

# Servant of India

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## Topics of the Week.

### Suspension of Red Shirts Ban.

IN his valedictory speech before the Legislative Council the retiring Governor of the Frontier Province announced the suspension of the ban on the Red Shirts organisation. This was with a view to enable them to take part in the elections. The first thing to be noted in this connection is that the prohibition is not cancelled altogether but is only held in suspense. And the second thing is that the continuance of the suspension is made dependent upon the Red Shirts keeping strictly to constitutional lines of agitation.

WE daresay the Government was induced to take this step out of considerations of fairness and justice towards the Congress organisation in the Frontier Province. But it is a matter for deep regret that they have not gone sufficiently far on that road. Their action would have evoked better public appreciation if the ban, instead of being held in abeyance, had been completely annulled. It is difficult to see how this would in any way have added to their difficulties. If the province can stand its suspension, it can also stand its cancellation. In the public eye the suspension merely serves to deprive the action of all its grace.

AS for the condition about the Red Shirts refraining from unconstitutional acts, even a novice in politics will not look upon it as anything better than a means of saving the face of the Government. The insinuation about their having engaged themselves in unlawful or unconstitutional movements will, we doubt not, be widely resented. If the Red Shirts were at any time found to have deviated from the paths of non-violence or peace, surely the Government would not have desisted from moving heaven and earth to bring the offence home to them. The fact that the Government chose the surer and easier method of branding them as outlaws in virtue of their executive powers instead of putting the usual legal processes in opera-

tion against them shows anyhow that they entertained serious doubts on the point. In these circumstances the public should be excused if it refuses to accept without question the official verdict on the character of the activities of the Red Shirts. This, however, need not prevent it from being thankful even for the small mercy of the suspension of the ban.

### Frontier Gandhi.

A RESOLUTION urging the removal of all restrictions in respect of the entry of the Frontier Gandhi into his own province was recently debated in the provincial legislature. We do not propose to refer here to the considerations in support of the public demand for the cancellation of these restrictions. They are known to everybody and need not be recapitulated. The official case was presented by the Home Member with his accustomed ability and clearness of expression. But if that was all that could be said for the continuance of the ban, the weakness of the Government's position must be frankly admitted.

THE worst that could be brought up by the Home Member against Frontier Gandhi was that he withheld his co-operation in the working of the present reforms, that when in 1931 an invitation was extended to him to attend a Durbar at which the announcement about the introduction of the reforms was to be made he failed to send a reply or to attend the Durbar, and that even now there was no possibility of securing his co-operation in the working of the new constitution. If refusal of co-operation in the operation of the reforms is to be considered a good ground for keeping a man outside his province, and if the doctrine were to be carried to its logical conclusion, such externment orders must be passed not by thousands but by millions. For even the Government with all their partiality for the new constitution cannot be unaware of the fact that the Congress whose following can be counted in lakhs in the different provinces is committed to wreck the reforms and thus to withhold its help in working them. If non-co-operation is to be followed by externment in every case, all Congressmen must be kept out of their respective provinces, as Frontier Gandhi is from his. This will lead to inter-provincial, though involuntary, exchanges of the population, on a very large scale.

IS this desired by the Government? If not, why should the obnoxious doctrine be set in motion only against poor Frontier Gandhi? Besides, where is the sense in removing, even temporarily, a ban on the followers whilst retaining it in the case of the leader? To deprive the rank and file of the guidance and advice of the general is virtually to facilitate their going astray. To avert this calamity, if for nothing else, the removal of the ban on Mr. Khan appears to

us the logical corollary to its removal in the case of his followers, the Red Shirts.

#### Travancore's Wise Lead.

THE young Maharaja of Travancore has issued a proclamation throwing open the temples maintained or controlled by his State to all Hindus without distinction. On the wise and progressive lead he has thus given to the other members of the princely order he deserves to be heartily congratulated. Public roads, watering places and other public amenities are already accessible to all sections of the Maharaja's subjects, irrespective of their religion or caste. He has now gone a step further and has given proof that in the temple of God he would recognise no distinctions based on birth or religion.

IT is more than one can say whether his example will be widely followed in British India or in the Indian States. But there can be little doubt that it is worthy of emulation as much by the authorities in British as in Indian India. Should this happen, the problem of the depressed classes which is eating into the vitals of Hindu society and seriously impeding sound nation-building would be easier of solution. While such progressive action, wherever it is possible, is to be welcomed, there can be little doubt that it is beset with less serious obstacles and can be more expeditiously taken in the Indian States by reason of the autocratic nature of the rule prevailing in them than in British India where such action can only follow a long and slow process of public education. Let the Indian States be in the vanguard of progress at least in this matter and earn British India's admiration for a speedy move in accord with the spirit of the times.

