

REPORT OF
CONFERENCE

OF LONDON LIBERALS

ON

“Constitutional Reform in India,”

AT

NATIONAL LIBERAL CLUB,
LONDON, S.W.

24th JUNE, 1919.



LONDON LIBERAL FEDERATION
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REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

OF A

CONFERENCE

held under the auspices of the

LONDON LIBERAL FEDERATION

in honour of

THE DEPUTATION OF THE MODERATE PARTY OF INDIA.

On Tuesday, 24th June, 1919, a Dinner was given at the National Liberal Club by some members of the London Liberal Federation to the members of the Deputation of the Moderate Party of India. It was followed by a Conference held in their honour under the auspices of the Federation, at the Lincolnshire Room, National Liberal Club.

The object of the Conference was to give a hearty welcome to our Indian friends of the Moderate Party, and to set forth a clear statement of their views and give prominence to their national aspirations with which the main body of Liberals are in accord.

As originally arranged, the Right Honourable E. S. Montagu, Secretary of State for India, was to deliver an address on CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM IN INDIA, but he was unavoidably detained in Paris. Mr. Charles Roberts was, therefore, requested, at short notice, to speak at the Conference on the subject. Mr. H. E. A. Cotton, L.C.C. was in the Chair.

The following members of the Moderate Deputation were present :—The Hon. Mr. Surendranath Banerjea, Editor of the *Bengalee* of Calcutta, Member of the

Viceroy's Legislative Council, and President of the Moderate Deputation ; Mr. N. M. Samarth, Hon. Secretary of the Deputation, and late member of the Bombay Legislative Council, representing the Bombay University ; Sir K. G. Gupta, K C.S.I., late Member of the Secretary of State's Council ; Sir B. C. Mitter, Member of the Bengal Legislative Council, and late Advocate-General of Bengal ; The Hon. Mr. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, President of the Servants of India Society, and Member for Madras in the Viceroy's Legislative Council ; Mr. K. C. Roy, Head of the Associated Press of India ; Mr. P. C. Ray, Joint Editor of the *Bangalce* ; and Mr. H. N. Kunzru, of the Servants of India.

Among other distinguished Indians who were present at the Conference were :- Mr. Bhupendranath Basu, Sir Prabhashankar Pattani, and Mr. Aftab Ahmed Khan, Members of the Secretary of State's Council ; and Sir Abbas Ali Baig, late Member of the Secretary of State's Council.

Besides these, a large number of Members of the Liberal Party attended the Conference.

The Lincolnshire Room was packed and many had to stand all the time the Conference lasted. The following is a detailed report of the proceedings.

THE CHAIRMAN :—“ Ladies and Gentlemen, You have assembled here in such goodly numbers this evening that I am very sorry, in opening the proceedings to be obliged to administer one dose of disappointment. We have had a message from Mr. Montagu this morning to the effect that he was detained in Paris over the Peace Conference and would not be able to be here to-night. He is extremely distressed about it because he had been looking forward to this meeting. He himself told me he was very anxious to explain the Liberal policy he was pursuing in regard to India before an audience of London Liberals, but his absence is quite inevitable ; he is being detained on the Nation's business, and I feel sure that under the circumstances you will accept his apology for not being present, and at the same time be as sorry for his absence as I personally am. I am glad, however, to say that we have secured a very able and efficient substitute in our friend Mr. Charles Roberts (Applause). Mr. Charles Roberts, as most of you know, was Under Secretary of State for India in Mr. Asquith's last Administration. He went to India with Mr. Montagu when the Indian Reform Scheme was shaping, and since his return he has been Chairman of the Reform Committee which has been sitting at the India Office, and which is responsible for the form which the India Government Bill has taken. Therefore I think you will agree with me that there is no one who is more fully qualified to speak with regard to the present scheme of Constitutional Reform in India than Mr. Charles Roberts. I am sure we are all extremely grateful to him for his kindness in coming this evening and giving us the benefit of his knowledge and his experience. I am not going to stand between you and him, but there is just one observation I would like to make, and perhaps you will forgive me for making it,

because this question of Indian Reform has been with me a matter of, shall I say, lifelong interest, and I hope I may add that I have inherited that interest from my father. To those of us who have worked in the cause of Indian reform, the days in which we are living now seem almost unbelievable. If five or ten years ago we had been told that the Secretary of State for India would come forward with the memorable declaration of August 20th, 1917, which laid it down that the progressive development of representative institutions in India was the aim of British policy in India, and secondly, would follow up that declaration by the introduction of such a statesmanlike Bill as the Bill for the Better Government of India which is now before the House of Commons, I think we should have thought a very big draft was being drawn upon our credulity. But there it is, and I need hardly tell you with what feelings of satisfaction those of our Indian friends who are here to-night, and not only they but a very large number in India itself, have welcomed that Bill, and how anxious they are to engage the interest and support of all you Englishmen and Englishwomen in the movement to help it through. Give it all your sympathy, give it all your support, so that when the Bill has been enacted they may have the opportunity they have been so long asking for of working out their own political salvation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I will not keep you longer, but I will now call upon Mr. Charles Roberts to address you." (Applause).

Mr. CHARLES ROBERTS :—" Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, it was with extreme reluctance that I acceded to Mr. Cotton's pressing demand this morning to come, not to fill the place, but to speak instead of the Secretary of State to this gathering to-night. I feel that it was perpetrating somewhat of a fraud upon the audience to ask you to listen to me instead of to the Secretary of State for India. As Mr. Cotton says the State is to blame for that, and such is my devotion to the cause of India that I merely ask you to make the sacrifice of listening to me for a short time, if Mr. Cotton thinks it will serve the cause we have at heart. I am glad to think also, that after I have spoken, we have here some very distinguished Indians, some of whom have been members of the Provincial Legislative Councils of India; others of whom have been members of the Imperial Legislative Council at Delhi, and two were late members of the Secretary of State's Council; and I trust you will have from them, when I have done, their views as to the possibilities of

