

The Servant of India

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Topics of the Week.

Late Sir B. N. Sarma.

SIR B. N. SARMA who passed away on Thursday last was not much in the public eye during the last six years of his life, but all the same had a public career remarkable in many ways. After serving in the Madras Legislative Council for two terms, he succeeded in securing election to the Imperial Legislative Council. Here too he gave evidence of his earnest study of public questions. He was an advocate of linguistic provinces and the debate he initiated on this subject in 1918 had the late Mr. Montagu as an interested listener. It may be remembered that Sir B. N. Sarma was a member of the deputation that went to England in 1914 in connection with the Indian Councils Bill; and was a signatory to the historic Nineteen Members' memorandum demanding self-government for this country. At the National Congress held at Amritsar in 1919 when feeling was running very high over the martial law happenings in the Punjab Sir B. N. Sarma found himself in the minority of one in the voting on the resolution demanding the immediate recall of the then Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford. Next year he was appointed a member of the Viceroy's executive council. His retirement in 1926 was followed by his appointment as President of the Railway Rates Committee which office he held till the day of his death.

Ordinance Bill in the Assembly.

THE long-drawn-out debate on the Ordinance Bill in the Assembly concluded last week by the passage of the Bill by 56 votes to 31. So far as can be seen from the telegraphic reports of the debates published in the press, the Bill as it emerged from the Select Committee was not allowed to under-

go any improvement at the hands of non-official members and all amendments, whether reasonable or otherwise, aimed at making it less obnoxious to public opinion by lessening the rigors of its provisions were mercilessly turned down. This was possible because some reactionary non-officials combined with the official bloc helped to give Government a standing majority. Such an easy victory for the Government would have been impossible if only all the non-official members had made it a point to be at their posts of duty, the absentees numbering about 50. Their constituencies are really entitled to an explanation from them as to how their non-attendance was unavoidable. It is their absence more than anything else which facilitated the passage of the Bill in its present form. To those unacquainted with political conditions in India, this can be represented as the endorsement by the popular House of the repressive measures set in motion by the Government on their own responsibility nearly a year ago but now embodied in the Bill. Those, who are at all in touch with the working of the Assembly will, however, have no difficulty in realising that its action reflects public opinion no more faithfully than the sanatan Hindu may be said to do Mahatma Gandhi's views on the subject of the untouchables' entry into Hindu temples. Even as things are, the result would probably have been different if the fate of the Bill had been made to depend upon the votes only of the non-official members, unrepresentative as the present personnel of the Assembly undoubtedly is. The enactment of the Bill into law only awaits the approval of the Upper House which will be forthcoming as a matter of course. In the circumstances all that can be done is to express the hope that the measure, conferring as it does on the executive wide and arbitrary powers of restricting personal liberty, freedom of the press, of meeting, and of association and other valued civil rights will be administered in a sympathetic and reasonable spirit. Otherwise the deeply cherished liberty of the subject is hopelessly doomed during the three years of its existence on the statute book.

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Non-coercive Coercion.

MAHATMA GANDHI has once again repeated his denial that his fasts were coercive. His power for self-deception is as amazing as it is disconcerting. The *Indian Witness*, the Christian weekly of Lucknow, not unfriendly to the Mahatma, felt obliged to say with reference to a recent statement of his that "his denials have not cleared it of the charge" made against him, viz. that he was quibbling with words when he sought to distinguish between coercion and pressure. It rightly remarked that "to be forced to act under outside pressure is to be coerced." With reference to his description of his fast as a "weapon", it says that "weapons are used to destroy the free action of others. Their

very purpose is to destroy or coerce. There is nothing of argument or moral persuasion here." In his very outspoken address to the Maharashtra Dharma Parishad last week in Poona Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta said that the Mahatma's fasts "have a real and unmistakable coercive effect on us. They coerce us into silence and surrender."

The Hindu community is particularly susceptible to this type of coercion. But even the worm might turn, Mr. Jamnadas Mehta did not mince words when he said that if the Mahatma persisted in his shock-tactics there was danger of reaction. The Parishad while sympathetic to temple-entry passed a resolution strongly disapproving of the fast method of the Mahatma. This sentiment was anticipated on general grounds by the *Indian Witness* when it said, "We have noted that there seems to be practical agreement throughout India in objecting to the present use of fasting. It is only personal regard for Gandhiji that tempers the condemnation. The time has come to pass over personal considerations. The public use of fasting should be accorded the condemnation it deserves."

The evil wrought by the Mahatmaji's method in a wider sphere is well brought out in Mr. Jamnadas' speech, already referred to.

"It is not without its dangers particularly in the affairs of a country struggling for freedom. Even in ordinary times the mass of mankind are averse to hard thinking and would very gladly let others do the thinking for them, but when a man like Mahatmaji does all the thinking for us, and what is more insists on doing so, the dangers of an unthinking and uninformed public opinion blindly accepting what it is told are of the most serious character. That is the actual state of things in India to-day. All public questions are decided by one man alone. As if this evil was not enough Mahatmaji has been latterly claiming that in all that he says and does he feels the presence of God with him. The result of such a declaration on minds, which already offer unflinching obedience to him, cannot be in doubt; and to crown all, he has now started, again in the name of God, not merely fasting but fasting unto death unless a certain thing happens as he declares it must happen. The simple consequence of all these facts is the total suspension of judgment, the paralysis of reason and the emergence of abject credulity in the affairs of the country."

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The Modern Review.

WE offer our cordial felicitations and good wishes to the *Modern Review* of Calcutta, which, under the able and distinguished editorship of Babu Ramananda Chatterjee, has recently completed twenty-six years of very useful public service. Among the Indian monthly magazines the *Modern Review* undoubtedly holds the first place in the affections of the people of India and is perhaps the most representative of modern Indian national thought. In a vast country like India it is well nigh impossible for a periodical to maintain an all-India character and not slip back to provincialism. The *Modern Review* is among the few that made the gallant attempt to reflect nationalism as distinguished from provincialism. We wish it every success.

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Madras Slum Welfare Conference.

THE Slum Welfare Conference held in Madras a few weeks ago was organised by the Triplicane Sociological Brotherhood, a social service organisation of over 25 year's standing, which has been doing its best to ameliorate the conditions in the slums in the Triplicane area in Madras city. The conditions of the slums in the Triplicane area were studied

by four sub-committees of the Brotherhood and reports on the following subjects were submitted to the Conference for its consideration: (1) Housing and Sanitation; (2) Starting of Community Centres; (3) Social Legislation; and (4) Compulsory Primary Education and Child Labour.

The reports considered by the Conference reveal a sad state of affairs. There are about 22 slums in the area, all lying in a belt near the famous Marina of Triplicane. There are three large fishermen colonies, a big colony of Oddas (Corporation scavengers) and the remaining are all occupied by Adi-Dravidas. Most of these slums are on private lands. All the dwellings are huts with low thatched roofs. The people pay a ground rent, ranging from 6 to 12 annas a month. Anyone who walks through these slums will note that they are absolutely unfit for human habitation. But the fact is that here live a large population of labouring classes who contribute in an important manner to the life of the City of Madras. Speaking about the slum conditions, the report states:

"There are no water taps in the majority of the privately owned Cheries. The people use the nearest water taps on the roadsides. Inside Mattankuppam and Palayasudukadu there are a few water taps. Street cleaning is not adequately done in the privately owned slums. The huts are built in such an irregular manner that the rubbish carts are unable to get into them. Street dirtying by the children and by the indiscriminate throwing of rubbish is a common feature. As there are not sufficient bathing platforms, the people make enclosures in front of their huts. The water from these enclosures runs into the streets. So does the sullage water. For the whole area under enquiry, with a slum population of about 8,000 there are only nine public latrines. The people are therefore forced to use the banks of the Buckingham Canal as latrine. There is no street lighting in any of the private Cheries. Barring a few exceptions, this is the case with Government-owned slums as well. The result of all these conditions is better imagined than described."

