

INDIA IN TRANSITION

By the same Author

I REFER TO INDIA
THE PROBLEM OF INDIA (With B. SHIVA RAO)

INDIA IN TRANSITION

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Table Conference

With a Foreword by

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Late Secretary of State for India



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FOREWORD

By THE RT. HON. WEDGWOOD BENN, D.S.O., D.F.C.,
(*Late Secretary of State for India*)

MAJOR GRAHAM POLE has produced a book which, while it contains a mass of solid information, is very easy and pleasant to read. These qualities must be attributed to the author's wide first-hand knowledge of the real India and especially to his understanding and sympathetic appreciation of her political demand.

The case of India differs historically from those of Ireland and South Africa in that no political party in Great Britain is found openly to oppose the claim to Dominion Status. The real division, and it is very real, is as to facts and as to methods.

As to facts: there are those on the one hand who regard the many differences of race, creed and class as an almost permanent bar to a self-governing India; and those who see in the unifying passion of Nationalism a force which must submerge even communal divisions and fit India for her place among the Dominions. It must be added that the real enemies of India's claims—and they are many—exploit these differences to achieve an end they dare not avow.

As to methods: there are those who cling to the preamble of the Act of 1919, and those who recognise, what is indeed the fact, that the meeting of the First Round Table Conference established relations of equality in dealing with India and destroyed for ever the tutorial plan so offensively and indeed uselessly laid down in that preamble.

The position to-day of the British administration in India is difficult. Co-operation must be the keynote of policy and yet to secure it requires infinite patience and sympathy. There is a party of Indian nationalists who do not desire understanding. They eagerly wish to destroy it. They find a counterpart among the British. How fatally easy it is to walk into this trap and to undo in a few weeks a task of reconciliation which has been the labour of years. This "firmness" not only sows seeds of bitterness which, as we see in Ireland, may blossom after many years, but renders almost impossible the active co-operation of Indians in the framing of the new constitution.

The problem is essentially a practical one. We must find Indian shoulders to bear the burden of Government. We must therefore have Indian advice as to fitting it to Indian shoulders and, moreover, we must find Indians willing to assume it with the assent of their fellow-countrymen. Otherwise the new constitution means either chaos or reversion to pure emergency rule.

Somehow, therefore, we must revert to the method of conference, and administrative policy should be shaped to that end.

It cost much labour to assemble in the summer of 1931 a comprehensive conference, long neglected during the election and then light-heartedly dismissed. A representative conference must meet again with two purposes.

(1) To place before the British Parliament India's real demand. Congressmen and Moderates alike are asking far more than the Government has shown any willingness to concede.

(2) To attempt to secure by an understanding statesmen willing and able to carry the burden of Government under the new constitution.

No bureaucratic draft, however industrious and full of paper safeguards, will do. (We may remember the

Government of Ireland Act of 1920.) A Bill which pretends to give Swaraj, and in fact denies it, is a real danger. To create new political forces without loading them with responsibility will mean a return to dictatorial powers without effective means of enforcing them. Nothing will do now, if indeed it is not already too late, but the gift of real responsibility.

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