this great measure of reform. Before going further I shall have pleasure in reading a message which Mr. Montagu has sent from Paris to this gathering as he was unable to attend it himself. He says, 'It is with the greatest possible disappointment that I find myself prevented at the last moment, for reasons which I am sure will be readily understood, from attending the Indian Conference of the London Liberal Federation to which I have been looking forward. I had accepted the invitation which you were good enough to give me through your Chairman with a special pleasure, because I feel that there never was a greater need than at the present time for a close sympathy and understanding between those who bring an independent mind, here and in India, to the study of political development. It will not be enough if in opening the way to the responsibilities of self-government in India, we content ourselves with introducing constitutional changes and leaving India to work them out as best she may. Even more essential, are the spirit of goodwill and comradeship, the interplay of ideas, and the encouragement of common interests which it is among the objects of this Conference to foster. May I assure you how warmly I appreciate the contribution that you are making to this vital aspect of India's great endeavour? I will trespass on your time with a word or two on the present situation. For the first time in her history India is to be given direct access to a Committee of Parliament on a matter which intimately concerns her interests. We can look forward with confidence to securing a measure which will give abundant effect to our pledges, without either giving countenance to the suspicion that we are protracting their fulfilment, or losing sight of essentials amid points of difference. It was inevitable that divergences of opinion should arise, and they have not been concealed or minimised. The views which find their place in the published papers will be expressed before the Committee and will be given the full weight to which their authority entitles them. But the structure of Reform which Parliament will be asked to approve will in all its fundamentals be that designed in the Joint Report by Lord Chelmsford and myself, and the promises implied in that Report will be most scrupulously fulfilled. No words of mine can be strong enough to express my gratitude to the Viceroy for the untiring energy and enthusiasm with which he has lightened our labours from the first moment of his association with me in our common effort. We are now, I trust, within measurable distance of seeing our aspirations realised. India is asking to be trained, and is destined to be trained, in new methods; the full use of constitutional powers through which the voice of popular feeling can find expression, not in agitation but by demonstration of its strength. If her leaders set themselves to master the lessons of responsibility and undertake their new task in the spirit of sympathy and co-operation with the great service through whose instrumentality she has been brought through this hopeful period in her history, they may be assured that the British people on their part will watch over the experiment without impatience or

narrowness of criticism. I am convinced that if the proposals now before Parliament become law, we can look forward to a prospect in which fears will be dissipated, doubts and misgivings overcome, and confidence in a steady movement of progress assured.'

I trust you will not consider this evening's gathering, in so far as it has drawn from the Secretary of State so confident a forecast of the future, as ill-spent. I think we may well congratulate those who care for the cause of Indian self-government on at least the successful launching of this great measure. It is backed by the joint agreement of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, after the fullest possible consultation in India with the heads of local governments, with officials, with non-officials, and leaders of public opinion, and we are glad to feel that it has passed its second reading in the House of Commons without dissent. I do not for a moment mean to suggest that the difficulties of the voyage are over. There may be many swirling eddies and currents of thought on the Joint Committee, but I do think that this great venture could not have been so far launched under more successful auspices, and I trust that before the close of the year at all events, the measure will be safely on the Statute Book. It is true you hear in obscure places, or in corners of periodicals of occasional outbreaks of reactionary violence. I do not suppose it is possible that a measure so large, so far reaching, giving rise to so many legitimate opportunities of divergent opinions, could fail to meet with the criticism of an opposition, but of organised opposition there is none. There is no party opposed to the cause of Indian self-government. There are individuals, and perhaps there is one Association opposing, but I think many great measures of enfranchisement have had to face far more opposition, and on the whole I think India may congratulate herself on the fact, and the Indian representatives may congratulate themselves on the fact, that this measure is launched with a very general, if not the unanimous goodwill on the part of the whole British Empire. (Hear, hear.) I, of course, can speak with no special authority; I am not a member of the Government; I am a mere individual who has served on a Committee, and Mr. Cotton is wholly wrong in saying that I am entirely responsible for the form the Bill has taken. That is one of his little mistakes. (Laughter.) But as he has referred to the form of the Bill, I should like to say I think the form of the Bill is very excellent. I have often seen criticism on the details of English legislation. India is fortunate in the fact that all the law which governs it now has been recently embodied in a single Statute, and I think this Bill has the great advantage that the draftsmen have provided, when it is passed into law, as we hope it will be, that on the top of the consolidated Statute it is arranged in its right place or places, so that even after this large measure the whole law of the Government of India is capable of being printed in one single Statute, and I think those lawyers who know the slovenly and incredibly

bad condition of the English law on many subjects might take a lesson from the superior effort which has been made as compared with English legislation. True, it is a Bill which leaves a great deal in outline—a Bill which over and over again takes power by rules to do this and that; by rules it establishes the franchise, by rules it lays down the composition of the Legislature, and when you have read through the actual words of the Bill you must ask, and many people have asked, what exactly is going to be done. For that you must wait until the Joint Committee before which these matters are to be thrashed out has decided. But the reason of it is clear. If you are to put every detail about the franchise or about the composition of a Provincial Legislature into an Act of Parliament, then you stereotype and you make rigid, you make it impossible to effect any changes in the future without all the cumbrous procedure of an Act of the Imperial Parliament, and for this reason:—Because this Bill is, as everybody knows, not a final word, but a mere stage of the process of Liberal advance, an instalment which is intended to lead on to another instalment, a method is preferred which gives elasticity and permits of going further under Parliamentary sanction, but without the necessity of passing a measure through the Imperial Parliament. Though it is perhaps baffling at first to those who wish for a simple and straightforward statement of what is going to be done under the Bill, it really is necessary, and I believe it is wise, to leave much to the elasticity of rules. I say that because Mr. Cotton asked me to give, as far as I could, a clear account of the proposals under the Bill. I suggest that he might have left that matter to the Indian speakers who will follow me, but I imagine he thought that a London Liberal would be perhaps better suited to explain to London Liberals the dark mysteries of Indian government, and that I should have more sympathy with the difficulties we all feel in exploring the somewhat obscure methods under which India is governed.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you must remember that the Bill now before Parliament does not deal with all the problems which the Secretary of State and the Viceroy were exploring in India during their tour. We have not yet got what the Joint Committee to which the Bill is referred, will have, namely the report of the Crewe Committee which is engaged in advising as to what should be the constitution of the Council of the Secretary of State, what should be the powers of the Secretary of State and of that mysterious body the Secretary of State in Council. It has also to advise on the amount of devolution which is to be granted from the Secretary of State in Council to authorities in India, whether central or local, and the report of that Committee has not yet been received. The Bill does not deal with the employment of Indians in the Civil Service; it does not touch the question of the relations between the Central and the Provisional Governments in India (which is not a matter for legislation); it does not deal with the proposals which have been

made for improving the relations between this country and the Government of India and the Princes and Rulers of States in India. But the Bill does make very considerable changes, changes which those who know anything about the Government of India will best appreciate.

