afghan war which he could press into his service to exculpate himself. "We all have now a clearer view of the realities of the situation and know who are our enemies." That is so, but the knowledge of the external enemy fails to bring to our mind the conviction that the many estimable persons whom they have brought under the martial law are the internal enemies who must be dealt with in the way in which they are being treated. The outbreak of a foreign war should rather be the occasion of the release of all those who can help in the maintenance of order, and none can believe of some of those upon whom the heavy hand of the Government has fallen that they will exert their influence to any other purpose.

FOR some years past, it has been the fashion in certain circles to regard the Indian currency scheme as the best that human ingenuity could devise and to recommend it for adoption elsewhere. When the whole question was last discussed in an authoritative manner by the Chamberlain Commission, complete satisfaction was expressed at the gold exchange standard system developed in India. Difficulties experienced in time of war as regards exchange and currency were attributed to the extraordinary circumstances through which the world had to pass. But the cessation of hostilities and the imminence of Peace have brought no relief, and the situation with regard to sterling exchange has worsened instead of improving. The artificial fixity of the

gold value of the token rupee was the corner stone of the fabric of the Indian currency system, and that has been seriously shaken by the extraordinary rise in the price of silver. The embarrassment caused by the disturbed conditions of trade compelled Government to raise the rate of exchange from 16d. to 17d. and later on to 18d. in order to bring it to the level of the price of the white metal, and now the further putting up of the exchange to 20d. has been announced. The restrictions formerly imposed by the Governments of the U. S. A. and Great Britain upon silver having been removed, the price of that metal showed a further rise and the sterling exchange has been adjusted to it by the recent announcement.

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A COMMITTEE has been appointed by the Secretary of State for India to go into the whole question and to suggest a solution of the difficult problem; and in the meanwhile export merchants and industrialists in India have been left to suffer and grumble. The latter really have a serious grievance. They find themselves severely handicapped just at a time when they had thought to put their business on a satisfactory basis and also to take advantage of the post-war conditions to promote the trade and industries of India. A high exchange means loss to the exporter and a premium on imports and, therefore, keener competition for our manufacturers. There is also the atmosphere of uncertainty in which the future is shrouded, and uncertainty is a great disadvantage to industry and trade. Government must, therefore, lose no time in clearly stating their exchange policy. We feel strongly that the time has come when the whole Indian currency system should be reconsidered and placed upon a sound and stable footing. The report of the Chamberlain Commission has become out of date as the policy it advocated has been proved to be unsatisfactory. India requires a true gold standard, with a free flow of gold into the country from outside and a gold currency in circulation. No other system will now do, and there ought to be no tinkering and patchwork in the matter.

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IN the draft Instrument of Instructions to Governors appended to the Government of India's dispatch, we notice the omission of an instruction as to the circumstances in which the Governor may justifiably call into action the exceptional procedure of certifying a bill on a reserved subject whereby it is withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the council and referred to a grand committee. It is provided in the scheme that this procedure is to be used "only when the Government feels that its legislation is necessary if peace and tranquillity are to be secured, or more generally, if it is properly to discharge its responsibility for the reserved subject even if no question of maintaining order arises." The authors of the report say: "Such a certificate as we have described would not be given without

strong reason; and we suggest that the reasons justifying recourse to it might be included in the Instructions to Governors which the India Office should issue." Some importance attaches to this point, for, under the scheme, opportunity is given to the council to take the matter to the Government of India, who are to decide, with reference to the terms of the Governor's instructions, whether "the certificate has been properly given." How is it then that the draft Instrument is silent on this point? Is it that the Government of India in their previous dispatch, which is yet a sealed book to the public, have left it absolutely to the discretion of the Governor to certify a bill whenever he may think such a course desirable? Do they intend that there should be no reference at all from the Governor to the Government of India?

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AGAIN, it is stated in the draft instructions that the Governor "will restrict the exercise of the power to act in opposition to his minister's advice to cases in which he considers that the consequences of acquiescence would be serious." This goes beyond the intentions of the reforms report, for in para. 219, on which the above instruction is modelled, occur the following words: "We should expect him (the Governor) to refuse assent to the proposals of his ministers only when the consequence of acquiescence would clearly be serious." The only power of control which is contemplated in this and the subsequent sentences is that of disallowing proposals which emanate from the minister. But the instruction as drafted by the Government of India is susceptible of a wider application. It may mean that, in exercise of the power allowed him by his instructions, the Governor may direct action to be taken where the minister has proposed no action. This seems to be clearly in excess of what the authors of the report had intended. If the Governor can require his minister to take action which the latter does not approve as well as forbid action which he desires to take, the position of the minister will be considerably lowered. He must not in any event be placed on a footing of inferiority to the executive councillor.