#### Governor's Allowances.

AMONG the draft Orders in Council discussed last week in Parliament was one prescribing the maximum allowances for the Governors of provinces for various purposes like, e.g., the renewal of furniture in their residences, entertainment of guests and visitors, purchase of motor cars, etc. The orders also perpetuate the band and bodyguard establishments of the Governors as also their personal medical staff. The utterly lavish scale of expenditure on these objects has always been a subject of strong criticism in India which the new reforms have done nothing to make pointless and the expenditure on the band and bodyguard is considered sheer waste of public funds. That this view is not restricted to non-official circles but is shared also by some high-placed officials can be seen from the well-known views of no less a person than a former Commander-in-Chief, viz. Sir O'Moore Creagh, who regarded the band and bodyguard establishments as costly superfluities, especially in these days when the services of a regimental band can be requisitioned at short notice for the entertainment of the Governor's guests and when the personal safety of the Governor is hardly ever jeopardised.

WE are glad to find that the extravagant scale of these allowances drew a sharp protest from some members of Parliament, Mr. Pethick Lawrence among them. While the general tendency was in the direction of a reduction to the minimum of all ceremonial expenditure, it was only in this unfortunate land that no action in that direction was either taken or contemplated. Mr. Pethick Lawrence rightly regretted the imposition of this burden on the tax-payer when a measure of so-called self-government was being conferred on the people of this country.

IN this connection it is interesting to note the comments of the *Times of India*, no indiscriminate critic of those in authority, on the scale of allowances fixed in the Orders. Says the paper:

While, of course, the representative of His Majesty must support the dignity of his office, our belief is that much nonsense is talked about the need in India for display as a buttress of authority. One edifying feature of life in this country is that personal dignity and character and intellectual calibre still carry more weight than a full pocket. After all it is fantastic, with the example of the simple life led by prominent men who have a grip on the imagination of the Indian people, to believe that show is of such vital consequence. In India as it is today, no Governor worth his salt and having the personal qualities that appeal to the people need worry overmuch about the panoply of state under which he moves.

#### Berar and the Nizam.

THE culmination in an agreement of the long drawn-out negotiations between the Government and the Nizam will be welcomed with a sense of relief specially by the people of Berar. Ever since the commencement of the negotiations they have been greatly nervous as to their political future. Would they continue to be the subjects of the British Government or would the control of their destinies be transferred to the Nizam? These and similar misgivings have once for all been set at rest by the agreement which in no way transforms the inhabitants of Berar into *de facto* subjects of the Nizam.

THE need for the agreement is self-evident. Technically speaking, Berar, though permanently leased to the British Government for a yearly payment of Rs. 25 lakhs, still owns the overlordship of His Exalted Highness the Nizam whose consent was a condition precedent to the enforcement of the federal constitution in regard to it. As a result of these negotiations such consent is now forthcoming. In other words, though the question whether Hyderabad comes into the federation or not is still undecided, the Nizam has decided to accede to it in so far as Berar is concerned.

THE agreement reaffirms the Nizam's sovereignty over Berar. The visible indications of this recognition will be that the Nizam will hereafter be known as the Nizam of Hyderabad and Berar and his heir-apparent as the Prince of Berar. It is also provided that the appointment of the Governor will have to be made in consultation with the Nizam. The Nizam's flag will be flown alongside the British flag in Berar whenever and wherever the latter is flown. The Nizam's right to confer titles on the inhabitants of Berar and to hold durbars in Berar is recognised, but its exercise is made subject to the prior assent of the Governor. Similarly too he can invite the Governor of the C. P. and Berar, as the province will be styled, to pay ceremonial visits to Hyderabad and can maintain his own agent at the seat of the provincial government. But the agent is expressly debarred from having anything to do with the internal affairs of the province.

ALL this sounds very impressive. But one wonders whether the net gain to the Nizam is any more substantial than what India's membership of the League of Nations connotes in actual practice. The fact that India is a member of the League certainly tickles our national fancy and entitles us to representation at certain international assemblies but it does not add an inch to our political status. Similarly, His Exalted Highness may hold any number of dur-

bars in Berar and honour any number of its people by the conferment of his titles. But so far as practical affairs of Berar go, he will, as at present, not enjoy the least little voice. The Beraris need have no quarrel with an arrangement which satisfies this requirement but only makes an addition to the ceremonial importance of the Nizam.

#### Unemployment in Bihar.

THE problem of unemployment in Bihar was inquired into by a committee which has recently submitted its report. The committee's estimate of the extent of educated unemployment is that 500 more matriculates are turned out every year than can find employment. Even this excess could be absorbed in industrial concerns and railways but for the fact that many non-Biharis are already in their service. The output of arts graduates, though a little in excess of requirements, is not such as to create any problem. So far as the professions go, nearly 30 per cent. of medical graduates are either unemployed or under-employed. The medical profession in the cities being overcrowded, the unemployed medical graduates would, in its opinion, do well to turn their attention to the rural parts. But it is equally clear that if their presence in the villages is to be of any practical use the scale of their fees must be so framed as to suit the villagers' pockets. It is the committee's view that only 20 per cent. of the law graduates are able to earn what may be called a decent living, about 40 per cent. being unable to earn even a pittance.