I have seen it stated by extremists, and by some voices in the House of Commons, that this is after all a mere trumpety affair, a liberalising tendency in the Provinces in India and is not going as far as the situation requires. Well, it does introduce a great and a fundamental change in the principle on which India is to be governed, and it does that in the terms of the preamble to the Bill which states that 'With a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in British India as an integral part of the machinery it is expedient to promote self-governing institutions in that country.' That is, of course, intended to give Parliamentary and Statutory sanction to the pledges of His Majesty's Government, given on August 20th, 1917. One may say the changes are slight but that is a fundamental change. Up to now there have been some slight beginnings in the way of self-government in India, such as the popularisation of the Legislative Councils, the importance of which I do not think anyone would fail to appreciate—certainly no Liberal who supported Lord Morley when he was introducing those great changes, has any reason to doubt that the extension of powers and the popularisation of the Councils under the Morley-Minto Scheme have done much to serve as a training ground for Parliamentary institutions. Lord Morley himself did not think they would lead up to a system of Parliamentary government, but I think they have done so, and I think that Lord Curzon, who said undoubtedly they would, proved in this matter a wiser prophet than the author of those reforms. There are beginnings of popular government in India, of course in Local Boards, District Boards, and Municipal Institutions. But apart from that, in all the real essence the chain of authority is unbroken, and has been unbroken up to now, from Parliament through the Secretary of State in Council, through the Viceroy, through the Secretariat, through the heads of local government down to the district officer governing a territory as large as two of our counties. Into that system we have now to introduce a different system. We are pledged, Parliament is pledged, the Government is pledged, and we Liberals are not afraid of being pledged to the introduction of responsible government by successive phases.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I apprehend my task may not be so much to argue that we ought to go thus far, perhaps, but to explain why it is that in the judgment of the authors of the Joint Report it is unwise to go at this stage further. But let me, in order to prove in the first place the very considerable changes and very substantial changes in the direction of self-government which are embodied in the Bill, very

briefly summarise them under a few heads. Please remember of course throughout that the measure must not be regarded as a complete whole. It is a stage in a process—responsible government is to be introduced by stages. After a period of ten years a Statutory Commission is to be sent out from this country to test the system, to advise the Government as to further advance. The whole scheme of the Bill is to devise, to provide a method of carrying out by stages a system which will ultimately lead to responsible self-government of the Dominion. In the first place, then, the Bill will effect a considerable measure of devolution of control from both the Secretary of State and the Government of India to the Provinces.

Quite apart from any question of liberalising institutions, that great change has been supported very widely, and only those who know how centralised the Government of India has been in the past—not so much I think through the fault of the men administering the machine as through the fault of the laws originally devised to meet a totally different state of things—only those who know how centralised the Government of India has been in the past will appreciate the importance of a change which is referred to in the second part of the preamble, 'to encourage the gradual development of such institutions (that is self-governing institutions) in the Provinces of India, it is expedient to give to these provinces in provincial matters the largest measure of independence in the Government of India which is compatible with the due discharge by the latter of its own responsibilities.' That I think is essentially bound up with the liberalising process in regard to these institutions. If you could not give to the Provinces or to any authority in India complete freedom from control so long as that authority, whether provincial or central, was a merely autocratic authority, then it would be responsible to nobody. If it is not responsible to the people of India it must be responsible to Parliament through the chain of authority, and therefore devolution of control and the liberalising tendency in the Provinces in the Government of India go together. Of course the changes are far greater in the Provinces. In the sphere of provincial government the Bill provides for a guarded but very substantial extension of self-government in the following ways. In the first place. It confers what is really a Parliamentary vote on five millions of Indians—men only. (Laughter.) Secondly, it enlarges the Legislative Council, gives them a substantial elective majority, and places them on a broad franchise with increased powers to vote both on the Budget and legislation. It increases the Indian element on the local authorities of the Provinces for the future; it divides subjects of administration into reserved subjects under the charge of the Governor and members of the Executive Council, and transferred subjects under the charge of the Governor and his Ministers, thus extending popular control over some of the subjects of provincial concern. The Governor

retains his veto and may insist on an allotment of money in the Budget for his reserved services, in spite of any objections which may be taken by the Legislative Council, and as to local self-government, complete control is to be established as far as possible. I do not go over the whole. In regard to the sphere of Central government in India, the Government of India says, "We recommend no alteration at present in the responsibility of the Government of India to Parliament, but we do provide greater opportunities for criticising the actions of the Government of India and also a Legislature which can develop when the day comes, into a machinery," and so on. I think anyone who appreciates what those changes mean will realise that this liberalising measure is very substantial. Why not go further? (Hear, hear). I thought that question would probably be in your minds. There were voices in the House of Commons which suggested universal suffrage, both for men and women, a complete measure of democracy. (A Voice: "It is incomplete without women.") You may well say why this timidity? Well, ladies and gentlemen, I think there is an answer which Liberals can make to extremists, and to those who are impatient in their demands—so to my friends who will not risk anything, I may say the last thing I would do would be to assert that there was racial unfitness on the part of the Indians to govern themselves. I do not believe it, and I do not put any restrictions or base my opinion on that ground. I am quite certain that many Indians are quite capable of working representative institutions; I am quite certain some are not, and I do not think my friends here would question that statement. The whole question really is, what is the percentage of those who are fit to work representative institutions, and what is the percentage of those who are not fit. We must remember that we in this country have proceeded gradually, guided by a prudence often far too slowly—(Hear, hear),—but we have also got the lessons of history, which proves over and over again that it is not enough to repeat merely the formulas of democracy, and to utter the shibboleths of freedom. The business of building up a free, self-governing nation is, as Burke said, an awkward business. Does anyone for a moment suppose that our friends the French are incapable racially or otherwise of governing themselves? Does anyone believe that the Russians are incapable of governing themselves? ("No!") Why then, both in the case of the French Revolution, and in the case of the Russian Revolution have we seen disastrous breakdowns, reactions which have led often to a set-back in the cause of progress? The answer is this—and I believe it is a very simple one—self-government rests not merely on Statutes, not merely on putting words into a Bill or an Act; it rests on the building up of customs and conventions which are as essential for the working of free institutions as free institutions themselves, and unless you give time for those customs and conventions to consolidate and to bear the weight of the institutions themselves, you will have breakdowns such as we have seen. I know well enough and