What is the remedy for this deplorable situation? The Triplicane Conference was right in prescribing better housing and greater sanitary facilities. More water taps, latrines, cleaner streets, and better amenities of life will certainly go a long way in solving the slum problem. But these will at best only improve the external conditions of living. There is also another kind of work to be done. The slum resident has to undergo a regeneration, if we may say so. He has to be lifted from the kingdom of darkness in which he now lives. The children have to be made to attend school. The adults should be made to have the benefits of education. To meet this need, the Triplicane Conference proposes to start Community Centres. These Centres will foster existing communal organisations like caste Panchayats, improve the earning capacity of the people, start co-operative societies, establish adult classes, and provide better amusements for the people. The successful working of such centres is likely to lead to a diminution in the drink evil, and to introduce a ray of hope and a touch of refinement into the lives of the people.

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Mission to Lepers.

IT is seen from the fifty-eighth year's report of the Mission to Lepers that its 37 Indian Homes had a total of 6,225 inmates. In addition, we are told, there were 760 healthy children of infected parents, for whom special separate provision was made. 15 other asylums received financial assistance from the mission funds and 4,418 out-patients attended the dispensaries maintained by the Mission for treatment. Some idea as to the magnitude of the medical work done under the mission's auspices may be formed

from the fact that at the largest Home, as many as nearly 28,000 injections were given, 52,000 persons attended for the purpose of having their sores dressed and 18,000 had their eyes attended to at its eye clinic. The total expenditure came to nearly Rs. 8 lakhs, nearly half of which seems to have been met out of Government grants. The report states that almost half of the total income in India (even including Government grants) comes from foreign countries to which India has every reason to be grateful. The universal financial stringency did not fail to be felt by the Mission which was under the necessity of cutting down its expenditure. This was rendered possible owing to the hearty cooperation of the inmates of the Mission's Homes who in some cases decided to forego half of their meat rations, and in others imposed upon themselves a voluntary cut of as much as 37½ per cent. in the allowance given to them for the purchase of essential articles of food. Seeing that, according to the last census, India's lepers number more than a million, there can be no doubt that the Mission occupies an important place in India's medical arrangements.

Articles.

R. T. C.—THIRD WEEK.

DEFENCE.

IT was widely feared in Indian nationalist circles before the R. T. Conference started that, with the support of the reactionary Muslims, Sir Samuel Hoare would so wangle things that the question of central responsibility would not be raised there at all, but that the British Indian delegates would be reduced to choosing between provincial autonomy and no reforms. That fear was happily belied in the second week of the Conference, for the question of central responsibility was discussed for one whole week and the principle accepted by Government without question. Indeed, the comment that the Special Commissioner of the Free Press made in his London dispatch on Sir Samuel Hoare's statement on the subject of reservations and safeguards was unexpectedly favourable. "I understand," he said, "that the progressive section is inclined to feel that Sir Samuel Hoare has accepted the principle of all the points raised by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. They, however, feel that much depends on actual drafting of the Reforms Bill and the filling up of details." On the other hand, we are told by the Free Press Commissioner that "Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. Jayakar are reconciled to the earlier introduction of provincial autonomy provided a single Bill incorporating responsibility at the centre within a definite period not exceeding twelve months, and with or without federation, will be introduced. They argue that if the States do not want to co-operate British India must not suffer." Their conviction seems to have been shaken a bit about the inevitability of federation. Another nationalist fear was that, under the restrictions implied in the "fixed agenda," the question of defence would not be discussed in the Conference but would be relegated to an expert committee. This fear too has now proved groundless, for the question was discussed from all points of view for three days in the

third week, though it cannot be said that the discussion has been such as to afford satisfaction to the progressive elements in the Conference.

It was agreed by Indian as well as British delegates that for a time defence must be a reserved subject, and that during this period of transition it must be under the control of the Governor-General. But the Indian delegates, in order not to leave the eventual transfer of the subject in doubt, asked for the insertion in the preamble to the Constitution Act of a declaration on the lines of the first resolution unanimously adopted by the Defence Sub-Committee of the first R.T.C., viz., that with the development of the new political structure in India, "the defence of India must to an increasing extent be the concern of the Indian people, and not of the British Government alone." It appears that Sir Samuel Hoare promised to look into this suggestion. The next demand of the more advanced section of the Indian delegates was to the effect that the Army Member, though in the final resort under the control of the Governor-General, should be selected from amongst the elected members of the legislature. On this Sir Samuel Hoare was not prepared to go beyond the view embodied in the Federal Structure Committee's report of last year that "so long as the Governor-General is responsible for defence, the constitution must provide that the Defence Minister should be appointed at the unfettered discretion of the Governor-General." He might be an Indian or a European; he might be taken from among the members of the legislature or from outside. No kind of binding on this matter would be acceptable to Government.

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru repeated his former suggestion that the Defence Member too should be regarded as a limb of the entire Ministry owing joint responsibility to the legislature; and that he like others should be under an obligation to resign if on any motion concerning a subject other than his own the Ministry is defeated. In the latter event Sir Tej Bahadur was however prepared to give power to the Governor-General to reappoint the Defence Minister immediately after his resignation. This proposal Sir Samuel Hoare was not prepared to entertain. If joint responsibility could not be provided for, Sir Tej Bahadur wanted at any rate to have joint deliberations, and therefore he asked that joint discussions of all important subjects should be prescribed in the Preamble to the Act between members in charge of reserved and transferred subjects in the central government. Sir Samuel Hoare recognised the need for encouraging joint deliberations, but thought that the object would be best secured by laying down in the Instrument of Instructions that it would be a duty of the Governor-General to bring all members of the Federal Cabinet into discussions on questions of defence and the Defence Member into those on other questions. Thus in some form or other this matter would be referred to in the documents relating to the constitution.

With regard to supplies the existing position is that the legislature cannot discuss the Army Budget unless the Governor-General gives permission to do

so. In fact the permission is given every year, but it can under the letter of the constitution be as well refused. Indians want this position to be altered and the legislature given the constitutional power to discuss the budget. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru put forward this demand on behalf of the Indian delegates. He asked for the budget merely to be discussed in the legislature and not voted upon. He also suggested that the budget should be prepared by the Defence Member and submitted to an advisory committee consisting of himself, the Prime Minister, Commander-in-Chief, Finance Member and Home Member. The committee was only to make recommendations, the Governor General being left free to take the final decision. On this point Sir Samuel Hoare expressed himself in favour of some kind of committee like the Committee of Imperial Defence being set up, but he would not like it to be a statutory committee, as the Committee of Imperial Defence is not. He also seemed to favour the establishment of a standing committee of the legislature to deal with defence problems. It was a matter, he said, within the absolute discretion of the legislature.