BIHARIS are found by the committee to receive poor representation in the all-India services. The deficiency can be made good only by securing more passes among the Biharis at the competitive examinations. This in its turn means efficient arrangements for the coaching of candidates for these examinations. The necessity for action to this end by the proper authorities is strongly stressed in the report. Parents with means may, the committee suggests, be also induced to send their boys to the army, navy and air force. Something can be done to relieve unemployment if retirement in the case of Government servants is made compulsory at the age of 55 or even earlier in cases in which the incumbents are found to be physically unequal to their jobs.

THE committee is not unmindful of the fact that these and similar measures can only touch the fringe of the problem which cannot really be solved in the absence of industrial development. This presupposes the active sympathy and co-ordinated effort on the part of both the local and central Governments, the

latter of which controls currency, tariffs, railway freights, etc. with which industrial development is closely interlinked. At the same time steps must be thought of to bring about the elimination of the outside element. To what extent the field is invaded by non-Biharis will be better understood when it is remembered that out of the 45,000 odd posts carrying a salary of Rs. 20 or more in the large industries of the province only less than a half have fallen to the lot of the Biharis, while in the Tata's iron factory at Jamshedpur only about 33 per cent. of the posts with a salary of Rs. 20 or more are held by Biharis.

#### The Depressed Classes Mission, Mangalore.

IT is observed from the latest report of the Depressed Classes Mission, Mangalore, that the finances of the institution are in a bad way, so much so that unless help is urgently forthcoming, the good work of the Mission may suffer contraction. During 1935-36, which is covered by the report, the Mission's expenditure exceeded the income by about Rs. 300. But over and above the deficit for last year, the institution is in debt to the tune of nearly Rs 5,500 representing, we suppose, its accumulated deficits for a number of years. It will thus be seen that if the Mission is not to curtail its activities, it must be enabled not only to make its two ends meet but to pay back this debt. The work that is being done by the Mission is of so beneficent a character that the idea of any reduction of it cannot simply be entertained. We are confident the generous public will not fail the Mission in its financial difficulties.

THE Government too can help to avert the calamity of an abridgment of the Mission's activities. The report draws attention to the inadequacy of the Government grant and, specially in view of the special nature of the Mission's work, puts forward a cogent plea for an increase. But, this apart, there is a more practical reason why the Mission should be helped more liberally by the Government. The Mission caters for a class of people upon whom a realisation of the benefits of education is just beginning to dawn. But they are so poor that they cannot pay for their children's education without denying themselves the bare necessities of life. If for want of funds the Mission is unfortunately compelled to close down any part of its educational activities it will result in a relapse into illiteracy of all or almost all of the pupils upon whose education the Mission has so far spent considerable sums. Would this not be a waste of public funds? At least to prevent this, if for no other reason, it is up to the Government to respond to the Mission's plea for more handsome grants.

## RIGHT TO MISRULE.

THE Princes are very jealous of what they regard as their inalienable and indefeasible right to misrule their States. The federation-to-be will not put any restraints on their internal autocracy; they have taken good care about it. But they think it would be poor statesmanship on their part if, in the furious bargaining that is now afoot, they only secured this negative result. They must aim higher. They must get the British Government to withdraw its paramountcy rights over them. These rights are not often in evidence, it is true. Indeed, their exercise will become rarer as the British Government comes to appreciate the powerful support the Princely bloc can

give in checkmating democracy in the federal centre. But from the theoretical point of view British paramountcy is very humiliating. A formal end should therefore be put to it, even though it is not likely to be brought into operation. The Princes' attitude to paramountcy is very much like their attitude to the subsidies and contributions which are taken from them. The contributions are not objected to because they make a large hole in the States' treasuries, and their remission is not sought as any important measure of financial relief. But they are a blot on sovereignty and the Princes want this blot to be wiped out. Similarly, British paramountcy

does not make itself felt to any great extent in actual practice; but it reduces them at one stroke to the, degrading position of vassals, juridically. They must therefore, somehow get paramountcy abolished as a price for their willingness to join federation for the purpose of doing the dirty work assigned to them of keeping the radical elements in British India in leash just as they have got contributions abolished. They count it a fairly easy thing to do. The British Government has after some ten years' cogitation passed a Reform Act, but this Act cannot come into operation in the centre till they graciously announce their readiness to take their place in the federation. How foolish would the British Government look if at this eleventh hour they said no? Sooner than cover itself with ridicule by allowing such a contingency to come about, would it not agree to their demand—none too heavy—of a formal revocation of paramountcy which in the new situation is sure to fall into almost complete desuetude? The Princes are playing this trump card which they hold for all it is worth with the British Government.