I often feel it must be very hard indeed for Indians to learn the doctrine of patience which I have ventured to put to them. We have enlarged our ideas. We used to think only a hundred years ago that we were the only people in the world who could manage free institutions, but since then we have seen free institutions passing all over Europe, passing all over America, including the Southern States of America, and now you see vividly before your eyes the old World which has had no past history, which has had no past training in self-governing institutions, demanding that they shall have their right like the rest of the world. No one would deny them. Well, there are breakdowns there, sometimes pathetic, sometimes grotesque, and if anyone thinks there is no danger of Bolshevism sweeping over countries before they have established these customs and conventions on which our institutions must rest, then I say that those persons do not realise how difficult, how dangerous, it is to proceed along this course, and how far wiser it is to proceed by a method which may seem slow at first, but which is far shorter, and which I trust will lead to the goal far quicker than if you proceed by the methods of the impatient idealist. After all we Liberals have learned our lesson, and I often ask my Indian friends who are impatient in their methods at times, to think of what the British Constitution is. I never look on it as a fixed and formed ideal ; it is a thing which is always in process of change, of evolution and gradual advance ; it has been its strength that we can trace it down, it may be from the fathers of the Puritan Revolution of 1688 to the efforts of Mr. Asquith. (Applause.) We set no bounds to its future and it is from that point of view we ask the Indians to advance along the line of Constitutional reform bit by bit, stage by stage, in order that they and we may arrive at the goal we all desire.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I want to deal very briefly, if I may, with some of the objections which one sees in the minds—I will not say of opponents, but of doubters and critics. (A Voice : “ Don’t mention names.”) Sometimes people say : “ This system seems to us curiously complex. Is there any precedent for it anywhere ? Here you have the Government of a Province composed of a Governor with nominated members to the Executive Council dealing with services, law, order, crime, and what not, and the Governor acting with a Minister chosen from an elective legislature, administering other services like sanitation and education, and so on—you have this Government in two component parts. Is not that very unduly complex ? ” Yes, I admit it is complex ; but I do not believe you can make it any simpler. Certainly you will not make it simpler by putting nominal power in the hands of the Legislature and basing it on a broader franchise, enlarging their numbers, giving them more powers of debate and criticism, but no responsibility. If you do that, and leave them face to face with an Executive with no responsibility to that Legislature, you invite

irresponsible faction, you multiply opportunities of friction, and you fail to provide that training in responsibility which the authors of the Joint Report really insist upon as the essential thing to aim at in the development of India. Of course, it is complex. The full system of a Cabinet Government and a responsible Governor seems simple, but it is not really simple ; but we are so familiar with it that we forget how complex it is. But a half-way house between the two—something which is a stage, something which proceeds by an instalment leading up to another instalment—I am afraid cannot be altogether simple, but I believe it can be worked ; I believe it has been worked out into a system which will not lead to breakdown and which is capable of being worked—of course, with goodwill on both sides. I venture to say that diarchy—this element of dualism—is absolutely inherent in what is being proposed. We are trying to establish in India a system which is neither fully democratic, neither fully a responsible Government ; but if you are going to have a half-way house between those two, the element of dualism is absolutely essential ; it is merely another way of saying you are advancing from one to the other. You may say it is not possible to have a half-way house ; you may say it is not possible to have anything except an autocratic system on one hand, or to make a sudden plunge of all the millions of India (of whom, I regret to say, only 11 per cent. are educated—whose fault that is I will not for the moment investigate) into this experiment with no training whatever, with no knowledge of our Western institutions, with no past from which they have been able to learn the working of these things. Well, Ladies and Gentlemen, I do not believe that our British genius for politics and the ingenuity of Indian minds is incapable of working out together a system under which we may go safely from one point to the other through the various stages ; and that is why I believe a system of dualism is essential in this proposal, and why I am not afraid of the bugbear of diarchy. There are those who will tell you that under this system under which the Provincial Government will exist in two component parts you will throw too great a burden on the Governor. Certainly he will require tact and wisdom, but yet I venture to think it will not be impossible to find a man or men who will be rather more attracted by the task of working out this new experiment in freedom than otherwise, and who would be more attracted by it than by the chance of holding the position of a mere Governor, a mere figure-head. You are told that the new Indian administrators, the new Indian Ministers who will take charge of considerable departments of Provincial work, will lower the high standard of administration which has been attained to in India. That may happen at first : but I think there is a compensation. If you can get popular support and popular interest taken in questions like sanitation and education you will enlist a new force that may enable administrators who, from the nature of the case, cannot be so highly trained, perhaps, as those in the past, to lift their country upwards.

There are many people who tell us that the new system will set up an oppressive oligarchy, that riots will result, and that the Mohammedans will be oppressed by the Brahmin people. Well, the Brahmins—some of whom are on the platform at the present time—may speak for themselves, but I would venture to ask those who think that the work of these institutions must inevitably result in oligarchy to remember that the Brahmins all told represent only $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the population of India, and if you are going to have a franchise on a broad basis I doubt whether that class, which is not altogether homogeneous and which is not found over vast tracks of India, will find it easy for them to establish this ascendancy which is so much dreaded. For my part, I believe you will find, if you look into the Bill, that there are adequate safeguards provided for the whole of the classes—for the depressed classes; and one hopes—although I am not for a moment going to suggest that so persistent an institution as caste will disappear, or will even be broken down, by democratic institutions—yet I do hope, and have every reason to hope, that the worst asperities of caste may be modified by the progress of democratic ideas. (Applause.)

I have always believed—I do not know whether I am quite in agreement with those who have taken an interest in Indian self-government—that you cannot point to a better instance of bureaucracy in history than exists in India, but I think the system has ceased to be suitable to the conditions of the country, and we as Liberals do not believe in government by bureaucracy provided you have a people trained to government themselves, and I, for my part, will invite you to notice that the authors of the Report and the Bill have given careful consideration to the position of the Services under the new scheme. There are statutory precautions introduced into the Bill protecting legitimate rights and privileges, pensions and status, and so on. A Public Services Commission will be set up which will have very important duties to perform with reference to these Services, and they can always look under the new system to the protection of the Governor, whose duty it will be to preserve a high standard of administration in India and protect the legitimate interests of everyone. I, for my part, believe there are many men in the Indian Civil Service who will feel that the new experiment of assisting a people to train itself for self-government is, or will be in the future, at least as interesting as their old job of administrative work, and I think that there is a large field in which the trained administrators at present in India will be able to co-operate in this task, and, great as the position of the Indian Civil Service has been in the past, it may have even a greater part to play in the future working out of these institutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am afraid I have detained you a long time, but it has been a difficult task to cover the whole subject. I can

only say that I believe I am voicing the feelings of all Liberals in this hall when I say and tell our Indian friends that we give our heartiest good will to their efforts to secure self-government in India. (Applause.) We are conscious of what India has done for us during the war. We are not likely to forget her co-operation during the period of our great trial, and for my part I think all Liberals wish that India and Great Britain should remain together in the Empire. I know the difficulties, the difficulty of language, the difficulty of race, are all agents that keep us apart, but I do not wish personally to see the British Empire founded upon the basis of race. I do not see how it can rest on the basis of race, and if it were to do so, then I should begin to suspect the working of the same poison which has brought Germany to the position in which she is. What the British Empire has to realise in the future is the common ideal of its power of maintaining law and order over the wide spaces of territory within its sphere ; it has to realise its power of developing freedom and self-government in its component parts, and of giving every scope for the culture and individualism for each member of the Empire. If the British Empire is to rest in future only on the dominance of race working to autocratic and bureaucratic ideals, then I think there would be great danger ahead for us. But what I trust to see is an Empire based upon a unity of ideals, steadily spreading those ideals of freedom and self-government on which I think British as well as Indian progress rest." (Applause).