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WITH regard to the power of intervention reserved to the Government and specially mentioned in the instructions to the Governor, so as to safeguard the interests of the Anglo-Indian and the British mercantile community and Christian missionary agencies, we have only to say that special protection is herein afforded to those who do not need it. Although as the terms of his instructions go, the Governor's power is to be called in only when unfair discrimination is made against these bodies there is every chance of the power being used rather to secure them in their privileges and immunities, partialities and monopolies. There is no real danger of these powerful classes suffering any serious injustice at the hands of the Indian community. To single them out for special pro-

tection from the tyranny of Indians only serves as a handle to the enemies of reform to say, as a retired Madras civilian does say in a magazine article, "How can any substantial reforms be introduced into a country in which special measures are required for the purpose of 'protecting capital, credit and indeed property' from the rapacity of its educated classes?" We may point out by the way that whereas in the Joint Report the Government is bidden to interfere only when "orthodox Hindu or Muslim zeal sought to impose disabilities" upon Christian missions or *vice versa*, the Southborough Committee and the Government of India forbid the adoption, "without due consideration," of any change in the educational policy affecting mission bodies. Does the enactment of a conscience clause "impose a disability" upon mission bodies which in countries, where they do not enjoy the privileged position which they enjoy here, they do not impose upon themselves?

SIR SANKARAN NAIR, in a minute of dissent not yet published, objects to heads of departments having access to the Governor behind the back of the minister and to the latter being compelled to accept insubordinate assistants. Both these matters will greatly weaken the minister's position. If report speaks true, the publication of the Government of India's previous dispatch, to which constant reference is made in the one now published, will disclose many other things which will act as a heavy handicap on the minister. We must admit, however, that in the Southborough Committee's report, the reciprocal character of the rule allowing intervention of the Governor to adjust differences between the two sections of the Government is scrupulously maintained. Where the decisions and operations of either part of the Government are to be overruled and interfered with, no discrimination must be made which is to disadvantage of the minister.

THE Government of India's suggestion that they should have the power of re-transferring to the official Government a department made over to non-official control is preposterous. The Southborough Committee recommend a temporary resumption of the department in case of an emergency during an interregnum when there is no minister, but they expect that such an interregnum will not be long and do not advise any permanent re-entry, which indeed is reserved in the reforms report to the twelve-year commission when it is satisfied that "serious maladministration" has resulted. The Government of India can also do it five years after the reforms come into effect, on the same ground. Here, however, they propose an entirely different thing. They "carry matters to the ultimate test" and arrive at the conclusion that when successive ministers and the council remain obdurate in their opposition to the Governor, the latter's will must prevail against that of the former. It would seem from Sir San-

karan's protest that the Government of India also propose this re-transfer as a "deterrent of factious and irresponsible action by the minister and the legislative councils." It is possible by this device, as observed by Sir Sankaran, to get rid altogether of responsible government, and it is clearly not within the competence of the Government of India to take away what has been given by the British Parliament.

A FEAR was expressed in some quarters in the course of the discussion on the M.-C. reform scheme that, although from the general tenour of the budget procedure and the priority of the supply for the reserved services it appeared that provincial taxation was a function made over to popular control and the express mention of "taxation for provincial purposes" among the transferred subjects lent strength to that idea, still this power did not extend to the whole field of provincial sources of revenue, but was limited to impositions on transferred subjects. It was felt that if a minister brought forward a bill proposing an increase or decrease in a tax on any of the reserved subjects, the certification process might be called to aid and the bill sent to a grand committee. The matter is now put beyond doubt by the Southborough Committee's report, which shows that the fear entertained was groundless. The Committee say:

"When a taxation bill is proposed by ministers, it may appear that some interest, the care of which is entrusted to the Governor in Council, is likely to be prejudiced. . . . But when a reserved department is affected only because it is proposed to assess or collect the tax through its agency, we think that in that case the executive council should be entitled to press their objections only as to the use of the agency, and that *the merits or demerits of the tax should be left entirely to the decision of the Governor and ministers.*" (Italics ours.)

The Government of India have now propounded a different scheme of provincial finance, in which they deprive the minister of the exclusive power of placing taxation proposals before the legislature, but that is a different matter.

A MADRAS correspondent writes: "The Liberal League which was recently started and which is composed of friends of the M.-C. scheme of reforms has so far been quite active—in fact, more active than the older political associations of this City. The League's President, Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer, has returned from Benaras and now that he has resigned the Vice-Chancellorship of the Hindu University, will be able to give to the League all the time it may require. I understand that the members of the Liberal League are generally satisfied with the report of the Southborough Committees and that they have appointed a sub-committee of the League to consider it in detail.—The report of the Southborough Committees has been more favourably received in extremist quarters than I had the courage to hope. We are perhaps to thank the Government of India for this result, for by their astounding despatch they have drawn on themselves all the available fire of criticism."