But their attack on paramountcy is being launched on all fronts. While they are negotiating with the British Government for the cessation of paramountcy, they are busy with the British Indian politicians too. The rights of paramountcy can be waived only by the British Government, and the British Indian politicians can be of little direct help in this matter, but the moral support of the latter in their demand for the abolition of paramountcy will be of great value indirectly. Knowing this, they are now engaged in the game of persuading the British Indian politicians that paramountcy should be ended. They have some very good cards for playing this game also, and they can always find champions of their cause in British India. Here of course they have a different, and in fact a contrary, role to play. While they can succeed with the British Government by offering to crush democracy in British India, they can succeed with the British Indian politicians by convincing the latter that, so long as paramountcy is retained, they cannot but be the hired instruments of the bureaucracy, but, with paramountcy abolished, they can boldly come forward to do battle for democracy. Such a double-faced negotiation would seem almost impossible even for Janus; but to the Princes nothing is impossible. The argument which the Princes' spokesmen use with the radical elements in British India in winning the support of the latter runs thus: "If paramountcy were being used really in levelling up the administration in the States, one could understand your being desirous of retaining it, not in your own interest but in the interest of the Indian States' people. But you know that it is never used to this end. The British Government uses this power for its own nefarious purposes. Now the chance of its doing so is immeasurably heightened by reason of federation. Bound by the fetters of paramountcy, the Princes will only be pawns on the British Government's political chessboard in the federal centre; freed from the fetters, they will be allies of the progressive popular elements. Whose allies would

you like them to be, you people in British India: yours or the British Government's?"

One Mr. H. Srikanta writes to this effect in the *Hindu* of the 7th inst. He says: The rulers of Indian States

live in constant fear of the agents of the Political Department of the Government of India. Hitherto it has no doubt been a function of these agents of the Paramount Power to see that good government obtains in the States which come within the sphere of their influence. This function of the Paramount Power was being exercised during the days of the pre-Gandhian era with such zeal and earnestness that the Paramount Power in those days was being looked upon by the peoples of the States concerned as the very embodiment of divine justice and fairplay. In recent times also, the Paramount Power has intervened with respect to the affairs of certain Indian States in the north of India (like Kashmir) resulting in the further contraction of the measure of sovereignty vested in them and in the introduction of the British elements in the government of the States concerned to improve the level of their administrations in such a way as to see that civilised standards of governance did obtain there. Much of the objection now raised by even the moderate elements of British India, that His Majesty's Government have not with any high motives evolved a hybrid plan of governance for India based on the union of democratic India on the one hand with an autocratic India on the other, would have been dissipated if the functions of paramountcy had been exercised by the agents of the Paramount Power in the same way as they used to be in the past.

Paramountcy could have been brought into exercise to secure the introduction of some sort of popular government in the States by the autocratic Princes; now, however, in this Gandhian era, it would be brought into exercise, if kept alive, to make even those Princes that are a little democratically inclined still more autocratic. Therefore, see that paramountcy is killed. Says Mr. Srikanta:

The present refusal of the Government of India to define paramountcy may result in the use the agents of the Paramount Power might make of their powers in the direction of forcing even the representatives of certain progressive Indian States not to ally themselves with the progressive elements in British India, thus torpedoing federal responsibility at the centre. It is thus imperative that British Indian statesmen should also interest themselves in the question and think of remedial measures to ward off this further danger of federal responsibility.

Thus British Indians' love of democracy and suspicion of the Britisher are being played upon with a view to getting the Princes freed from all fear of misrule in the States being corrected and punished. It is of course true that the Paramount Power does not honestly discharge its duty by the States' people and that it does not exercise its paramountcy powers in their interest whenever occasion calls for such exercise. But how would it benefit the States' people if powers, which are not often enough and vigorously enough exercised for their good, are either totally eliminated or drastically emasculated? Will the British Indians' complaint of want of self-government be redressed by depriving them of such small measure of self-government as is accorded to them? And what evidence have the Princes given of their devotion to democracy so that the British Indians may believe that if only the Princes could keep clear of the British Government's influence they would establish

popular government in the States and press for popular reform and progress in the federation? None of the States, however advanced they may be in comparison to the more backward of their kind, come up in point of constitutional structure to any of the Provinces. Is it to be supposed that this general characteristic of autocracy perseveres in the States only because the British Government would not allow them to take a forward step? However critical we may be of the British Government, is it necessary to make this fantastic supposition? Would it not be more natural and reasonable to assume that all autocrats, whether white or brown, like to retain their power as long as they can, and that, on the whole, it is best that, if autocrats all are to be, the worse autocrats should be under some sort of check by the better autocrats. What will be the gain either to British Indians or to the States' people if the Princes, who are the worse autocrats, should be freed from all kind of control? If this is the best way of making them democrats, would not also the solution of the British Indian problem lie in giving absolute and complete power to the Governors?