The view was generally expressed that the army expenditure must be drastically reduced, in order to put federal finance and provincial finance on a stable basis. Sir Samuel Hoare hoped that it would be possible in future to lessen expenditure but argued that they must not on *prima facie* grounds arrive at a certain figure and tell themselves that it would be adequate to the needs of the country now and for all time. In the second R. T. C. it was suggested that a basic figure for army expenditure should be settled subject to a review after five years by the legislature and the executive, and the Federal Structure Committee reported at the time that "the details of any such plan should receive further careful examination." No such examination seems to have been given to the suggestion, which was summarily turned down by the Secretary of State. Among the suggestions made for bringing part of the army policy under the control of the legislature one was that the Indian army should not be employed outside India without the legislature's consent. Sir Samuel Hoare rejected this suggestion; but it would appear that he did so only in so far as the army had to be despatched abroad for the sake of defending India. It might be that in certain circumstances the defence of India would, in the opinion of the Governor-General, be best secured by sending the army beyond the borders of the country, in which case it should not be necessary to seek the approval of the legislature. If, however, it was a question of giving help to foreign powers in enterprises not concerning India, Sir Samuel Hoare seemed to agree that it could not be done without the legislature's consent.

But the main bone of contention was as regards a definite provision for completely Indianising the officer ranks within a certain period of time. This demand did not find place in the memorandum presented by Mr. Jayakar on behalf of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, but it was made at the Conference. It is known that Lord Rawlinson, some ten years ago, put

forward a programme for the completion of the process of Indianization within twenty-eight years, and the Government was asked to bind itself to some such time-table. But the automatic principle was rejected by Sir Samuel Hoare, on the ground that even the present scheme of Indianisation, under which one division and one cavalry brigade are proposed to be Indianised, is but an experiment subject to modification if the result is found unsatisfactory. Even the Shea Committee later put forward a programme for Indianisation to be completed within thirty years, and this programme was accepted by the Government of India. Naturally it could not have been formulated without due regard to the maintenance of efficiency. In this connection it may be added that Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer, who was a member of the Chetwode Committee of last year, has stated in the *Manchester Guardian* recently that it is quite possible to fix a time limit for the completion of Indianization of the Army and that it ought to be done if the constitutional reforms are to be at all satisfactory. In this matter Sir Samuel Hoare's attitude caused grave discontent and disquietude among all Indian delegates, including Mahomedans as well as Hindus, though it does not appear that the British Indian delegates derived much assistance from the States' representatives. The position of the latter was very much what was stated last year by the Nawab of Bhopal on behalf of the States' delegation. "As long as the Crown is responsible for the defence of India, it must determine how it discharges that responsibility and carries out its obligations in that connection. It is therefore for the Crown to judge and decide how far, consistently with its obligations to the country as a whole and to the Indian States, it can meet the various points of view put forward here." The delegation was then unwilling to express its dissatisfaction and so was it this year.

FEDERAL FINANCE.

If on the subject of defence the States' delegation merely held back from giving a vigorous backing to the British Indian delegates, on the subject of federal finance they went clean over to Sir Samuel Hoare's side, placing themselves in opposition to a solid phalanx not only of Indian delegates including Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Parsee, but also Anglo-Indian and European delegates, for all these were wholly unanimous. So far, in all discussions on the apportionment of the financial resources between the federation and units, there was complete agreement on all hands as to the necessity of allocating the proceeds of income-tax to the provinces. The Peel Committee, which contained four representatives of the States, made a unanimous recommendation to that effect. They said that unless the whole of the taxes on incomes were redistributed to the provinces, "it will be impossible to secure, even ultimately, a uniformity of federal burdens as between the provinces and the federating States." If by transferring income-tax receipts to the provinces, the federal government was to found to be in deficit, this Committee proposed that the deficit should however be met by contributions from the provinces, which ought to be reduced when finances improved

and finally extinguished. So emphatic were they on a nearly extinction of such provincial contributions that they recommended that a provision should be inserted in the constitution for an annual reduction of the contributions so that they may cease after ten or fifteen years. It was left to an Expert Committee to determine the basis on which the income-tax should be distributed among the provinces and contributions levied on them. The net effect of the recommendations of this Expert Committee was to allocate to each province a proportion of the receipts collected in it. On this Committee, too, known as the Percy Committee, there were two representatives of the States, although not a single British Indian representative was included in it. This Committee's recommendations too were unanimous.

But Sir Samuel Hoare set aside the recommendations of both these Committees, and proposed that the proceeds of the income-tax must be retained by the federal government. At present the finances both of the Government of India and the provincial Governments are in an exceptionally weak position, to remedy which he suggested certain emergency measures. But even when normal conditions returned, it would be necessary, he said, to give the proceeds of income-tax, or at any rate the major part of it, to the federal government in order to maintain it in a solvent condition. It might be possible when federal finances improved to transfer certain heads of central revenue to the provinces, but for the present there was no alternative to letting the federal government keep income-tax for itself. This would no doubt hamper the growth of the provinces, but he said it was more important to preserve the financial stability of the federal government. For some time, it is true, the provincial governments would be on a bare subsistence level, but he proposed to give them a right, if they would develop their resources, of levying a surcharge on income-tax to the tune of 12½ per cent.

To this reversal of the financial settlement proposed so far, delegate after delegate from British India raised vehement objection, Sir Cowasji Jahangir, Sir A. P. Patro, Dr. Shafa'at Ahmed Khan, Sir Purshotamdas Thakordas, Sir Hubert Carr, &c. But Sir Akbar Hydari, Sir Sukhdev Prasad and other delegates from the States supported Sir Samuel Hoare. Sir Akbar Hydari found it rather difficult to go back upon the recommendations of the Peel and Percy Committees to both of which he was a party, but he defended himself on the ground that the opinion expressed by these Committees was only provisional and tentative. Both he and Patiala's representative made it clear that the states would join the federation only if it was a financially sound concern and that it would not be financially sound unless the federal government had placed at its disposal British India's income-tax to which the States made no contribution.

A deadlock has thus arisen, in which for once the whole of the British Indian delegation is of one mind, the British Government's and the Indian States' representatives being ranged as a body against it. It would appear that Sir Akbar Hydari is now trying to find a way out of the impasse by suggesting that that part of the proceeds of the income-tax should be distributed to the provinces which was not required for the service of the pre-federation debt. However, such a connection between the debt and the income-tax the Percy Committee have denied in express terms in their report. "It will be observed," they say, "that we have not sought to justify this retention of a percentage of income-tax receipts as a federal source of revenue during the early years of the federation by any theoretical considerations. We have not, for instance, suggested that it should be regarded as a special contribution from British India towards pre-federation pension charges or the service of the pre-federation debt."

BOMBAY VILLAGE PANCHAYAT BILL.

THE Village Panchayat Bill pending consideration by the Bombay Legislative Council does not aim merely at the consolidation of the Act relating to village panchayats passed in 1920 or its amendment in unimportant particulars. It is designed "to increase their (panchayats) utility in the further development of local self-government in rural areas." The need officially felt for making provision for advancing village self-government may be regarded as an indication of the fact that the popular view about the failure of the old Act in promoting the growth of the panchayat movement is also shared by the Government, though the conviction forced itself upon them somewhat late. It is needless to do anything more than mention the number of these village bodies in order to show that the Act passed twelve years ago had not fulfilled the anticipations formed of it. The number of villages in the Bombay presidency is nearly 27,000. Of these not more than 260 or less than one per cent. could boast of a panchayat in 1931. It should also be noted that the panchayats are to be found only in the presidency proper, not a single one being yet established in Sind. In comparison with Bengal and U. P., the record of Bombay in this matter must be said to be

poor. The number of village unions in Bengal is, roughly speaking, 6,500, out of which nearly 2,900 had panchayats working in them. The panchayats in U. P. numbered very nearly 4,600, and served 22 per cent. of the population, while in Bombay they catered to the needs of only 3½ per cent. of the population. No more proof is needed in support of the statement that the existing panchayat law had virtually failed of its purpose.