## TRANSFER OF POWER.

THE first impulse of many persons on hearing of the names of the members of the Reform Committee must have been to throw up their hands in despair. Dr. Sapru and Mr. Thompson, Mr. Sastri and Mr. Couchman, Mr. Banerji and Mr. Hailey formed a team which to many must have seemed incapable of yielding any substantial result. All but those who are of a particularly sanguine nature must have thought that this Committee would produce like the Irish Convention some three or four reports, and that no one could say with any amount of assurance on which side the balance of intelligent opinion preponderatingly inclined. To those who were sceptical of the ability of this Committee, composed as it was of heterogeneous if not hostile elements, to hammer out a solution of the many intricate questions lying at the base of Indian self-government, the unanimous report which it has presented must have occasioned no little surprise. And an agreeable surprise it will be, we are sure. For, though every one must be disappointed with some feature or other of its report—that was bound to be the case from the very character of its composition—there will be no one but will hail with enthusiasm a great many of its recommendations. Rather than that every single member should press his individual views to the farthest limit and, finding that they do not win the support of more than a third or fourth of the Committee, embody them in a report of his own, thus leaving the matter exactly where it was, it is of far greater advantage to the country that all the members, differing widely from each other in their views, should, in a spirit of accommodation, find out the greatest common measure of their personal opinions and present to the Secretary of State and the British Parliament a workable plan of a substantial measure of self-government. The plan will not be wholly satisfactory to anyone, but will be acceptable to the largest number. Above everything else it is necessary when we are entering upon a large experiment of responsible government that we should carry with us the good will and the friendly feeling of large sections of every community and interest. It would have been easy enough for each member of the Committee to have borne testimony in a dissenting minute to the faith in him and to have developed his own ideas, but it would not have advanced much further the solution of the question which he was called upon to tackle. It is only this consideration which could have persuaded several members to refrain from urging certain matters with which they are known to be wholeheartedly in sympathy. One can imagine the fight that they must have put up in committee, but finding that their opinion did not gain adhesion from a sufficiently large number, they must have, in order to preserve unanimity, left the matter there, hoping to press their opinion in their individual capacity on other occasions. But it will be admitted by all

dispassionate observers that, for the Committee that it was, the schemes whether of franchise or functions which it has devised are fairly progressive and afford an excellent working basis for the Reform Bill now about to be introduced. It will be open to all the different sections of opinion, which have suffered some amount of self-suppression, to suggest improvements in it, but the substantial concurrence of all in so many features of it is a guarantee of the successful journey to the statute book which awaits it in Parliament.

With the exception of irrigation, the Functions Committee has practically recommended the transfer of all the subjects mentioned in the Illustrative List No. II in the Reforms Report and added to them higher education and development of industries other than local. Of the subjects reserved for official control the most important are police, law and justice, land revenue and irrigation. The popular representatives on the Committee also advocated the transfer of land revenue for the Bombay Presidency, and left to themselves, we are sure, they would have gone farther forward, and Sir Sankaran Nair fully supports their claims. It would still be possible to argue the case for the transfer of land revenue before the Joint Select Committee of Parliament, but an agreed plan for the transfer of all the departments which the Committee thinks ought to be made over to non-official control will make it impossible to curtail this list in the Select Committee. We value the recommendations of the Functions Committee greatly from that point of view. It was apprehended by many people that the differences in the level of enlightenment and public spirit which exist and are fancied to exist between province and province would be made much of and it was thought that while advanced provinces would secure the transfer of all the departments mentioned in the Report, more backward ones would be dismissed with a much smaller number. The one gratifying feature of the report is that all the provinces are started on a fairly high level and no province is left behind, except Assam which stands in a peculiar position. The Government of India's dispatch, however, is very reactionary. It proposes the retention in the Government's hands of the department of industries and all branches of education except primary and middle vernacular. In the next article we argue for the transfer of the higher grades of education, and we shall in a subsequent issue deal with the subject of industries. In the matter of land revenue, even if administration were to be retained in official hands, the fixing of the level of taxation must be done by non-officials. It is only because the land tax is raised or lowered by executive action, that it has escaped from popular control; if legislative action is substituted for it, it will automatically pass into the hands of non-officials along with other "taxation for provincial purposes." This is a modest demand and is imperative in the interests of the country. The deputations in England will, we feel sure, press the matter on the attention of the British

statesmen. For the moment, even more, perhaps, than the number of departments to be transferred does the question of the minister and the legislative council being allowed to exercise full control over the services that may be transferred to them assume greater importance, and we are afraid the popular disappointment will be very keen as to the way in which the latter question is being dealt with. An illiberal solution of these questions may easily smash the whole of the M.-C. Report.

### EDUCATION AS A TRANSFERRED SUBJECT.

THE Committee on the Division of Functions has wisely come to the conclusion that the whole subject of education, with the insignificant exception of European and Anglo-Indian education, should be transferred to the control of the ministers. They recognise that the subject is one indivisible whole and that any partition of it would lead to many difficulties. This is the one subject on which Indian opinion is very keen, and it would not be too much to say that the reservation of any portion of education in which the people as a whole are interested will do much to render the whole scheme of constitutional reforms a fiasco. It is, however, on this very point that the Government of India are taking a reactionary attitude. They are only in favour of transferring primary or vernacular education, but want to reserve secondary, university, professional and industrial education to what they call the more tried part of Government. Their arguments will not hold much water and have been conclusively answered by the Hon. Sir Sankaran Nair whom we respectfully take leave to congratulate on the bold stand that he has made on this question. Without any periphrasis, he roundly says, "Those who would keep education a reserved subject do so, I fear, not in the interests of educational progress, but for political reasons. They have themselves no scheme of education in view, and their predecessors have been going on making experiment after experiment, all in the face of Indian protest, which they themselves have now to acknowledge have ended in failure."