Those British Indians who are asked to work for the abolition of the British Government's paramountcy on the ground that this kind of paramountcy would not be favourable to popular freedom may ask: "Why then did the Princes refuse to accept the paramountcy of the new Government of India as they had accepted that of the old? Why did they insist that

they must be placed under the control of the Governor-General alone, unaided by the advice of his popular Ministers?" The new Government of India would not have forced them to be reactionaries as the Governor-General, it is supposed, would force them. The Princes cannot by choice accept bureaucratic control and then try to have it abolished on the ground that it is not popular. No British Indian will be deceived by the specious appeals that are made to him. He sees through the whole game. He will surely tell the Princes: "You have opted for the control of the Governor-General and his agents. Very well; we wish you joy of it. You rejected the control of a popular Government of India, of which you would yourselves have formed a part. Now it only remains for us to ask that the Governor-General and his agents use their powers in a most drastic fashion. But we cannot trust you to do your duty by your subjects. If you wish us to trust you so far, we would ask you to trust your subjects to govern themselves. If you have no trust in your people, we can have no trust in you. You must be under somebody's control. The best control would be that of your own subjects. If you will not have it, you must remain under the control of the Governor-General, and not nominal control either, but meticulous control. Here then you have our last word: The only way to get the British Government's paramountcy abolished is for you to introduce popular government in your States."

## A SCHEME OF DEBT REDEMPTION.

**A** UNDH, a State in the Satara Collectorate, has taken in hand a scheme of debt redemption which in some respects is far more comprehensive than the schemes which are being worked out in any province of British India or in any Indian State. Through the agency of a Debt Conciliation Committee it is proposed in Aundh to scale down the debts of agriculturists and others, but the Aundh scheme does not leave it to the debtors themselves to find the means for repaying the debts thus compounded as most other schemes do, but the Government takes upon itself full responsibility for paying off the debts in the first instance and then for recovering them from the debtors in easy instalments. In none of the British Indian provinces where debt conciliation is attempted is provision made for Government either paying down the debts in cash or guaranteeing their repayment. Bhavnagar State, however, was in the happy position of having so much superfluous cash as to pay off the liabilities of the agriculturists itself in one lump sum and then collecting these dues from the agriculturists as land revenue arrears. Cochin State also, it is understood, repays part of the debt due to the creditors in cash and for the rest gives them bonds guaranteed by itself. Aundh, being itself indebted, can finance a scheme of debt redemption only by the latter method, and this it proposes to do. It will pay the creditors whatever the Debt Conciliation Committee decides should be paid to them by issuing treasury bonds of the required value. While it is proposed to repay the

whole of the conciliated debt to the creditors in ten years, it will necessarily take much longer to recover it from the debtors in the shape of land revenue. In the British Indian provinces the scheme of debt conciliation that has been adopted is voluntary, with a certain element of compulsion; in Bhavnagar it was avowedly compulsory. So will it be in Aundh. Partly because Bhavnagar went in for a compulsory settlement of debts, but mainly because it arranged for the repayment of the debts in cash, it could scale down the total debts by nearly 75 per cent. Even in British Indian provinces, with schemes of voluntary conciliation and with no definite provision for the repayment of debts, the debts were brought down by about 50 per cent. If the scheme works well in Aundh, there is no doubt that this State will be able to secure as great a reduction in the private debts of its people as Bhavnagar.

What is far more interesting in the Aundh State's scheme is that it aims not merely at liquidating the prior debts of the people, but at increasing their earning capacity so as to save them from incurring new debts. The question that never ceases to haunt those who are engaged in debt redemption is: Suppose you succeed in relieving the people from the existing debts, how are you going to ensure that after a few years they will not again be as heavily indebted as at present? The question is often asked with a view to proving the impossibility of bringing about a permanent improvement in the economic position of the

people. Such an objection need not, however, deter those who have felt it necessary to effect a reduction in debts because of the heavy fall in the prices of commodities. Whether or not the agriculturists and others whose debts are conciliated take this opportunity of acquiring those qualities which will enable them to make the improvement lasting, the conciliation of present debts is entirely commendable. But Aundh State is going to try, after it takes over the debts of the people and is thus in a position to regulate the whole of their economic life, so to mould the villages that they will be able to increase their income but will not be able to increase their outgoings unduly. The State authorities will issue detailed instructions to the villagers to carry on this, that or other subsidiary industry, or to introduce this, that or other reform in their agricultural methods, which the villagers shall carry out to the letter. It is estimated that if the plans which the State authorities have in mind are given effect to in a loyal spirit, the earnings of the villagers will receive a considerable increase. At the same time while the scheme of debt conciliation lasts, the villagers will not be allowed to incur any debts from money-lenders; the State itself will arrange for such accommodation as they will need through co-operative societies. In fact the State will itself keep the accounts of the villagers and will in effect tell them how they should earn more money and how and what part of it they should spend. The State will take dictatorial powers to itself in all that concerns the villagers. The conviction is so wide spread in this country that the desperate economic situation of our people requires desperate remedies that no one will object to the assumption of dictatorial powers provided that not only disinterested and honest but wise use is made of such powers. What exactly Aundh State will do with these powers no one can foretell, but we admire the determination of the State authorities not to allow the peasantry, once relieved from debt, again to fall into it.