Two causes are assigned for this. The first is the very restricted scope allowed by the Act for the activities of panchayats. In the Indian mind a panchayat is associated principally with the settlement of disputes; but it was precisely these judicial functions which the Bombay Government for reasons none too easy to appreciate could not be induced to confer on them. The difficulties surrounding the grant of these powers to the panchayats were well known and the Decentralisation Commission could not be supposed to be unaware of them when it unequivocally recommended that panchayats "should have civil and criminal jurisdiction in petty cases arising within the village." By setting at naught this important recommendation of the Commission the Bombay Government helped to prejudice the success

of its panchayat law. Popular representatives in touch with rural conditions who were in the legislative council at the time had foreseen as much and not hesitated to sound a clear note of warning to that effect. But the Government was in no mood to profit by it and had no difficulty, on the strength of its standing majority, in securing the passage of the measure.

But this was not the only point in respect of which the Bombay Panchayat Act contravened the deliberately expressed wishes of the Decentralisation Commission. Dealing with the suggestion for the grant to the new village bodies of the right to levy taxation, the Commission observed:

"We consider it essential to the popularity and efficiency of the panchayat system that it should not be associated with any new form of local taxation, for the evidence shows that the imposition of this character has made such bodies as the existing welfare and sanitary committees unpopular."

But the Commission's advice was completely lost on the Bombay Government. Instead of allowing the new bodies a large amount of latitude in the matter of raising funds, they made it obligatory upon them to levy a house-tax which is generally regarded as having largely contributed to the unpopularity of the panchayat system in Bombay. From this point of view even the new Bill cannot be said to be an improvement; for like the 1920 Act it makes the imposition of a house-tax compulsory, whatever other taxes the panchayats may or may not impose. The justification for this course of action is that the tax provides some stable income to the panchayats. While this is undeniably necessary it would have been better to have left the new bodies to find out their own sources of income.

But to go on with the new Bill. Public opinion seems apprehensive that as a result of its passage panchayats would be foisted on unwilling villages. Section 5, which says that "in every village there shall be a panchayat", would appear to have given rise to this fear. But a little reflection will show that the fear is largely groundless. The Bill lays down a definite procedure for the establishment of a panchayat which seems to be designed to protect the residents of a village from any pressure in that respect. Even supposing that in some cases panchayats are brought into being by overzealous officials in disregard of local feeling, their satisfactory and harmonious working would be impossible without the willing cooperation of the village people. Of this the Government will have to assure themselves before they select any village where a panchayat could be successfully started. In fact, the U. P. panchayat rules clearly enjoin upon the Collector the duty of finding out that the residents concerned favour the establishment of a panchayat. Some such provision will, we suppose, be made even in this presidency. But no more evidence is required to prove the hollowness of this fear than the circumstance that, in spite of the presence in the old law of a stiffly worded clause, not more than one village in a hundred possesses a panchayat.

The new Bill provides for a minimum of five and a maximum of seven elected members. It is suggested in some quarters that the numbers should be raised to 9 and 15 respectively, as in C. P. The suggestion appears to be made in ignorance of an important difference in the provisions of the C. P. Act and the new Bombay Bill. While the former contemplated the creation by the Deputy Commissioner of a village bench for the trial of civil and criminal cases out of the members of the panchayat, the Bombay Bill as also the U. P. Act, which provides for very nearly the same number of mem-

bers as in Bombay, contemplates the exercise of the judicial powers by the whole panchayat. The C. P. Panchayats thus form so many panels from which the selection of persons for the hearing of civil and criminal cases in the village may be made. Unless it is decided to reproduce this practice in Bombay, there is no reason why the proposed strength of these bodies need be disturbed.

A point closely touching the personnel of panchayats may here be conveniently dealt with. It is provided in the Bill that the revenue patel should be an ex-officio member and that the Inamdar should invariably be nominated by the Collector. Objection is rightly taken to both these provisions. The inclusion of the patel was justified, while the existing Act was under discussion in the Legislative Council, on the ground of his administrative experience and was to be tolerated only "in the initial stages of their (panchayats) working." But these considerations are far from convincing. Cannot the patel's administrative experience be made available to the panchayats without his being placed on them ex-officio? The panchayat system may be said to have gone beyond the initial stage after having been in existence for twelve years, so that the plea for the patel's membership of the panchayats has no legs to stand upon.

The proposed nomination of the Inamdar also deserves condemnation from more than one point of view. In the first place, the provision introduces the element of nomination which was non-existent in the old Act, and must be characterised as a retrogression. In the second place, why should the Inamdar in these democratic days be brought in by the backdoor of nomination? Cannot he, if he is so keen on serving the public and earning its confidence, secure his election to the panchayat? In so far as the Bill embodies the element of nomination, it clearly goes against the recommendation of the Decentralisation Commission, which definitely set its face against "the appointment of the members of the panchayat by outside nomination." The best plan would really have been to have suggested a wholly elective constitution for these bodies. Even in 1920 Dewan Bahadur Harilal Desai, who was then a non-official member of the legislature and who later became a Minister to the local Government, had moved an amendment recommending that the panchayats should be wholly elected bodies. The suggestion may be repeated with greater force on the present occasion and its effectuation should be insisted upon in the interest of the promotion of a sense of responsibility in the new bodies. This will doubtless be blurred by the presence of the ex-officio and nominated members who would not be accountable to the residents of the village.

The absence of any provision in the older measure preventing the patel from offering himself for election as a sarpanch, which is retained even in the new Bill, aroused a good deal of criticism from non-official members at the time. So strong was the feeling on the point that Mr. B. S. Karak, himself a nominated member and one who is noted for his moderation and level-headedness, moved an amendment which, if carried, would have disqualified the patel for the office of president of the panchayat. It speaks volumes for the reasonable character of his amendment that it could have no more than 20 opponents as against its 17 supporters. It is to be hoped that the select committee will amend the Bill so as to disqualify the patel as also the nominated member for the office not only of the president but even of his deputy, seeing that the latter is expected to do duty for the former when for any reason he is unable to discharge his functions. The tenure of the

sarpanch and deputy-sarpanch was laid down in the 1920 Act as one year, which provision is repeated in the present Bill. The better plan would be to leave the panchayats themselves to fix the tenure.

The reasons underlying the proposed ban on the female membership of panchayats are difficult to appreciate. Educationally, even the males in the villages cannot be said to be too far ahead of women and there is no reason why the latter need be discriminated against. It is also inconsistent to allow women to become members of more important bodies like the Assembly and the provincial councils and at the same time to refuse the membership of such comparatively unimportant bodies as panchayats to them. The disqualification is unsupportable on any grounds we can think of and ought to go.

The Bill makes a great advance on the 1920 legislation in the matter of the functions of the new bodies. If we take into account only the municipal duties proposed to be entrusted to them and compare them with these in the old law, it is true that not much advance will be noticeable; perhaps all such administrative and other duties as could be transferred to them had already been handed to them. But the provision in the Bill investing panchayats with the power to try petty civil and criminal cases is a new departure and a departure of the right kind. It will no doubt be found to be a blessing by the people in rural parts who have very often to undergo much monetary expense and trouble in fighting their cases in taluka courts in the absence of provision for their disposal in the village itself. The procedure in these village courts must needs be as simple as possible, as suggested by the Decentralisation Commission. We hope this requirement has not been lost sight of. The ban upon pleaders in connection with cases to be heard by panchayats which was also a feature of the old law, will, we doubt not, be universally welcomed.