Consider this confession by the Government of India itself on the subject of primary education: "It is very limited in quantity; there is great wastage by the way; teachers are ill-paid, poor in quality and commanding little respect; the inspection is insufficient and indifferent; as a result the course takes too long and yields but small results; and very little of the knowledge attained remains in after life." After this candid confession of its ill-success in dealing with a department which has been almost wholly under Government control, it hardly lies with them to say that a minister will mismanage this whole subject of education. In fact, what has been the history of the last thirty years? Such popular opinion as there is has always advocated a progressive educational policy. The late Mr. Gokhale insisted upon a

wide expansion of free and compulsory education and brought in a bill which was opposed by the very Government which is now afraid of the dire consequences of transferring education as a whole:

Let it be clearly understood that the following words of the Education Member clearly echo Indian feeling. "There is no use ignoring the fact that the Indians are satisfied that all these changes were made with a sinister purpose. It is the universal belief, and there is little doubt that facts unfortunately tend to support it, that primary education for the masses and higher education for the middle classes are discouraged for political reasons. Higher professional and industrial education is discouraged to favour English industries and recruitment in England of English officials." The facts are patent to every one. During the course of a century, Government have not established in India a single first class university or a good up-to-date technological institute. The main object of introducing English education in India was to procure a cheap supply of clerks, and many officers even in high places are popularly believed to have become afraid of the monster which this primary step has raised and would, if they could, kill outright the whole system. But the task is beyond any body's power. All that we can do is to see that educational progress is steady and on right lines; and this task can only be done with the full sympathy of the public whom the minister represents and whose confidence he possesses.

Indians know full well that educational progress cannot be obtained on the cheap. A great deal of money has to be spent upon it, but the old Government machinery will not be able to put the requisite burden on the people. People know only too well that the agency that Government imports at such cost from abroad is not the best that can be obtained; the officials are only remotely interested in education; their own children are not going to go through the process. The Indian ministers and the members of the councils are personally interested in the result and will take care to make it as efficient as possible. The bogey of the lowering of standards is raised once again; but who is to blame for it? If careers were to be obtained only by merit and not by influence or colour of the skin, if there were open competition for all important positions, then people would feel that the education that should be obtained by their sons should be of the highest quality and that the stamp of a B. A. was not all that was required.

What India wants is a system of education in all branches properly adapted to her needs. We are not obscurantists or revivalists, and we want to adapt as much as possible of western knowledge and experience. Who is best fitted to do this but the leaders of the people themselves? The large majority of the English officials still continue to regard the Oxford and Cambridge system as the last word in educational policy. But educational experience has gone beyond this single system.

No new country in the world is going to create, even if it could, new Oxfords or even new Etons. A bureaucracy imbued with such ideas is hardly the best agency to steer the bark of Indian educational progress through the strenuous period before us. We must do it ourselves; we alone can ask our countrymen to make the needful sacrifice; we alone can inspire the confidence in them that these sacrifices are for their own good and not for any sinister political ends.

### THE DIVIDED PURSE.

SIR JAMES MESTON'S proposals for a separate purse for the official and popular parts of provincial Governments, which have not yet been published but which are set forth in broad outline in Sir Sankaran Nair's minute of dissent, will, if carried into effect, altogether destroy the budget control provided for in the Joint Report. Under the original scheme, subject only to the Governor's power of restoration on a certificate of necessity, the legislature of a province had practically the "power of the purse," but the Government of India's dispatch seeks to undo this cardinal feature and reduce the legislative council to a position of sheer impotence. It would appear from Sir Sankaran's summary that the Government of India now recommend an actual division of provincial resources between the two halves of Government, the mode of division being somewhat like this: that the ministers and executive councillors should have the receipts from transferred and reserved subjects allocated to them, and that they should also be given to understand what amount from the provincial surplus would be available to them. Having thus arrived at an estimate of their revenues, they should proceed to estimate their normal expenditure. If on such a survey it is found that their revenue and expenditure do not balance, an assignment should be made from one branch of the Government to the other. If the receipts from the earning departments of transferred subjects, with their share of the provincial surplus, cannot finance the administration of all those subjects, the official Government must surrender part of the revenue of their departments for this purpose. Who is to make this adjustment and how long it is to remain in force is not known. Even after such an adjustment additional taxation may be necessary. When the separate purse system is adopted, ministers cannot of course be given the exclusive power of initiating fresh taxation proposals which was proposed to be conferred upon them under the M.-C. scheme. Such proposals can originate with either part of the Government and are to be dealt with like ordinary bills, which means, as indeed is explicitly stated by Sir Sankaran Nair in one place, that those proposed by the official Government (or dealing with reserved subjects?) may be referred to grand committees—there being thus practically no check upon any possible extravagance of this part of the Government. They are secured in their freedom

from all control by the further provision that even the budget resolutions passed by the councils will not be binding upon the executive, but will be of the nature of recommendations which the executive may adopt or set aside at discretion. The council is thus studiously excluded from all control over finance, having no authority to sanction or disallow any item of expenditure. In fact, the budget will not be voted upon. Thus the council will be statutorily disabled from regulating any part of expenditure and will regulate only such part of additional taxation as may be proposed by the ministry. And yet the Government of India's dispatch seems to contain a hint that, although the council resolutions need not exercise any manner of influence upon the non-popular part of Government, ministers may regard adverse resolutions in respect of allotments to transferred services as indicating a want of confidence in themselves and may resign. This, indeed, is a finishing stroke as Sir Sankaran remarks, and comes with peculiar appropriateness from a Government which has propounded this rival plan with a view to relieving the ministers of the odious task, assigned to them in the M.-C. scheme, of proposing fresh taxation. What better avenue of relief than resignation?