The Bill for Debt Redemption which the State has introduced into its Legislative Council, however, suffers from one serious defect, which we hope will be removed before the measure takes legislative effect. The State authorities, although their avowed object is to reduce the amount of debt, nevertheless seem to have lurking in their minds a notion about the sanctity of contract, for one clause of the Bill provides that while the Debt Conciliation Committee will be at liberty to settle the debts at lower figures than those at which they were contracted or to which they have accumulated, it will be incompetent to it to reduce the amount of the debt in respect of which a court has made a decree. The Committee can only vary the manner of repayment; for instance, it can permit the debt being repaid in a larger number of instalments than the court has ordered, but it cannot decrease the amount the debtor is to pay. This clause shows, we are afraid, that the framers of the Bill have not thoroughly grasped the principle underlying it. It is not the function of the Debt Conciliation Committee merely to determine what the debtor's liability really is. Its function also is to reduce this liability

his economic capacity. One factor, in particular, in the economic situation, viz. rise of the value of money, makes it unjust to exact fulfilment of old contracts in terms of money in the normal way. The adjustment that it is necessary to make in view of the altered circumstances the courts of law cannot make, and that is the *raison d'être* of the constitution of conciliation boards. If these boards must regard as sacrosanct the decrees of the courts, they can achieve nothing. For in any State or Province debt conciliation will have to be carried on over a long series of years in order to be completed, and all that the creditors have to do in order to prevent the debts due to them being scaled down is to file suits in law courts and get decrees. Law courts have not the power to take cognisance of a change in economic conditions; it is the business of the debt conciliation boards to weigh properly and make due allowance for the change that has taken place. Debt conciliation boards have first to find out what amount is properly due from a debtor. Even in determining this they may and should go deeper into the past history of the debt than the civil courts can. But the work of compounding the debt begins only at that point. Then the boards start adjusting the debt to the repaying capacity of the debtor, a consideration with which the law courts have nothing to do except in ordering instalments. This is the chief work of such boards. While the boards may be ordered, in cases in which the decrees of courts are available, to determine the amount of debt in accordance with such decrees, they must be at liberty, in bringing the debt within the economic capacity of the debtor, to reduce it if necessary. Debt conciliation boards in all the British Indian provinces are not only given freedom to modify the courts' decrees in performing their second function, but are required by the legislature to do so. The Punjab Act, for instance, says: "A decree or order of a civil court shall be conclusive evidence as to the amount of the debt to which the decree relates, but the amount may be reduced" in accordance with other provisions of the Act. To debar the Debt Conciliation Committee from reducing the amount of a debt which is the subject of a decree would be fatal to the whole scheme.

On another point the Bill shows great weakness. The Bill, while aiming in course of time to free all the people in the State from indebtedness, excludes from its scope those to whom, in the opinion of the State authorities, it would never be possible to accord this privilege. Of course, there will be some debtors whom the State will be unable to help with advances, because, however drastically their debts may be reduced, even the reduced debts will be in excess of their assets. But it will not be right to leave these unfortunate persons to their fate. Those who are in such a desperate situation deserve the attention of the State first of all. It is of course fully admitted that the State cannot make loans to people who have no security to offer. It can help in this manner those whose position is or, after certain adjustments, will become solvent. Those who fall outside this category must be helped by giving them the benefit of insolvency.

They must be asked to surrender their assets and declared insolvents so that they may be freed from a debt which they are never able to repay and which presses them down throughout their life. The Punjab and Bengal have, as parts of their debt conciliation measures, modified the Provincial Insolvency Act to suit the case of rural people. The Punjab Act reduces, for the benefit of agriculturists, the limit of debt from Rs. 500 to Rs. 250 and raises the limit of assets from Rs. 500 to Rs. 2,000. The Bengal Act prescribes that the debt of an insolvent be so reduced that he will be able to pay it off in twenty years or, as a last resort, he may be required to sell up all his property barring what is required to maintain himself and his family, which is laid down to be his dwelling house and one-third of his land. If his holding is less than three acres, at least one acre or three bighas of land will be saved to him. It must not be supposed that in reducing the debt or declaring a debtor insolvent any injustice is done to the creditor. If the principle of debt conciliation is properly carried out and the debt reduced to the repaying capacity of the borrower, clearly no injustice will result. For the creditor cannot in any case take from the debtor more than it is within his capacity to pay, and the creditor too realises as well as anybody else that the debtor must live if he is at all to pay. The extension of the insolvency benefit to the agriculturist only recognises his right to live and nothing more.