At the same time it is desirable that if the new bodies are to be made self-sufficient, as far as may be, for the needs of the villages, they should be invested with powers in regard to the management of village forest areas and village irrigation works, of course with suitable safeguards. This was suggested by the Decentralisation Commission; but the framers of the Bill have apparently disregarded its recommendation. The Madras Government however have thought fit to adopt it with the result that by their Local Boards Act they have taken to themselves the power to transfer to panchayats "the management, protection and maintenance of village forests whether reserved for fuel and fodder or for other purposes" "subject to such conditions and the payment of such contribution, if any, by the panchayat as they (the Local Government) may prescribe." Similar provision is also made in Madras for handing over to panchayats the control of village irrigation works under conditions to be laid down by the local Government. While the Bombay Bill was under discussion at the first reading stage, Mr. B. S. Kamat suggested an enlargement of the functions of the village bodies in these two directions, a suggestion which deserves to be sympathetically considered by the select committee. We hope everything will be done to bring the Bill into line with the Madras Act in this respect. There is really no reason why what has been possible in Madras should be regarded as impracticable in Bombay.

From what has been said above, it will be seen that the Bill is a considerable advance on the existing Act; but in one or two respects it seems to register a set-back. Let us explain how. In case of doubt about who was the senior officiating revenue

patel who should be ex-officio member of the panchayat the 1920 Act left the final decision to the president of the district local board. Similarly, it empowered the board to order the suspension of the operation of any resolution of a panchayat which it may regard as obnoxious from the public point of view. In like manner, it authorised the district local board to arrange for the execution of any emergent work. The Bill takes away these powers from the board and hands them to the Collector, which is unquestionably a retrograde step and must be avoided. It may be pointed out that in these respects the Bill differs from the C. P. Panchayat Act which lodges these powers in the district council.

WORK AMONGST VILLE-PARLE HARIJANS.

IN view of the wide-spread public interest in the problem of untouchables, it would not be improper to describe the conditions of life of the Harijans who live and work in a quiet corner of the vast city of Bombay. It is a description of the Bhangi Nivas—sweepers' locality—of Ville-Parle. This suburb of Bombay has an area of three square miles with a population of about 12,000. There are about 1700 bungalows and the annual income of the municipality is Rs. 70,000. Out of this about Rs. 31,000 were spent on conservancy during last year. On the east side of the Railway line, in huts built of old rusted tin plates live the Bhangis. The land is low-lying and there is no access to it except by a foot-path. There is no arrangement for water or light and it is impossible to go anywhere near it by night. On one side of the footpath is heaped up the rubbish of the town and it is ever giving out a foul smell. Just near it is a garage for the municipal lorries used for loading the rubbish and a water tap for cleaning and washing the tins that are used for carrying human excreta. A few of the Bhangis get their drinking water from this tap and that too with the favour of the Mukadam! On the other side of the foot-path are arranged in a line the municipal hand-carts used for the same purpose as the big tins mentioned above. It is within such surroundings that the Bhangis—men, women and children—spend their leisure hours. The tin huts on the low-lying land shelter them from the sun, rain and wind all the year round!

The place being in the midst of fields, in addition to mosquitoes, there are rats, snakes and scorpions to harass the poor Harijans. Owing to ignorance, a number of evil customs prevail amongst them; and petty quarrels, use of abusive language, extreme poverty, bagging, and dirty living are the order of the day. Because of the dirtiest work that they do, their foul habits, insanitary surroundings, idleness etc. they do not even take a bath every day. The consequence is that all sorts of skin diseases are rampant among them. In the Bhangi Colony there are 31 families with a total of 109 persons. Of these 35 are males, 25 females, 19 boys and 6 girls between the ages of five and twelve and 15 boys and 9 girls below the age of five. Out of these 109 persons only 9 boys can read and write. The rest are all illiterates. Out of the 60 men and women 7 are unemployed. The rest are scavengers and sweepers and do sanitary work thus keeping the whole town in good health and free from disease. Their monthly pay is on an average Rs. 16. They have to work from 6 to 10 in the morning and 2 to 6 in the evening. Out of the 31 families not a single one is free from debt. Their total debt is Rs. 4,412. Out of this Rs. 2,039 was contracted at the various places from which they come and Rs. 2,373 in Bombay. They

have to pay interest at a rate varying from 75 to 300 per cent.) Thus it will be seen that even the ordinary necessities of life have been denied to them.

It is amongst such people that Mrs. Surajben, the first life-worker of the Bhagini Seva Sangha, started her work nearly a year back. She visited the place daily and mixed freely amongst the women and children. She bathed the children everyday and gave them medicine, when needed. Soon she acquired confidence of the Bhangi women who began to relate to her their domestic difficulties. She talked to them about their dirty habits and asked them to lead clean lives. A day school for the boys and a night class for the men have been started and they are attended by 16 boys and 6 men. The need for a Hostel was keenly felt. With the help of a philanthropic gentleman who was pleased with the work and who promised to contribute Rs. 100 per month, an Ashram Hostel has been working for the last two months and the present number of its inmates is six. A nursery school for children under five is also conducted by one of the lady workers of the Bhagini Samaj, while another takes care of young children left in her charge by the women when they go out to work. The lady in charge of the nursery school and creche is a trained midwife. The future programme of work includes the starting of a co-operative society, a co-operative grain store, building of better houses for the Bhangis and securing of better wages and better conditions of work for them.

K. J. CHITALIA.

Our Geneva Letter.

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

(BY AIR MAIL.)

Geneva, Nov. 30.

A WORLD IN SUSPENSE.

THREE problems, all fraught with the utmost importance for the future of the world and interlocked—war debts, the Sino-Japanese dispute and disarmament—are now engaging the serious and urgent attention of the governments and public opinion in the principal countries of Europe. The first of these, war debts, is a matter for immediate consideration, not only because the refusal of the United States government to extend the period of the Hoover moratorium, if insisted upon, threatens to obliterate all the effects of the Reparations settlement concluded at Lausanne, but it is subversive of the financial stability which the British Government has attained at no small sacrifice. Should the British financial crisis, of a little over a year ago now recur its consequences will not be confined to Great Britain, but the world will be thrown back into the depths of economic depression at a time when it is getting ready for the international Economic and Monetary Conference to which it has long looked forward.

It has been suggested that Great Britain should lead the countries of Europe in stoutly resisting these demands for payment and insist on immediate liquidation of war debts. Responsible opinion in Great Britain is almost unanimously against this course, for, apart from considerations of propriety, as finance ultimately rests on credit, which is a matter of confidence, the repercussions to any such action are incalculable and may well prove to be disastrous. The vast and intricate financial structure of the City makes any such step unthinkable. There is the alternative of payment of the debt on December 15 in gold, by calling on the British people to bear up

with the situation and get ready for the sacrifice involved, or some such compromise as making the payment in sterling as suggested by President Hoover himself. The transfer of a large quantity of gold from London to New York, however, besides intensifying the 'gold famine' and accentuating the depression, would cause the imposition by Britain of heavy tariffs on United States goods to prevent further flow of gold in that direction (a step much desired by bellicose protectionists) and the proposed compromise of payment in sterling would also be attended with grave risks of financial dislocation.

The British case for the postponement of further payments under the head of war debts, until this question is examined in all its aspects and a settlement is arrived at, is based not only on general considerations of the present international financial situation, but also on the hope that the United States will not subject their prosperous trade with Great Britain to unnecessary risks. There are signs that American businessmen are fully appreciative of this and yet the United States Government is hardly in a position to take bold steps to alleviate the crisis. Apart from the restrictions arising from the present awkward interregnum and the difficulty of bringing home to vast vociferous multitudes the complication of international trade and finance, the initiative of the Government at Washington is limited by the fact that, so far as the United States are concerned, the debts in question are private debts and there is little likelihood of American bondholders reciprocating the generosity and good sense of their Government fittingly. Good times are notoriously slow in coming even when all known impediments in their way are removed and meanwhile Washington will have to cope not only with the depression, the twelve million unemployed and decreasing national income, but also the claims of indignant rentiers. Moreover, one can hardly help asking—Was the monumental conference held at Ottawa, on the other side of the United States border, and followed with wrapt attention in that country, calculated to impress Americans that Great Britain's solicitude for American trade which undoubtedly figures in the British note to Washington, is likely for long to outlast the debt settlement?