THE CHAIRMAN :—"Ladies and Gentlemen, we have several Indian gentlemen here this evening all of them leaders of public opinion in their own country, and I think I shall be falling in with your wishes if I ask some of them at any rate to put their views before you. I will first of all call upon my old and valued friend, the Hon. Mr. Surendranath Banerjea to address you. Mr. Banerjea is no stranger to an English audience, but some of you may not have heard him before ; those of you who have not, prepare for a treat. Mr. Banerjea is a Brahmin of the Brahmins, yet he is the best democrat I know. He is the hero of a hundred fights, and now at the age of 70 he has come to this country, I hope to gather the final victory of his career. I call now upon Mr. Banerjea, whom I have known and loved from a boy, to address you, and to give you the Indian point of view."

THE HON. MR. SURENDRANATH BANERJEA :—"Mr. Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen, I must thank you in the first instance for the kind words of welcome and greeting you have been pleased to accord to me. Yes, Mr. Chairman, we are old friends ; I have been a friend

of your father, than whom there has not been a warmer, a steadier, or more earnest supporter of the people of India. We all cherish his memory, and the memory of other devoted workers in the cause of Indian freedom. I think I express the feelings of my Indian friends when I say that we all share the sense of regret at the absence of Mr. Montagu on this occasion, but I think we all agree that we have found an excellent substitute in Mr. Charles Roberts. (Applause.) I have listened to his speech with intense interest leavened with admiration, but there are one or two points of difference between us to which I shall presently refer.

Sir, statesmanship has never been called upon to grapple with a problem more exalted in its character, more comprehensive in its scope, more far-reaching in its consequences, than the one which is now before Parliament affecting the destinies of 200,000,000 of human beings, the inheritors of an ancient civilisation. We were great in the past. In association, and I hope in permanent union with the British Empire we feel we shall be still greater in the future. In the morning of the world we were the spiritual teachers of mankind; in the remote past the memory of which recedes into the dim twilight of history, our Indian sages chanted on the banks of their sacred rivers and amid the solitudes of their forest groves those hymns which represented the first yearnings of infant humanity towards the Divine Ideal. Later on, but several centuries before the Christian era, India asserted her spiritual supremacy over the greater part of the Asiatic continent by the spread of Buddhism which, in its palmy days, extended from Kamschatka on the north to the Eastern Archipelago on the south, and from China on the east to the deserts of Syria on the west. My point is this, that these glorious things were done at a time when India was in the enjoyment of free institutions democratic in their character, when the Sovereign was no more than the chief functionary of the State, obedient to the will of the people. My contention is that it is these free institutions which made us great in the past; it was political liberty which secured India's spiritual supremacy. The freeborn Aryan with his soul unfettered by the trammels of political servitude or political subordination soared high into the untraversed regions of the invisible, the impalpable, the spiritual and the mysterious. As in the past, so in the future, if Britain will give us free institutions, Britain will qualify us for the accomplishment of that mission which is ours under the Providence of God. Therefore, Sir, we welcome the message of the 20th August, 1917. We welcome the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme which seeks to give effect to that message. We regard that message as the greatest of our charters, our true Magna Charta, not wrung as of old by rebellious Barons on the field of Runnymede, but the spontaneous gift of a liberty-loving democracy. We regard the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme as the most notable State document in the history of the British connection with India, and on a

par with Lord Durham's Report on Canadian Reform. There may be differences of opinion as regards details ; but I think I anticipate the verdict of history when I say that when the heat and dust of the present storm has been allayed, and when things are seen in their true perspective, a grateful posterity will regard Mr. Montagu as one of the truest benefactors of the people of India. Sir, I have heard it said, and said by Englishmen, not by my people, that there is no such thing as gratitude in politics, but gratitude is a deep instinct with our people. The House of Commons may bar out Mr. Asquith for the moment—(A Voice : ' He will come back ').—I am sure he will, but I was going to say that such a thing with a House of Commons in Calcutta, or Madras, or Bombay—I hope we shall soon have one—would be inconceivable, almost impossible. Sir, an illustration occurs to me at the present moment which I will put before you. Seventy-seven years ago an Englishman whose name was David Hare, died in Calcutta. He went out to India as a watchmaker, he amassed a fortune, and he gave the whole of it away to the people of Bengal for the establishment of educational institutions. But he was highly unpopular, as such men usually are, amongst his own countrymen, and they denied him the rite of burial in consecrated ground. He sleeps in an unconsecrated spot, but guarded by the love of the people of Bengal, and consecrated by their tears. He died on the 1st June, 1842, and on the 1st of June every year hundreds of my countrymen who have never seen him, but have heard of him by name, assemble round his tomb, strew it with flowers, adorn it with wreaths and uplift their voices in adoration to the Supreme for the peace of his soul. That is the gratitude of the Indian. And bear in mind, sir, that when these Reform proposals have been enacted into law and have been placed on the Statute Book they will evoke a measure of gratitude in a form that will be unparalleled.

Reference has been made to the British connection with India, and we look forward to the permanence of British rule in India, but in order that such connection may be permanent it must be based upon mutual confidence, mutual esteem, mutual affection, and upon the abiding and firm conviction on the part of our people that under the ægis of British protection the amplest opportunities will be afforded for the fullest development of those gifts and faculties with which an all-bounteous Providence has so richly dowered our people. It is because we believe that the message of the 20th August, 1917, and the joint scheme of Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford open out such vast possibilities of political progress, of industrial expansion, of moral and spiritual well-being, that we welcome them with alacrity and enthusiasm.

Now, sir, it is my duty to state what we feel with regard to the Scheme and the Bill. I belong to what may be called the Moderate Party—I do not like the word at all, but it is a word which is not of

our making ; it has been put upon us by the *Times*, and it has stuck to us ever since. I prefer to call our Party the Centre Group of the Nationalist Group ; we are really between—not between two fires, not between the Devil and the deep sea, not between the Extremists of the Left and the ultra-Loyalists of the Right ; we are between the extreme views of both sides. We are for steady, Progressive Liberal advance in a direction which will eventually culminate in placing us amongst the self-governing nations of the British Empire. (Applause.)