#### CONGRESS : A STEPMOTHER.

**M**R. K. T. SHAH examines the federal scheme in the *Hindustan Review* for November. After saying that the scheme speaks of the Indian States as geographical expressions and makes no mention of the Princes, he proceeds:

Had the Act disregarded only the Rulers altogether, but spoken of the peoples of the States, one might have considered the new constitution reasonable as well as realistic. But in the actual method adopted, it can only be considered as the most obsolete instrument of archaic ideals and impossible intentions, which the people of India, no matter under what jurisdiction they live, cannot possibly accept with any hope to derive benefit for themselves. Such a disregard of millions of peoples in the country, in the constitutional document prepared for that country by the popular assembly of another country, makes a most ironical commentary on the motives and the workings of Parliament. A marriage has been arranged, to use the language of the most fashionable British Press advertisements, between two parties, British India and the Indian States, neither of whom seems to be at all consulted in the choice of the partner, no facilities provided for divorce, and little or no settlements made on the bride, nor dowry given to the groom. We cannot read Section 6 (5) and Section 45 (4), as implying anything more than that the Hindu practice of perpetual widowhood is not accepted by this constitution, i. e. the States might secede from the federation, if the fundamental provisions of the present constitution are changed, or the constitution breaks down for more than three years and cannot be restored without radical alterations. This is, at best, a forced union, Rakshasa Vivaha, as the ancient law-givers of India would have called, in which the moment the parties reach the age of discretion and demand the right to choose for themselves their life-mates, there would inevitably be conflict, collision and collapse.

True, the British Parliament is not alone in its disregard of the very existence of the peoples in the Indian States. The Indian National Congress, with far less justification, has also ignored the existence and claims of the Indian States' peoples. The rationale of this attitude of the Congress is difficult to appreciate for any one who will not credit the more unbecoming insinuation about the motives of some of the Congress leaders in advocating a policy of "Hands off the States". At a time when the Government of India strongly deprecated the criticism of States' administration, British Indian publicists used to be unsparing in their critique of that policy of the Government of India. Nothing has happened since that time to justify this revolution in the Congress attitude towards the Princes or the States. In the past, at least when the States and their administrations were theoretically outside the orbit of Indian politics, there could be some semblance of a reason in international courtesy to eschew criticisms of the foreign States. But now that the States might soon form part of the common political organisation and government in India, even that excuse to shield the Rulers from the blasts of popular indignation or criticism in the States or in British India is not availing. The Congress has not—officially at least—disowned or denounced the ideal of Indian unity, supposed to be achieved by this device of the federation. And the Princes have not abandoned, vis-a-vis the popular elements in India, at least, their absolutist claims, which ought to have met with the most emphatic opposition from the spokesmen of the Indian people. It is the strangest irony of Indian politics, however, that under leadership like that of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and perhaps under much higher inspiration, the Indian National Congress prefers to be worse than a stepmother to the peoples of the Indian States.

Under much higher inspiration! Whose inspiration could this be? Does it put you in mind, gentle reader, of Shegaon?

#### SHORT NOTICE.

#### EDUCATIONAL REFORMATION IN INDIA.

By "EXPERIENCE". (J. C. Basak, 363, Upper Chitpore Road, Calcutta.) 20cm. 271p. Re.1.

THE author has poured out in this book his seventy years' experience, as he says. The book deals with practically every aspect of Indian education from principles right down to the publication of books.

Spread of useful knowledge—knowledge that would enable pupils to earn their living—is to be the aim of education throughout. The author prefers home education to University education and almost condemns the latter. Prejudices and superstitions even among the educated are a great hindrance to educational progress and to remove these he recommends the formation of societies for their removal. Such societies he considers more important than mathematical, geographical and other scientific societies.

He also sees no bright spot in our educational system. Illiteracy and absence of industrial education are the great defects. As he does not expect any financial help from the Government he calls upon bands of young graduates and under-graduates to undertake this work.

Chapters entitled "Western Education in India" and "Londoner's Education" are perhaps the most useful part of the book and may be separately published. Our local bodies may find some inspiration from chapter V.

K. V. SANE.

## ETHIOPIA'S PATHETIC APPEAL.

*Following is the text of the speech delivered by the Ethiopian delegate at the Assembly of the League.*

THE Ethiopian people would not consider that our delegation had performed its duty if we did not once more draw the attention of the Assembly to the present unfortunate situation of my countrymen.