As to the Sino-Japanese dispute, cumbersome as the international machinery is, once it is set in motion it follows its inevitable course. After the Lytton Commission's report the League Council met to consider it, and despite Japanese protests, China's case will now be handed over to the Assembly. At first sight it may seem that this is all to the good, but an Assembly, which is incapable of implementing its decision, cannot add to the prestige of the League. The practical problem before the League is not to secure the impeachment of Japan—the moral sense of the world has already done that in abundant measure—but to bring about a settlement of the Manchurian dispute and save the instruments of international intercourse from violence. This end cannot clearly be attained by forcing Japan out of the League organisation or yielding to Japan all that she demands and thus covering Geneva with ridicule. In the present mood of Japan nothing can be so dangerous to international stability as making her solitary or an outlaw, and at the same time to make an Egypt or Nicaragua of Manchuria would be to deprive Asia of the benefits of the League and restrict the latter's influence to the European continent.

And finally, as regards disarmament, a British plan and a French plan have been added to the various schemes that the Disarmament Bureau have been studying, and a Japanese plan is said to be on the way to Geneva. These plans, which are undoubtedly considerable contributions to

the study of Disarmament and are fitting complements to the Hoover proposals, will acquire adequate importance only when Germany has been brought into the Conference again, by satisfying her claim for equality. It is understood that satisfactory conversations, in which Mr. Norman Davis is taking a leading part, are going on behind the scenes and may be expected to yield tangible results when the political crisis in Germany is brought under control.

Our London Letter.

(From Our Correspondent.)

(BY AIR MAIL.)

LONDON, December 2.

INDIAN LEAGUE.

THE Conference and public meeting to hear the returned delegates of the India League were held at Kingsway Hall, on Saturday last. The delegates had a bitter tale to tell of almost unrelieved gloom, except that Miss Ellen Wilkinson struck a note of hope in that she had been able to test the growth of the soul of a nation, and the revelation of the spiritual life of India. The delegates mainly occupied themselves in presenting facts that had come under their own observation. They denied that they had been shepherded by the Congress, or that they had received any useful assistance from the authorities in India. On the contrary, they complained that the latter had shadowed them everywhere, intimidated those who desired to come to them with complaints or information, and generally did their best to make their visit infructuous. The official side of the story was told on Monday by Sir Samuel Hoare in reply to a question put by a young Conservative enquirer. Speaking to his brief he declared that the delegation had handed itself over to the careful custody of the Congress, who had arranged its itinerary and had stage-managed its effects, whilst it had sedulously avoided contact with the officials, and instead of undertaking a serious and impartial study of the situation in India and refraining from participation in politics, it had done little else than give careful expression to the partisan politics of the Congress. I suppose that that is what a Secretary of State for India is bound to say, since unless investigators are willing to place themselves entirely or substantially under the direction of the officials for their information, the things they are supposed to see, and the deductions they are supposed to draw, they are bound to be regarded with the utmost suspicion, and to be discredited in advance. People in this country find it difficult to realise that official statements in India are regarded, even by non-Congressmen, as partisan and propagandist, and that they are as little reliable and as much open to suspicion as Congress propaganda. That is one of the principal difficulties that we find in this country in getting into the Press a fair and reasoned statement of happenings in India, such for example as the recent Unity Conference in Allahabad. The reactionaries with Government aid or encouragement find it easy to get their obscurantist views voiced in the British Press through Press Correspondents in India. The latter often either wholly hoodwink their papers by colouring their reports according to official proclivities, or else are genuinely ignorant of the vital undercurrents, and therefore are used as channels for the propagation of tendentious information designed either to magnify relatively unimportant individuals, bodies or movements, or else to obscure the issue for the

British reader and to create in his mind doubts regarding the accuracy of authentic but unexpected news.

DIFFICULTIES OF UNDERSTANDING.

One draws two conclusions from this. The one is that it is quite impossible at this distance from India to get anything like a correct perspective of the daily scene or the fundamental undercurrents. We see only distorted pictures, from which those of us who have adequate experience and are sensitive to realities have to deduce the truth, or something approximating to it. The other conclusion is that, unless India is to be placed in the position substantially to manage her own affairs, the difficulties of distance and of inability to interpret are bound to increase, friction is bound to grow, and bitterness and hostility between the two countries to be magnified, out of all proportion to the events around them. In an atmosphere such as the present, it is difficult for either country to understand or render justice to the other. Misinterpretation is bound to be frequent even where the motive is pure and the event innocent. Irritated people and ignorant people alike are apt to generalise at the expense of each other and the result is to make confusion worse confounded. For this reason one can to some extent realise some of Sir Samuel Hoare's difficulties. He is readily and naturally susceptible to the official information supplied to him from the men on the spot, who themselves are mostly out of touch with the major tendencies in Indian life. It is bound to be extremely difficult, therefore, for him to be able to educate his own Party into an understanding of the realities of the Indian situation, and to induce that Party to take in time those measures that will satisfy at this stage of Indo-British relations the average sentiment of educated India, and yet unless the Conservative Party, either in whole or in major part, can be convinced of and converted to the need for urgent far-reaching constitutional reforms the process of constitution-building is bound to be a failure. On the other hand the majority of British people who have been systematically and for many years misled and misinformed by agencies interested in the perpetuation of direct British rule in India are timid and cautious folk on the whole generously and decently inclined, and if they knew all the facts and were thereby enabled to come to a reasoned judgment, they would be quite willing that India should have a square deal.

THE R. T. C.

Last Saturday by way of a preliminary to their somewhat strenuous labours this week, the Round Table Conference delegates were received by the King, and Sir N. N. Sircar received the accolade of Knighthood. During the week the Sub-Committee set up to consider the matters referred to in my last letter has been getting on very well with its work and is expected to report either to-day or Monday to the Conference. I understand that there has been little friction in its task, and nothing of serious importance as to difference of opinion. So far as the Conference itself is concerned, it has been devoting itself to the careful and detailed study of the true nature of central and provincial responsibility and of the safeguards for the interim period to which all parties are committed. I do not propose to go very much into detail about these matters, since no final conclusions have been reached and most of the day-to-day events have been recorded in the daily Press reports and special telegrams communicated to India.