Ladies and Gentlemen, we welcome the Scheme, we hope that the Bill will pass, but we want a little modification, a little expansion, in regard to the Central Government to which my honourable friend referred, though in the most guarded terms. So far as the Provincial Governments are concerned, we want Progressive advance. There will be, as my honourable friend has explained, a cleavage between two classes of subjects. There will be the subjects that will be under the control and superintendence of the Governor and Ministers, and there will be the subjects that will be under the direction of the Executive Council. The former includes such subjects as Local Self-Government, Education (Primary and Technical), Co-operative Societies, etc. They are nation-building subjects. Education, Sanitation, Local Self-Government, for instance—these are subjects in which we people of India take the most vital interest. The whole of our future is bound up with the problem of education and sanitation. Take the case of Bengal. Malarial fever claims its victims by thousands and hundreds of thousands every year. Have you any malarial fever here ? You had it. I am a reader of English history, and I know it. James I. died of the tertian ague, which is a form of malarial fever. The Fens of Lincolnshire were the dens of malarial fever. You have driven it from your country by sanitary means. Why should not we do the same ? The Government hitherto has not been able to do it. If a popular Minister was installed in Government House, and was invested with the portfolio of sanitation, and if he was not able to take effective measures for getting rid of this disease in the course of the next few years, he would be dismissed from his office and his portfolio would be taken away from him. (A Voice : "Without a pension.") The Joint Scheme provides a definite advance in responsible Government in the Provinces, and so far as it goes it is good ; but why not introduce a measure of responsibility into the Central Government ? The Central Government is to be wholly responsible to the Secretary of State and Parliament, and the Provincial Government will be responsible in the case of transferred subjects to the Legislature and to the constituencies. We are anxious that some measure of responsibility should be introduced into the Central Government, and we can mention some of the subjects which might be entrusted to a popular Minister. Take, for instance, income tax ; take salt. Then there are public works. These are subjects which at the

present moment are in charge of the Indian Member of the Executive Council in the Viceroy's Council, and there is no reason why some subjects should not be transferred to a popular Minister in the Central Government, responsible to the Legislature and to the constituents rather than to the Secretary of State and Parliament. That is the view we have ventured to put forward, We are grateful to the Government for giving us a measure of autonomy as regards the Provinces sketched out in the Joint Report, but we are anxious that the Government should advance a step forward, and introduce some further measure of responsibility also in the Central Government. Sir, you have been pleased to refer to our capacity for self-government. When Europe was sunk in primeval barbarism our ancestors developed institutions of self-government which survived the vicissitudes of Time and Fortune. Our village systems of government date from thousands of years before Christ, and they existed until the year 1818. You talk of Republicanism, you talk of Popular Government. Read the Kautilya Arthashastra, written in the third century before the Christian era. In that book you find that in the village councils members were elected for the government of towns ; committees were appointed ; the King had a Council whose number was defined, and he was subject to the authority of that Council. That was in the morning of the world, thousands of years before Christ. We have all these hereditary instincts which contribute towards the success of self-government. Try us ! It is quite right to have checks and counter-checks, but do have a little confidence in our capacity for self-government. We have been a hundred and fifty years under British rule, and if at this time it is to be said we are not qualified for self-government, does not that imply the gravest reflection upon British rule ? That is the view which I venture to put before you. Conventions, customs—all these things will grow up if you give us a whole-hearted control. Trust us, repose confidence in us, and I venture to think we shall rise to the height of the occasion.

I am in entire sympathy with my friend's remarks about a diarchic control. I think it should be tried. There are some risks. Is there any institution in connection with which there are no risks ? But we have diarchy even now. There are departments of Government ; there are separate portfolios lapping and overlapping each other, but there is no friction that we know of, because the Governor is there co-ordinating everything, and I have not the slightest fear in my own mind that diarchy will end in disaster. According to the terms of the pledge, you have no other option left you. The message says that self-government is the end and aim of British rule, and it is to be attained by progressive stages. Responsible government cannot be introduced except under a form of diarchy. My friend has referred to the Brahmins, and there has been a suggestion of a Brahmin oligarchy which might be installed. Well, I am a Brahmin ; my friend here, Mr. Sastri, is a Brahmin ; my friend

over there, Mr. Bhupendranath Basu, is not a Brahmin. But is there any difference between him and myself as regards social status?—absolutely none. When people day after day meet together in a common Council Chamber, they become friends; the acerbities of life and of debate are softened down, and a feeling of mutual esteem and mutual confidence is engendered. Democratic institutions will slacken and eventually destroy the rigours of caste. Give us the beginnings of democracy, and the death-knell of the caste system will have been sounded. Then it is said that the Brahmins will oppress the masses, but what are the facts of the case? Every movement for the upliftment of the depressed classes has always been patronised and supported by Brahmin leaders. In Madras we took evidence on the subject, and it was found that it was the Brahmins who initiated the movement for the elevation of the depressed classes. And it is the same in Bombay and in Bengal; the Brahmins are the originators and the most active supporters of similar movements. The Brahmins are an intellectual people; they know what is best for them, and it is their intellect which has enabled them to hold their own in the stormy times through which they have passed. They know what is best for the people; they know what will be most conducive to the interests of all classes, and they know that all should unite upon one common political platform for the elevation of the country. Read the proceedings of the Congress, and what do you find? Ever since the foundation of the Congress in 1885, resolution after resolution has been introduced, with the object of inducing the Government to take measures for the alleviation of the condition of the masses. We have urged the reduction of the salt tax for the benefit of the masses; we have urged the reform of the police, and the spread of free primary education. The Government stood in the way, I am sorry to say, when Mr. Gokhale wanted to introduce a Bill empowering the Government to initiate measures to make primary education free and compulsory. Who are they who cry out most earnestly for the spread of primary education? Again, it is the representatives of the educated classes. In Bengal it was a Brahmin who introduced a Bill for free compulsory primary education, and in Bombay it was an Indian member.

Ladies and Gentlemen, one word more, and I have done. In the course of the next few days the Joint Committee of both Houses will sit; the eyes of all India will be fixed upon the work of that Committee. Its proceedings will be watched with the utmost interest, and India will rejoice; the gratitude of India will be stirred to its deepest depths; the ties binding England with India will be cemented a hundredfold, if the labours of that Committee fructify in results which will lay broad and deep the foundations of responsible Government in India, and make our people, it may be by progressive stages, but within a measurable distance of time, equal partners in the great confederacy of Free

States which constitute at once the boast and bulwark of the Empire, which has enabled it to pass through the severest ordeal in its history, and which, when re-inforced by the accession of India with her limitless resources, will enable England, conscious of her invincibility, to gaze with serenity on any combination, the strongest that may be formed against her imperial sway. Ladies and Gentlemen, we appeal to you as Liberal men and women to help us in the mission on which we are embarked, to expedite the Bill which is now before Parliament, to make it worthy of England, worthy of the British democracy, so that the foundations of responsible government may be well and truly laid, so that the bonds which unite England and India may be strengthened to the glory of England, the happiness and prosperity of India, and the lasting good of mankind." (Applause.)

THE CHAIRMAN :—I will now call upon Mr. Srinivasa Sastri, the successor of Mr. Gokhale, as president of the Servants of India Society and a member, like Mr. Banerjea, of the Imperial Legislative Council. Mr. Banerjea is from Bengal. Mr. Sastri represents both Southern and Western India for he is a Madras Brahmin and the headquarters of his society are at Poona in the Bombay Presidency.