Need I remind you of the stages of our terrible ordeal? The Walwal incident; our efforts to have applied the arbitral procedure provided for by our treaties; the opposition of Italy, and her endeavour to limit the scope of that procedure; the evasive and ineffective meetings of the Council; the Italian military preparations and the grave decision of the Powers to refuse us arms. Later, at the close of the rainy season, and without any new incident having occurred to provide a fresh pretext against us, came the invasion, your meeting and effort to help us, weakened, alas, by fatal flaws; then the resistance of our people, despite the inadequacy of their arms.

A new rainy season was at hand, and our country could have held out until the rains began without any decisive result having been achieved by the aggressor, when the latter, impatient to end the struggle, and certainly in defiance of the rules of war, turned upon us an appalling new weapon against which we were defenceless—the sprinkling of our troops and of our civilian population with a rain of mustard gas. How many more powerful armies than our own would have succumbed to such an attack!

Referring to the crushing of our unhappy country by military force, the President of the Swiss Confederation, M. Meyer, said a few days ago in a broadcast message that "the highest courage was unable to prevail against the most modern arms."

My fellow-countrymen will not have heard unmoved this testimony which will be confirmed by history.

We had hoped that the additional injustice we suffered would lead to a further effort on the part of the League to help us. His Majesty the Emperor, in agreement with the Government, decided to leave for Europe, there to bear witness to, and endeavour to arrest, this destruction of his people. His departure was unfortunately invoked as a pretext by those who, preoccupied with the European situation, were impatient to put an end to collective action.

Distinguished speakers have declared from this platform that it is by preventive measures of mediation and conciliation that attempts should be made to prevent disputes between nations from degenerating into war. True: but it should be remembered that such measures must be undertaken immediately, and with sincerity and decision, so that delays, procrastination and hesitation may not benefit the very State whose aggressive intention is manifest.

The conflict of which my country is the scene has been a painful experience for the League that has taught everyone a striking lesson; our delegation need not therefore go deeply into the problem of the reform of the League. Nevertheless, the Ethiopian delegation ventures to state its opinion that the Covenant is sufficiently clear to stand in no need of modification, but that the League's action is far from inspiring confidence in any of its Members.

Experience has shown that, failing a radical change in the methods by which the Covenant is applied, the League cannot give really effective assistance. It will rather confine itself to exhortations

and prayers, to threats, even to offering economic or other advantages to the aggressor at the expense of the victim, and to showing such hesitation as to encourage the aggressor. A study of the question would appear to show, however, that economic sanctions did in fact produce a definite effect—namely, that of reducing the foreign trade of the aggressor State. It is none the less certain that such partial sanctions had no effect on the aggressor's will to conquest, and were powerless to arrest his warlike action. On the contrary, the prospect of the future cumulative effect of sanctions already applied, or likely to be so applied, induced the aggressor to employ poison gas in order to finish off his victim before such measures could take effect.

We have heard a great deal about the noble idea of collective security; but we fear that such security may become in practice merely the deceptive reality of a false security. If national pride, national prejudice, national selfishness, national inertia and secret diplomacy are strong enough to prevent the firm establishment of peace and security through efficacious collective action, would it not be better to say so clearly to all nations, and especially to the weaker ones?

However, I did not come to this platform to voice a new protest.

Reference has been made to the settlement of the Ethiopian question; but do the decisions to abandon sanctions against the aggressor and to allow our delegation to participate in the discussions of this session constitute a settlement?

If no agreement is reached, the coming months will witness a renewal on land and in the air of the murderous operations undertaken against those who nowadays are termed brigands, though their sole crime is to have opposed a desperate resistance to the invader, even though unable to obtain from abroad the indispensable weapons of defence. What can be hoped from this resistance, if the frontiers of the areas holding out are to remain effectively blockaded by neighbouring countries and closed to the import of arms?

Accordingly, His Majesty, who is profoundly disturbed by such a prospect, instructs me to state that, for the purpose of saving human lives and preserving an independent national home for his people, he would now regard himself as bound to consent to even the heavy sacrifice of rights which were nevertheless guaranteed to the Ethiopian people by the Covenant.

At the same time, we express the hope that the Powers which play a preponderant part in international politics will increase their efforts to bring about a solution within the framework of the League. Nothing would be more likely to place peace on a firm foundation, which is the desire of us all.

### BOOKS RECEIVED.

- WORLD POPULATION. By A. M. CARR-SAUNDERS. (Oxford University Press.) 1936. 23cm. 336p. 12/6.
- INDIAN FINANCE YEAR-BOOK, 1936. Ed. By P. R. SRINIVAS. (The Author, 20, British Indian Street, Calcutta.) 1936. 26cm. 428p. Rs. 5.
- THE INDIAN TARIFF POLICY. By B. N. ADARKAR. (Author, Bombay.) 1936. 23cm. 161p. Rs. 3.