Sponsors of this new scheme for a separate purse seem to have pressed two principal arguments into their service: (1) that a joint purse would breed constant friction and favour extravagance; and (2) the unpopularity of the idea that the minister was to approve and therefore bear the whole odium of additional taxation. Now, with regard to the first, it must be understood that a certain amount of friction is bound to be generated where conflicting interests are to be brought into harmony by a process of adjustment. The Government of India prevent friction only by making the council impotent and overriding at every step the interests represented by it when these latter clash with rival interests. Such a simple expedient cannot recommend itself to anyone who desires to hold an even balance between competing claims. If justice is to be the guiding factor, it must be admitted that the plan advocated in the Joint Report gives rise to the least amount of conflict, compatible with an equitable apportionment of the provincial revenue. As observed by Sir Sankaran Nair:—

"It is a strong point in favour of the Reforms Report scheme of budget procedure that it minimises the drawbacks of a system of dual government in provinces and gives to both executive councillors and ministers opportunities of sympathetically influencing each other's decisions to the advantage of both and of the people of the province. The Governor, too, will be in a better position to discharge his duties as head of the whole Government and promote friendly relations between its two halves. The knowledge that ministers with their responsibility for the transferred departments have also been a party to the allotments made for reserved subjects, is calculated to induce in the legislative council a conviction of the necessity of those allotments and to minimise the chances of their seeking to cut them down. This will be of great

moral value as it will curtail the necessity of the Governor's making use of his power of certification which cannot but cause friction and conflict between him and his executive council on the one side, and the ministers and the legislative council on the other. . . . When a proposal of fresh taxation is made in those circumstances, the legislative council will more easily persuade itself to accept it and support the Government than it can be expected to do under a system such as is proposed by my colleagues now."

As for extravagance, it is limited, under the new scheme, only by the possibility of the popular discontent taking on very unpleasant forms; but it is practically eliminated, under the old one, by the self-regulative process which it sets in motion. If the executive council are too grasping, the ministers will refuse to carry on with the leavings of the official part of the Government or to make themselves responsible for additional taxation, and this will suffice to bring the council to their bearings, for otherwise a deadlock will result from which no escape is provided for in the report. As to the second argument, *viz.*, the odium which the ministers must take for fresh taxation proposals, it must be confessed that violent criticism has been directed against this part of the scheme in the newspaper press and on the public platform, and that Sir James Meston has executed a clever stroke of policy by exploiting this largely superficial criticism to the full in depriving the M.-C. proposals of a feature of considerable merit. Odium there is, no doubt; but with odium goes power—power to keep the appropriations of the executive council within reasonable bounds, and rather than deny himself this power, a patriotic minister will and should undertake even the odious task of bringing forward proposals of fresh taxation for the purpose of financing the development of nation-building functions, requiring large outlay. Again, is it not after all fair and just that he who is in charge of the growing departments necessitating further taxation should make himself liable for it to the legislative council? The only precaution which must be taken is to see that the allotment for reserved services is not allowed to be unduly bloated above the present level of expenditure and, when possible, is even reduced below that level. And safeguards are provided for with that view in the Report. A division of departments being assumed, the plan devised for provincial finance is as good as any that can be thought of, and it is one of the most satisfactory features of the original scheme. But the key to the budget control provided therein is the exclusive power of the minister to propose more taxation, and this capital feature of the scheme has been excised by the Government of India in their reactionary dispatch.

One or two additional safeguards have been proposed by some persons, with the object of further ensuring that the reserved services will not trench upon the allotment which should properly go to the transferred services, the one embodied in the U. P. Council resolution being the most prominent. It suggested that after all prior

charges and the normal expenditure for all services were provided for, the balance should be divided between the reserved and transferred services in a fixed ratio, 1:9 for example. While this affords sufficient guarantee that the allotment for reserved subjects will not be increased above a certain figure, it affords none that it will be reasonably reduced. The minister's exclusive power of additional taxation, which is not consistent with this plan, affords a guarantee both ways, if used properly. Only it will work indirectly, while the safeguard suggested in the U. P. Council works directly. We hold that the budget procedure laid down in the Report is superior inasmuch as, providing as efficient a guarantee against an inordinate inflation of the allotment for reserved services, it is likely to be more helpful in effecting retrenchments. But it is one thing to do away with the seeming one-sidedness of the arrangement proposed in the Report by statutorily limiting the allotment for reserved subjects which are placed in a privileged position in so far as they have a prior claim on the provincial revenues, and it is quite another to make the arrangement not only seemingly but really one-sided, by removing the reserved services from all budget control, while requiring the assent of a majority of the council for proposals for additional taxation brought in on account of the transferred services. Since the budget is not to be voted at all and the resolutions on allotment are to be only recommendatory, there is no pretence of popular control either over the reserved or the transferred services. What is the meaning, then, of committing the latter services to the care of a popular representative if the popularly elected council is to exercise no control over budget dispositions? With the deprivation of financial control, the administrative control also, which works through the former, disappears, and the result is that the so-called popularisation of provincial Governments becomes a hollow pretence and an empty sham.

#### FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THE REFORM COMMITTEE'S REPORTS.

I HAVE not been able to get a copy of the report of the Southborough Committees yet, and at this stage I can only give the general impressions I have formed from the extracts in the newspapers.

The recommendations made by the Franchise Committee so far as they can be gathered from the official summary appear to be fair and reasonable. The Committee have acted wisely in my opinion in not attempting to establish general principles and in endeavouring to arrive at an adjustment of conflicting claims and interests by the method of reconciliation and agreement as far as possible. However interesting to theorists, the discussion of abstract principles involves endless controversy and delay, and we must congratulate the Committee on their decision not to tread the path preferred by the Government of India. It must also be re-

membered there is nothing like immutability in the constitution of electorates and that we must be prepared to revise and alter our system from time to time in the light of experience. Periodical statutory Commissions at short intervals are contemplated in the reform scheme, and it is the better policy to introduce the scheme even though it contains some minor defects rather than lose time in trying to attain theoretical perfection.

I see nothing to object to in the proposals of the Committee with regard to the strength of the provincial legislative councils, the Indian legislature and the Council of State.

I do not consider the question of female suffrage a live one in this country, and the Committee have rightly considered it premature to extend the franchise to women. The Committee are also right in not seeking any absolute uniformity with regard to the standard of property qualifications. Residence within the constituency and the possession of certain property qualifications being the general conditions of eligibility for voting, there is no reason for not extending the suffrage to subjects of Native States satisfying the necessary requirements of residence and property.

The number of subjects of Native States residing within any particular area is not likely to be so large as to affect the results of election, and a generous policy of recognition of the claims of the subjects of Native States will also lead to a similar recognition of the claims of British Indian subjects in such Native States as have introduced or may introduce constitutional reforms. The proposal of the Committee to confer the franchise on title-holders is based upon the existing practice and may well be adopted. It would also be a graceful recognition of the military services of retired and pensioned officers of the Indian army to extend the franchise to them.

The Government are of opinion that the size of the electorate in Madras should be considerably enlarged. The proposals of the Committee are presumably based upon the figures furnished by the Madras Government. While conceding the desirability of the enlargement of the electorate, I would not on that ground approve of anything which would have the effect of putting off the introduction of the reforms. The recommendations of the Committee with regard to the strength of the elective element in the provincial councils and the proportion thereof to be allotted to the Muhammadan community are acceptable. With regard to the claims to communal representation of the non-Brahman community in the Madras Presidency, the Committee have adopted the only course which it was possible for them to take under the circumstances, and the reasons given by them abundantly justify their conclusion.

The suggestion of the Government of India that there should be six seats for the depressed classes in the Madras Presidency is unworkable as it will be difficult to find so many qualified men among them, and it would be undesirable and

inexpedient to reserve so many as six nominated seats for any one community. I do not agree with the proposal of the Government of India to disfranchise the universities. The professional classes are nowhere represented as such, and in the face of the practice in the United Kingdom it is rather difficult to understand the objection of the Government of India to the representation of the universities on the ground that it will carry politics into academic circles.

The subjects dealt with in the report of the Functions Committee are of much greater importance and complexity, and it is desirable that the earlier despatches of the Government of India bearing on this subject should also be immediately published to enable the public to appreciate correctly the value and significance of the proposals which have been made by the Government of India. The Committee's demarcation of subjects between the Government of India and the provincial Governments seems on the whole to be convenient and reasonable. The inclusion, however, in the All-India list of the law of status, property and civil rights is unnecessary and inexpedient. Taking, for instance, the question of changes in the Hindu Law, there are several matters in regard to which public opinion in a particular province has been in favour of a change, but it has not been possible to carry out such changes owing to the attitude of the Government of India. This is not one of those matters in regard to which uniformity throughout India need be sought. As a matter of fact, there is great diversity in the law of status applicable to different communities, and there is no reason to apprehend that such diversity will be unduly multiplied or that sufficient safeguards cannot be provided against any injury to vested interests.

As regards the question which of the subjects are to be transferred to popular control, the proposals of the Committee are quite sound so far as they go, and the proposals of the Government of India in so far as they dissent from recommendations of the Committee are open to the most serious objection. I would refer in particular to their proposals in regard to the subjects of education and industries. The arguments in favour of including these in the classes of reserved subjects are particularly weak and unconvincing. If educational policy in the past has been a failure it is the Government that have been responsible for it. The Government admit the errors of the past and ask for time to repair them. But they have had over two generations to work out their policy, and it is high time that the control of the whole subject of education should be transferred from the official Government to the popular Government. The proposal of the Government of India for the temporary resumption of a transferred subject until the Governor can get a minister prepared to act in accordance with his wishes and their proposals in regard to the budget must provoke serious opposition. Sir Sankaran Nair must be



congratulated on the firm stand he has taken with regard to these and other retrograde proposals which have emanated from the Government of India.