THE HON. MR. V. S. SRINIVASA SASTRI :—" Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I will take only five minutes of your time, the allowance originally fixed for speakers after the chief speaker. I think after the speeches we have heard, which lay bare the general policy and expediency of a large measure of constitutional reform, it will be well if I was a little more particular, and descended to what I consider the important details in the Bill which is now before Parliament. The Government of India, in their recent despatch, have used the words 'to extend the functions of the Governor.' The Governor is an absolute official in the present system of administration, but his powers and his duties will assume in the future, under the Scheme that we are about to inaugurate, far greater complexity and far greater delicacy than has ever been known. He will have to discharge functions which are ordinarily considered incompatible ; he will have to show a combination of qualities which in administrators are not often found dwelling together ; he will have, on the one hand, the Executive Council to deal with, being himself a member of that Council, sitting with his colleagues and debating with them, often overruled by them, and occasionally, and under a profound sense of responsibility, overruling them also. With the Ministers, on the other hand, he has quite another kind of connection. The Ministers are not to sit together ; he never sits with them ; he never will work with them ; but he has over the Minister a power of control—he can advise him like a constitutional

monarch. Sometimes, when the advice is unheeded, he can give an order, and when the order is disobeyed he has the power of dismissing the Minister. When the Minister is so dismissed and a successor is not found easily, then the Governor has to take over the transferred Department and arrange for its future management. He has, further, a very strange power of certification to be given to him, under which, when he has said a few words composing a formula, whole subjects are lifted out of the hands of the ordinary Legislative Council, and placed in the hands of a Grand Committee of that Council, where the officials will have it in their power to carry out their will. Now these are duties which are in themselves very heavy, but the Scheme proposes to place on the Governor another responsibility. He has to preside over meetings of this popular House ; that is to say, he has to fulfil the functions ordinarily fulfilled with such eminent success by the Speaker of the House of Commons. I hope this feature of the Scheme will not be carried out, for I wish a popular House to elect their own Speaker. Supposing, however, the Governor had the additional function to discharge, you may well think his office was insupportable. I quite well remember discussing the whole matter with an exalted Viceroy in India some time ago, and when he found out what a Governor had to do, he exclaimed, ' If I were appointed to this office, the first thing I should do would be to book my passage home.' Well, Ladies and Gentlemen, a combination of the qualities necessary for fulfilling the functions of a Governor can be found only in the front ranks of Parliamentary public life in England. I take it that in future the Governor will have to be a man who has already reached eminence as a Parliamentarian, one who knows the traditions of public life, a noble and chivalrous public life, who knows how to hold the scales evenly between contending parties, who can keep his personality behind as an unseen power, and betray it only when unavoidable. The Indian Civil Service, I know, is a great service, and just tributes are often paid to it, with which I associate myself ; but it has its own training ; it grows up and develops in its own atmosphere, an atmosphere by no means propitious, I must say, either to the exercise or the growth of the extraordinary virtues which we wish to see combined in a Governor. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary that the Governors of a future India should be chosen outside the ranks of the Indian Civil Service. (Hear, hear.) It may seem a harsh thing to say, but the Indian Civil Service does not produce a man of first-rate ability, a man of admirable calibre in whom the broad-mindedness of a Governor exists, competent to deal with the mass of detail as an expert administrator ; and unfortunately it is not from that Service one would ordinarily expect to recruit a man for the high office of Governor. This has got to be remembered : your public men, when they rise into eminence, must not grudge to sacrifice whatever career may be open to them here, but proceed cheerfully to take up this high office in our land. They

will be warmly welcomed ; they will have the very high honour and the great glory of starting a new and promising régime under the best auspices. I know the Civil Service, as I told you before, and, unfortunately, too many members of the Civil Service are impatient of criticism. They do not like prolonged discussion ; they have invariably shown a great distrust of the control that Parliament exercises over them ; they long to be freed from the trammels that an ignorant House of Commons, as they say, imposes upon them. There is a spirit of antipathy to the very atmosphere of the House of Commons very often to be found strongly developed in members of the Indian Civil Service. Now, since we desire in future to have the true spirit of Parliamentary institutions implanted in India, it is of the first importance that we should have your very best men. The Government of India in their recent despatch laid down that the appointment to the office of Governor should proceed on the same lines as hitherto, that is to say, that to three of our nine great Provinces Governors should be appointed from home and for the rest of the Provinces, the great majority of them civilians should be chosen, as hitherto they have been chosen, for the office of Lieutenant-Governors and Chief Commissioners. Now I take it that that part of the despatch will have to be scrutinised with great care, and I am in full hopes that the Liberal party in England, who can appreciate broad-mindedness in statesmanship, who can appreciate the necessity of appointing men who are not mere office holders, but who are capable of rising to the occasion, will always keep a watch on the growth of those Liberal principles and will strengthen our hands in placing before the Joint Committee the absolute necessity of at least a considerable majority of our future Governors being real Parliamentarians who have drunk deep of the fountain of pure Liberal traditions." (Applause.)

MR. N. M. SAMARTH (of Bombay, General Secretary of the All India Moderate Conference) :—"Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am very glad to be asked to move a vote of thanks to the lecturer of this evening. (A Voice : 'A Brahmin ought to have done it.') My leader, Mr. Banerjea, a Brahmin of Brahmins, has already spoken, and I fear there is no other Brahmin here who could have moved a vote of thanks. I hope you will allow me, a non-Brahmin, to take the opportunity of associating myself with my leader in giving my thanks to the speaker and to the members of the London Liberal Federation for the cordial welcome extended to the members of our Party—the Moderate Party, as it has been called, but which I prefer to call the National Liberal Federation of India. (Applause.) I should like to call the attention of the London Liberal Federation and others of that school of political faith to the efforts which for over half a century have been made by the Party which I represent to inculcate in the minds of