Certain things, however, are clearly emerging. The first is the very clear lead that Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru in these matters, speaking for virtually the

whole of the British Indian delegation, has given to the Conference. The second is the strong nationalism and sound common sense of the Muslim delegation. The third is that some of the delegates representing special interests, and particularly the Punjab representatives, find it very difficult indeed to keep away from their particular King Charles's head, which always seems to bob up before them on all kinds of inconvenient occasions. The fourth is that the British delegation has not receded from the helpful position under the direction of Lord Reading that it has taken up from the beginning. The fifth is that even in the Conservative delegation there has been some measure of understanding of the British Indian point of view. I am told that last Monday to the delight and with the encouragement of virtually the entire British Indian delegation, Sir Tej Bahadur delivered an onslaught upon the official citadel that took his British hearers aback. At one time some of them even went so far as to spread the rumour that the Conference had been brought virtually to an end because Sir Tej Bahadur had gone away from his pledges in regard to safeguards. Fortunately, however, Lord Reading by the sanity and clarity of his outlook and his knowledge of his former Law Member's rigid sense of honour, was able to pull the situation round with the aid of an explanation by Sir Tej Bahadur and the quiet interpretation of Lord Irwin. Sir Tej Bahadur insisted, and has insisted throughout, that responsibility and safeguards should not be mixed up as they are in the present Statute, but that the sphere of each should be carefully and completely defined and that as regards the non-reserved subjects Ministers should not be subject to intervention by the Governor-General or Governors as the case may be, but should be fully and completely responsible to their own legislatures, which should have the right, as in any self-governing Dominion, to support or defeat them. It is believed in well-informed quarters that the situation is now clearing up and that a sense of reality is prevailing. This has been brought about very largely by the clarity with which Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Jayakar, and Mr. Zafrullah Khan have put their views before the Conference, and the general unity that has been displayed, notwithstanding occasional irrelevant outbursts by some members of the British Indian delegation. Another thing that has aided in the clarifying of the position regarding real central responsibility has been the insistence by the States' representatives through their spokesman, Sir Manubhai Mehta, that nothing less than real central responsibility will induce the States to come into the federation. It may be taken for granted that provincial autonomy by itself has now disappeared from the picture. The Mussalmans recognising this are loyally supporting federal central responsibility and are equally eager with their non-Muslim colleagues to ensure its reality and substantiality. Possibly the reverberations of Allaha-bad have overtaken them, and they are beginning to take heed of the true demands of nationalist India. Whatever may be the real reason, it is undoubtedly a fact that not at any time since the beginning of Round Table Conferences have Muslim and non-Muslim alike been in such close accord in the nature of their fundamental demands. The real test, however, of the willingness of the British delegation to agree with their British Indian colleagues on the true nature of the safeguards will come next week when questions relating to federal finance and financial matters relating to the reserved subjects are due to come up for discussion, and we are certainly not yet out of the wood. All that I need say for the moment is that there is at the present time a much greater degree of hopefulness in the Confer-

ence than at any time since it opened, and the goodwill generated within it has been extended to individuals and groups outside with whom leading members have made valuable contacts. The social events affecting them have been few and unimportant, but in Conservative circles in particular it has been possible to put forward impressively Indian nationalist views in a manner to make them understood and possibly even appreciated. This is particularly true so far as the young Conservatives are concerned. Unless something untoward happens in India to bring grist to the mill of the diehards and the reactionaries of the Churchill-Craddock type, it is not outside the realm of probability that a sound and reasonable agreement on main principles may be reached by the 20th instant, when the Conference is due to terminate.

Miscellaneous.

CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS.

MR. SASTRI'S VIEWS.

The Right Hon'ble V. S. Srinivasa Sastri was interviewed by the "Hindu" on the work of the Round Table Conference in progress in London, when he expressed himself as follows:

I am unable to share the favourable view which our friends in London seem to take of the statement of the British Government's delegation. Perhaps the cabled reports do our friends wrong. No doubt, the statement is couched in conciliatory terms, but the substance requires careful scrutiny.

To make the new constitution acceptable to advanced opinion in this country, it must contain as few subtractions as possible from Dominion Status. Every reservation or safeguard is such a subtraction.

Emphasis is laid on the commonsense and goodwill with which exceptional powers would be used by those in whom they are vested. We are entitled on our side to assume that our future Legislatures and the Ministers responsible to them will have at their command a similar fund of commonsense and goodwill. What these did when they had no ultimate responsibility is no guide to what they will do when they are answerable for their country's welfare and prosperity. When Lord Reading assumes, for the sake of argument, that responsible Ministers may refuse to levy taxation and leave the treasury empty, he is asking us to provide against their taking final leave of commonsense and against a contingency, which is scarcely distinguishable from a breakdown of the constitution.

CERTAIN FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES.

A safeguard is an arrangement by which the precipitate or unwise action of one arm of the government may be corrected by the action of another arm, or by the requirement that more than an ordinary majority would be necessary, or by a second affirmation after the lapse of a certain period. Expedients like these have the merit that they are strictly within the constitution and do not look to an outside agency for their being put in operation. It would be necessary to institute an extra-constitutional safeguard only if it were made clear that a constitutional one was not feasible. Even in the case of a reserved or excluded subject like the Army, our plea has been that large spheres of activity could be transferred without any risk and that only the more vital aspects—like finance, discipline or disposition need be reserved.

If these principles be borne in mind it is possible that the resulting constitution could be described as a close approximation to Dominion Status. I will now mention a few particulars which appear to violate one or other of these principles. Let me acknowledge fully that, in most other respects, the British Delegation's statement is actuated by a desire to meet the Indian view-point.

The reserved subjects are: Defence, Foreign relations, Paramountcy and Ecclesiastical. The heads under which safeguards are inserted are: Finance, Commercial Discrimination, Minorities, Services, States, Inter-Imperial relations and Emergencies. In each case under the latter category as well as in the former category, special powers are proposed for the Governor-General and Governors. The sum of these powers, in my humble judgment, makes an enormous inroad on Dominion Status.

For the safety of Indian credit and financial stability it should be sufficient to require the Finance Minister to be guided generally by the advice of a non-political expert body. Where he was headstrong the Governor-General might be empowered to require him to conform to such advice. In strict constitutional theory every exercise by the Governor-General of his special power is liable to control by the Imperial authorities in London and therefore also to the suspicion that it was actually dictated from Whitehall. To ward off such a suspicion I suggested, (and I have reason to believe that Lord Reading agreed) that the Instrument of Instructions to the Governor-General should contain a clause that it was British policy that every exercise of special power should be in the interests of India, and the interests of India alone.

COMMERCIAL DISCRIMINATION.

Commercial discrimination is a source of difficulty. In 1930—after much negotiation—we hit upon a treaty of reciprocity between Britain and India as the best solution, and it was adopted by the Federal Structure Committee on the recommendation of Lord Reading himself. Next year, however, the European community changed their mind and demanded that their economic interests should be secured by express provisions in the constitution. The idea apparently is that these provisions should be invoked, whenever necessary, and exercised by the Governor-General under a special power. I objected to this demand, and still object. I would revert to the 1930 proposal. If this be not feasible, I would provide for the British commercial community having a power of appeal to the Federal judicial tribunal. It is in contemplation to endow this tribunal with jurisdiction in disputes arising out of the working of the Constitution. That would prevent the intervention of any authority outside India.

The same observation applies to the Minorities. It is dangerous to lead them to expect that a *deus ex machina* will come to their protection every time they fancy themselves oppressed. They will not settle down on terms of amity and contentment so long as such extra-constitutional protection is afforded them.

Next as to the Services. The men now actually employed may have in the future all the privileges that they now enjoy, but all future entrants must be completely under the Government of India. I believe this idea was embodied in the report of the Services Sub-Committee of 1930.

Under the heading of States, a curious provision is proposed. When two neighbouring units of Federation molest each other it would appear only the Governor-General can remedy the situation by using his special power. We should like to ask what the

Federal Government is for, if it cannot keep the peace within its borders in regular constitutional style. Could it really be contemplated to bring into existence such a thin and anaemic federation?

INTER-IMPERIAL RELATIONS.