P. S. SIVASWAMY AYYER.

### THE FRANCHISE COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

THE steady progress of the country towards responsible government essentially requires the development, and if necessary the creation, of a proper electorate which will be imbued with the main principle of loyally accepting the decision of the majority when once that decision has been given. The report of the two committees appointed to formulate definite proposals on two important matters in the M.-C. Report have been published during this week. The Franchise Committee's report appears to us on the whole disappointing, for on most points where in our opinion a better way could have been found they have been content to recommend the worse. The points on which it is fairly satisfactory were all there in the M.-C. Report, but where it had to deal with any new point, it has in our opinion decided wrongly. We are of opinion that while some of the points which we have in mind will not give rise to much controversy in the immediate future, they will be the starting point of a good deal of agitation at no distant date.

The recognition of the principle of direct election, the comparatively wide enfranchisement of males, the size of the councils, the discouragement of commercial electorates, the acceptance of the Congress-League compact on Hindu-Muhammadan question and the retention of the university seats—these are the satisfactory features, and it is needless to dwell long on them. There are some directions in which on each of the above features our commendation is subject to some criticism. Thus it is unfortunate that in the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State the system of indirect election has been favoured. On this matter the Government of India accept indirect election for the Assembly, but propose the creation of a small body of electors for the Council of State. Curiously enough, on this point Sir William Vincent takes in our opinion the most advanced view. The wide enfranchisement of males is perhaps too wide in Bengal and U. P., but is certainly too narrow in the Punjab. On the question of the communal electorates they have resisted all new claims except those of Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans in some of the provinces. In our opinion none of these ought to have been conceded, as the last two would be well represented by the European commerce and planting representatives and European Government officials. It is unfortunate that the non-Brahmans of Southern India led on by personal considerations declined to help the Committee by their opinion, and hence that question has been left in a nebulous state in its Report. We

hope, however, that the solution proposed, viz., the reservation of seats in plural constituencies will be finally accepted by the good sense of that community as it has been accepted by some of the leaders of the non-Brahmans in the Bombay Presidency.

On the Hindu-Muhammadan question the Report is quite satisfactory, but the Government of India is desirous to extend it in the way of giving an increase of ten seats to the Muhammadans of Bengal. But the compact has to be accepted as a whole; for if it is tampered with in one particular to favour one side, the other side will immediately ask for its modification in other cases where the Muhammadans get as much as three and a half times, or over twice their due share. If we were writing on a clean slate and if at Lucknow the desire for any compact at all, even though not the best possible, had not been so strong, we should ourselves have preferred some such arrangement as that suggested by Sir William Vincent in which the Muhammadan representation in the various provinces is over-weighted by a factor varying between one and two according as their numerical strength is greater or smaller. But it is useless to speculate on the might-have-beens; and perhaps, but for this imperfect compact, the reforms would not have come at all.

We proceed to consider the points on which we wish to enter a protest against the Committee's conclusions. We regard as very unfortunate the recommendation against the enfranchisement of women. The arguments about its impracticability or about the want of demand for it have all been heard before on every question of advance on democratic lines. We would undertake to adopt the paragraph and make out a case against responsible government in India in nearly the same words. The question here is one of justice and long statesmanlike views. Of course every one knows that there are some difficulties as there were even in England on the same question. We entirely agree with Mr. Hogg who appears to have been the only member to take a sane view on this question. "He is of opinion that while there is no very general demand for female suffrage at present, no strong opposition to it was revealed by the evidence, and that therefore it is advisable to remove the sex disqualification at the outset of the development of responsible government in India. He would not, however, be in favour of making any special or separate arrangements for the recording of women's votes." We still trust that, in the first Parliament the members of which have been elected by the votes of both men and women, it will still be possible to accomplish this act of bare justice to Indian women.

While we have acknowledged the correctness of the attitude taken by the Committee on the question of communal representation we feel that a natural corollary to this view is the creation of plural constituencies in as large a measure as

possible. The claim of minorities to get a hearing is unquestionable, and plural constituencies are the only means to allow them to have it. The choice between the single vote, the cumulative vote and the transferable vote might have been held over for the future; but any one of these methods would have sufficed to give all reasonable minorities a hearing. But the single remark "elaborate systems of voting" appears to the Committee a sufficient answer to the inherent merit of the systems. In this and several other matters the Committee seem determined to father upon India the discarded fallacies of the west, perhaps with the idea that India should have its experience of bad systems before attaining to the right system; just as uneducated mothers think it necessary that every child should have an attack of measles. We feel that several communities will begin to cry out immediately on the completion of the first election under the new rules, and the wrong demand for communal representation will wax enormously louder. In Bombay several districts are given two seats each, and the Governor in Council is empowered to keep them as plural constituencies if this is found expedient. But we should have liked a definite extension of the principle by constituting two or three districts into a single constituency returning four or five members. The Committee appear to attach an exaggerated importance to a district as a unit of administration, forgetting that their boundaries and even their number are dependent on the sweet will of the executive. Just at the present moment the Thana District is being split up into two districts, and during the last few years Khandesh and Hyderabad (Sind) have been similarly divided. We are afraid that the new Councils will contain men of only one shade of political opinion, and in the Deccan districts they are likely to belong predominantly to one caste.