the people of India a feeling of sympathy and friendliness for freedom-loving England, in the hope that England ultimately will give to my country those free institutions for which England is famous. I claim, sir, that the work which has been done by my Party during all these years—the banner which has been held aloft by Mr. Banerjea for the past forty or fifty years, for he has been in the public life of the country for nearly half a century—the gospel which we have inculcated amongst the people through sunshine and storm, through evil report and good report—is responsible for the enthusiastic and spontaneous manifestation towards England which India has shown in her late hour of peril. (Applause.) Mr. Charles Roberts said there is no organised opposition to the reform Scheme by any organised body. I do not know whether the Indo-British Association is or is not an organised body ; I think it is. And only the other day, at the Annual General Meeting of that body, the distinguished President of the Indo-British Association said we have come here as ‘denationalised politicians who have taken advantage of the war to create a ferment.’ Denationalised politicians ! Denationalised politicians, forsooth ! who have been suckled on the food of English liberty and English literature and English history, who are trying to see that those principles for which England has stood all these years are given to us and imparted to our system of administration. If we are denationalised politicians, hundreds and thousands there are of them in my country, of whom England ought to be proud and not ashamed, and as to taking advantage of the war to create a ferment, there is no greater travesty of the facts. (Hear, hear.) The unrest talked of was there before the war, and the cause of it is the system of bureaucratic government which prevails. The problem is a very simple one. Here Parliament may be supposed to exercise control over Indian affairs, but in the debates which take place on Indian affairs there is not even one-tenth part of the House which is at all interested in India. The purely nominal control which Parliament exercises over Indian affairs has been the bane of the administration ; the men on the spot are autocratic and bureaucratic, and the whole system of Government is such that it ought to be without further delay decentralised and democratised. The control which is, in theory, exercised at present by Parliament should be largely transferred to the representatives of the people in the Legislative Council, and that is the simple problem to solve which, and to give effect to the real remedy for which, Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford have devised a Scheme which has appealed to the better mind of India. There is no doubt, as has been pointed out, that there are defects in the Scheme and in the Bill ; but I hope and trust that English Liberalism will stand by us and see to it that these defects are removed, and strive to give us a substantial measure of reform which would enable us to hold the destinies of our own people in our own hands in important respects, at any rate, to start with.

I thank Mr. Charles Roberts for his kind expressions of sympathy, and for the tactful way in which he has dealt with the subject on the whole, although, as Mr. Banerjea has said, there are points of difference which will be placed before the Joint Committee of the two Houses by us." (Applause.)

MR. ROWE :—" Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, It gives me very great pleasure to second the vote of thanks to Mr. Charles Roberts for his address this evening. He has dealt in a wonderfully complete and illuminating way, in the very short time at his disposal, with a most vast and complex subject, and we owe him the more gratitude when we know that he came here under exceedingly difficult conditions to take the place of the Secretary of State for India. I can only say that anyone who listened to his address must have found it difficult to realise that it was only this morning that he was called upon to fill the place. I will not take up more time, after the speeches to which you have listened from our Indian friends, such speeches as we are not often fortunate enough to listen to, but I must say that it is not to our credit when we consider the way in which we coolly neglect the Indian affairs of our Empire. It is all very well to come here and cheer on an occasion like this, but I should like to know how many of the present audience, for instance, have read the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. If you want to learn more about this great subject now under discussion, the way to do it is to get the Report and read it without further delay.

The only other thing I wish to say as Chairman of the Federation is that I am very glad, and I think you will have reason to be grateful to us, that we have arranged this Conference on the Indian question. We are very grateful to the speaker and to all those who have made it such a brilliant success." (Applause.)

CHAIRMAN :—" Ladies and Gentlemen, We have not had a Mohammedan speaker to-night, and I do not think we ought to separate without a few words from one of our Mohammedan friends, so I will ask Sir Abbas Ali Baig, a former member of the Secretary of State's Council, to address you."

SIR ABBAS ALI BAIG :—" Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, After the thunder-claps of eloquence of my friend, Mr. Surendranath Benerjea, which I am sure are still ringing in your ears, I think it is somewhat unfair on the part of your Chairman to call upon me to address you. However, I will do so with pleasure. At the present moment, when the political atmosphere of India is charged with electricity, and when the solidarity brought about by the spirit of

loyal comradeship in facing and encountering the gravest peril which the British Empire has ever had to face—when this solidarity is being threatened by the disruptive forces of discontent in India, we ought to feel thankful that Mr. Cotton has brought together in this room some of the Indian leaders and the Liberals of London to consider the matter and to have an interchange in a friendly manner of their views on some of the gravest problems affecting, not only the political destiny of India, but the world position of Great Britain. (Hear, hear). I am sure we are all most grateful to him. The Bill, of which we have had such a lucid exposition from Mr. Charles Roberts, has yet to be piloted through the very dangerous rocks and shoals of the Joint Committee of the House of Lords. He takes a very optimistic view with regard to it, and I hope he is correct. That Bill is undoubtedly a very great stride forward, and is unparalleled in the constitutional history of British India. It opens up a bright vista of immense possibilities, conducive to the strength and prosperity of both countries; but although Mr. Charles Roberts has told us that it is excellent, I think it is not perfect. Mr. Banerjea and Mr. Sastri in their speeches have revealed to you some of its defects. No measure, however well considered, dealing with such vast and complex problems, and involving such varied interests, can possibly give satisfaction to all parties, but there are a few outstanding features—I will not go into details, because there is no time—which I should just like to mention. For instance, there is the central feature of the Reform Scheme, the measure of advance in the Provinces and the various duties to be performed of which the pivot is the Indian Minister. Now what is the position of this Indian Minister? The declared object of the Bill is a responsible Governor with the responsibility of the Executive and the Legislature to the people. Now this Minister is responsible to an autocratic Governor whose powers are to be greatly enhanced, and who can dismiss that Minister at a moment's notice if he happens to disagree with him. In this respect I think his position is rather more humiliating than that of any official, high or low, and I wonder how Mr. Charles Roberts would like to be in that position in that excellent Bill which the House of Commons is going to consider. Compare it with the position of his colleague on the executive side of the diarchic Government. His dignity and his independence are assured. The King appoints him; the Governor cannot remove him. He may disagree with him as often as he likes. I do not understand why the independence and dignity of the Indian Minister should not be similarly safeguarded. Then, again, you have the bureaucratic—or you may call it the autocratic—absolutism of the Government of India quite untouched. Mr. Banerjea emphasised the necessity and the desirability of introducing some element of responsibility therein. I fully associate myself with his remarks. Then, Ladies and Gentlemen, there are larger subjects which the Bill and the Scheme of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report will have invoked. No

nation can have a really free life and command the respect of other nations unless its military and naval strength is developed in proportion to its resources and population. (Applause.) I hope the Liberals who are present here to-night will endeavour to make this Scheme a living reality and a powerful cementing force which will render impossible in India the Separatist tendencies which are now developing, for instance, in Ireland, so that the mutual good of both countries may be advanced." (Applause.)

The resolution was put to the meeting and carried unanimously.

Mr. CHARLES ROBERTS :—" Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I should like to be allowed to say two things ; first that your vote of thanks to me is, I know, a message of encouragement from this meeting to the Secretary of State, who is proceeding with his difficult task with a great grasp of the principles of Liberalism which I think ought to be, and I am sure are, recognised here. Secondly, I am not going to quarrel with my friends as to any of their criticisms, though I think there may be a reply. But one thing I feel sure of is that we are all glad that India possesses such spokesmen as we have heard to-night. Men who have spoken so much to the point, and with such an extraordinary command of the English language, are admirably qualified to put to the Joint Committee those particular subjects on which they wish on behalf of India to lay most stress.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you, and I am sure we are all very much indebted to the Chairman for presiding over this meeting." (Applause.)