I must be allowed a word upon the safeguard proposed under Inter-Imperial relations. I appreciate the anxiety that Sir Samuel Hoare and his colleagues manifest to treat Indian susceptibilities with tenderness. May we hope that in the event no provision will be made which will enable the India Office to address the Government of India in a tone markedly different from the tone which the Colonial Office adopts towards the Dominions and Colonies of the Empire? We cannot any longer have a Viceroy like Lord Hardinge or like Lord Reading called to order. Nor should the Secretary of State interpose his veto as Lord Peel did when the Legislative Assembly tried in 1923, within its limited scope, to resent the policy of the Kenya White Paper. If the India Government is to have a place of honour in the Empire, other Governments should not be encouraged to believe that in the last resort the India Office could be got to snub the Viceroy and put the people of India in their place.

CERTIFICATION AND ORDINANCE.

Nationalist spokesmen of India have during the discussions of the Round Table Conference emphatically condemned government by certification and ordinance. One is taken aback to find that not only are these methods to continue but they are to be extended. Though it is not expressly stated in the summary cabled to India, it is gatherable that Governors are to be empowered in future to issue ordinances for the space of six months—a power which hitherto has only been entrusted to the Governor-General. The word "certification" does not occur in the summary. But the thing itself is there, and no mistake. Given commonsense and good-will on the Indian as well as on the British side I venture to think that it should be sufficient to give the Governor-General and Governors the constitutional power in defined circumstances of interposing his veto in the executive sphere. When there is a break-down of the constitution the Governor-General should be placed in an unassailable position to do all that may be necessary to restore working conditions. Otherwise stronger proof than has been advanced would be necessary for the proposition that the Governor-General and Governors cannot do without actual legislative power. Even the outbreak of civil disobedience should be well within the control of a responsible government aspiring for early Dominionhood and stabilised by a large infusion of the representatives of the Princely Order.

INDIA COUNCIL MUST GO.

With every wish not to be irrelevant I cannot forbear to add a suggestion which bears intimately on the matters under discussion. The Council of the Secretary of State for India must go. Its continuance, even in an attenuated form, will be a menace to the free play of the federal constitution of India and cannot but be regarded as a hindrance in its march towards its appointed destiny, namely, an equal Dominion in the Commonwealth of Britain.

BOMBAY LIBERALS PROTEST.

Sir Samuel Hoare's statement on the reserve powers of the Governor-General was considered at an urgent meeting of the Council of the Western India National Liberal Association held on the 6th inst. The following

cable sent to Lord Sankey, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and others embodies the Bombay Liberals' views on the subject :

The Council of the Liberal Association feel strongly that the statement of Sir Samuel Hoare is disappointing, specially the wide reserve powers of interference to the Governor-General and Governor with authority to promulgate Ordinances and also permanent acts, and to appropriate funds. The Council are seriously concerned about the reactionary attitude of Government about defence and the Indianization of the Army. If the present scheme is adhered to, Indianization will take more than a century to materialise. The least that will satisfy the country is the Rawlinson Scheme. The Council urges the Indian Delegates to make a firm stand against safeguards, rendering responsibility shadowy. The Sapru proposals are the minimum that moderate opinion will accept.

Correspondence.

A REFERENDUM ON UNTOUCHABILITY !

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SERVANT OF INDIA.

SIR,—Are those of our fellow-citizens who have recently been called "the erstwhile Untouchables" and rechristened *Harijans*, i. e. God's folk, to receive decent treatment from their countrymen as a matter of right, or as a favour? On this question, it is to be regretted, Mahatma Gandhi, who is the staunchest champion the Harijans have outside their own ranks, has by a recent proposal of his given cause to critics to remark that he is sometimes inclined to be too "generous"—at the expense of his proteges! In the seventh of the stirring series of his statements on Untouchability issued from the prison at Yeravda, dated the 16th November, he advises the Harijans and their friends, the 'Touchable' reformers, to make their own separate arrangements for the enjoyment of any service or the use of any institution in case a referendum on the question of throwing open the existing service or institution to the Harijans on equal terms with the rest of the people results in the anti-reformers (miscalled sanatanis) securing a majority in their favour. In giving this advice he expressly says that he makes no difference between what may be called the purely civic utilities and the temples. It strikes one that this advice, so far at least as the civic disabilities of the Harijans are concerned, is most undemocratic, uncitizenlike, if not anarchic. It would be understandable if it was confined to the case of temples, because these may be public, but are certainly not civic institutions. No non-Hindu citizen, for instance, can claim admission to them as of right. In respect of them we have got to create a right. But as regards other public institutions and services, e. g. watering places, conveyances, schools etc., Mahatmaji's advice, if literally followed, will only assure a longer lease of life to Untouchability, if not perpetuate it. Thereby we shall not be fighting Untouchability, but pampering it. We shall not be disarming the monster, but shrinking within our own shells. In the case of the above instanced public utilities it should be noted that those who are now in the enjoyment of them are not the 'Touchable' Hindus only, but all non-Hindus also. No 'Sanatani' ever dared to exclude a Mahomedan butcher, even though he came fresh from his work at the slaughter-house, from the use of them. It would

have been something if Mahatmaji's advice to the reforming minority to make themselves Untouchables by voluntary self-denial in all these cases had been expressly qualified as being a temporary expedient. Unfortunately it has not been so qualified. However, the only proper course which reformers had a right to expect from Gandhiji as the most uncompromising reformer and yet a scrupulously fair opponent of the anti-reformers, was for him to make an offer, not to the reformers, but to the supposed "conscientious objectors" to reform, to allow them a definite period within which they might make their own arrangement for a reserved well, school, boat or other utility, and at the same time to insist that the public utility from which the Harijans are at present *illegally* debarred is after that period made accessible to all without distinction of birth, though with due regard to sanitary and other rules which must be applicable to all without distinction of birth.

It is hardly less than anarchic to make the exercise of an undoubted civic right depend on the sweet will and pleasure of the 'majority'. But that is what Mahatma Gandhi's advice amounts to, in my humble opinion. It reminds one of the action of a chairman who would on a point of order enforce the ruling which is favoured by the majority of the assembly though he knows it to be unconstitutional; or it savours, I may say, of the conduct of a teacher who 'passes' those in his class who agree in giving an answer which he knows to be wrong, because they are the majority, and 'plucks' the few who give the correct answer, because they are a minority. Obviously we are here concerned with one of those questions on which it would be both a dangerous and a cowardly precedent to lay down the law that mere numbers shall decide them.

As regards temples, one would have expected Mahatmaji to advise that the reformers should not take the vote on any and every referendum in which they fail, as final or conclusive, even supposing that the meeting at which the vote is taken is not a hole-and-corner meeting or that the vote is not a 'snatch vote'. It would be most unfair to the cause of reform if the fortunes of the campaign were allowed to hang on the issue of a single battle in any locality.

But after all the temple ban is in a class by itself, as compared with the many and more serious civic disabilities. It is obviously a less urgent issue though it may be the most important one from the point of view of Hindu psychology and Hindu solidarity. The temple-entry issue should therefore be left to purely Hindu organisations (whether of 'Touchables', or 'Untouchables', or both) to solve, while the civic disabilities can and must be tackled by non-denominational bodies the membership of which is open to all citizens irrespective of creed.—
Yours etc. S. D. NADKARNI

Karwar, Dec. 9.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

- LIFE AND EXPERIENCES OF A BENGALI CHEMIST. By PRAFULLA CHANDRA RAY. (Chuckervertty, Chatterjee, Calcutta.) 1932. 24cm. 557p. Rs. 5.
RECOVERY. The Second Effort. By SIR ARTHUR SALTER. (Bell, London.) 1932. 22cm. 306p. 10/6.
EARLY ASTRONOMY AND COSMOLOGY. A Reconstruction of the Earliest Cosmic System By C. P. S. MENON. (Allen & Unwin, London.) 1932. 22cm. 191p. 10/.