Another point on which the Committee has made a distinctly retrograde recommendation is the residential qualification for membership of the Legislative Council. They are not consistent in their recommendation, however, and exempt Madras, Bengal, U. P., Bihar and Assam from this condition. We feel that if the Councils are to be really representative, independent and full of intelligence and ability, this condition must go. The Committee and the Government of India appear to have been obsessed by the fear of carpet-baggers, but, in this case as in several others in politics, a slang word is made to do duty for sound sense and argument. In England there is no such restriction and we have yet to learn that the British House of Commons is for that reason incapable of watching the proper interests of the whole country. In India the differentiation between the town and the country is not at all complete; every well-known man in big cities has connections which he regularly keeps in the country and probably owns land there. Is it not likely that the effect of this condition will be the cutting off of the tall poppies?

Generally everybody who has some grit in him gravitates to the big centres in the course of his work or professions, and to say that the Council of a hundred and twenty is to contain at least sixty people who are not conversant with the larger life of towns, cannot express themselves well in English, are not accustomed to put their points properly in debate and are likely to feel awed by the strange atmosphere of the Council hall is to ensure a less efficient legislative and administrative body. In any case it is always found that a good local man has always a great advantage over an outsider as regards canvassing, &c., and will generally succeed except against a towering outsider. It is only when such a man is not available that in England the central party organisation is asked to supply a suitable candidate. In India parties have not got regular and wealthy organisations. The influence of the local candidate is, therefore, likely to be far bigger. We can give instances of this even in the present Councils; and the situation will be even more favourable for the local candidate when the constituencies consist of one district or even two districts as we recommend. Again, the class of local candidates whom it is desirable to see in the Councils, *viz.*, that of landholders has been given special constituencies all by themselves. Hence there will be always some real mofussil element in the Councils in any case. The absurdity of this residential qualification will be immediately realised when one considers that a habitual resident of Ahmedabad, Poona, Karachi, Surat or Sholapur will not be able to stand as a candidate for his district as these cities are made special constituencies by themselves. Thus Dewan Bahadur Godbole will be precluded from standing for the Poona District as he lives in Poona although he is the President of the District Local Board. We feel that in constituting our new bodies we must trust the electorates and not fetter them in the fear that they will misuse their privileges. Their political education cannot be accomplished without a large measure of confidence. It is natural that officials would always like to have milk-and-water councillors to deal with. As regards carpet-baggers, can we not retort that the members of the Civil Service itself who claim to speak for the masses are themselves glorified carpet-baggers who only get handsomely paid for their carpet-bagging?

We would also like to enter a mild protest against property being recognised as the sole qualification for franchise. It is, however, not a matter of much consequence now that this property qualification has been pitched very low; but we should have liked to see some high educational qualification recognised. Some members of a joint family are likely to be disfranchised on this account, and as an extreme case we may mention that some members of the Servants of India Society will be without a vote under these rules.

We are glad that the present right of the Governor to debar a man from standing as a candidate has been taken away by the Committee, and that

the Government of India grudgingly accept this recommendation saying, "Its loss may be inconvenient, but we are not disposed to press for its maintenance; we incline to regard a provision of this nature as inconsistent with the new conception of representation." We should have liked to see this inclination more often in evidence. On the question of university representation the Committee has retained the existing privilege, but the Government of India are against it. Government is mortally afraid that "the only result of a departure from the principles of the report (in retaining the eight university seats) will be to add to the representation of the professional classes and to do something to carry politics into academic circles." People in Bombay have not forgotten who obtained the exclusion of English history from the B. A. course and what the underlying motives were. They have also only recently read in the papers that professors in Colleges in the Punjab are required to teach their students the official version of the case for the Rowlatt bills and thus to damn the non-official opponents of the bills by ignoring what they have to say. From the Government point of view, politics in inverted commas mean the other fellow's views, surely! When special representation is given to all and sundry and when even in England the number of university seats has been increased

but last year, it is taking too high a line to object to university representation in the name of the theory of democratic government. We should have, however, preferred if the present Bombay Government's proposal to give two seats to the Bombay university to be filled by all registered graduates on the principle of the cumulative vote had been accepted by the Committee. Of course on this point of university representation, I speak with a certain feeling of awkwardness, being the representative of the university in the local Council myself; but I have no doubt that the recommendation is sound in principle.

We have mentioned several points in the report, and we could if we had time consider many others also. We think, however, that the whole public should insist on getting forward with the bill in Parliament and not allow the Government of India to indulge in its wish of referring several points to local Governments again. This is the favourite method of obstructing measures which one would like to oppose but dare not. The immediate need is for something done; we would be content with a bill not quite perfect rather than wait for ideal perfection. Perhaps in the Joint Committee of the two houses on the bill some of the points may be again threshed out and even improved; but we have no hesitation in saying that there will be keen public disappointment if in this proposed going from pillar to post and post to pillar the passing of the bills is delayed beyond this year.

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