

*The Fourteenth Session*  
OF  
*The National Liberal Federation of India*  
HELD  
AT CALCUTTA  
on the 15th, 16th and 17th April, 1933

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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

BY

*Dirvan Bahadur M. Ramachandra Rao.*

## CONCLUSION

Fellow delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am afraid I have exhausted your patience although I have not exhausted my theme. Let me therefore, bring my remarks to a conclusion. At the end of the first session of the Round Table Conference, we returned to this country with the belief that the period of suffering and strife was over and that Great Britain had at last made up her mind to lift this country to the highest stage of its national existence and to recognise her as a contented and willing partner in the British Commonwealth of Nations. The whole country has considered the proposals of His Majesty's Government and the almost unanimous verdict is that our hopes have not been realised. For a long time it was the practice of British statesmen to seek moral justification for British rule in India and they have repeatedly asserted that in governing 330 million people of India, Great Britain is discharging a solemn trust. They have asserted that British policy in India is not in any sense dictated by British interests and that the welfare of India alone is the determining factor in the formulation of their policy. They have frequently declared that as soon as the people of India are ready to undertake the burden of the Government of the country, they will willingly hand it over to them. Our trustees have opened a vigorous campaign in the British press on behalf of the masses of India whom they seek to represent and desire to find reasons for the perpetuation of the trust. The theory of trusteeship has now been modified and Sir Samuel Hoare stated at the third session of the conference that the problem of India is the problem of reconciling "the claims of three partners who have for many generations been united in an undertaking of far-reaching ramifications; Great Britain on the one hand, British India on the other, and Indian India on the other". A trust is a trust and can never be converted into a partnership between the trustees and the beneficiaries of the trust. Sir Samuel Hoare has further assured the British public that in putting forward the present proposals, British interests and British imperial interests have not been sacrificed in any way. This is the bare truth about the present proposals. They have been so designed as to perpetuate the domination of

Great Britain indefinitely over the affairs of this country. The idea that Britain should continue as a working partner in the Government of India along with the people of this country is altogether inconsistent with the ideal of Dominion Status so often declared to be the goal of British policy in this country. As regards the Princes, the recent resolutions adopted by the Chamber of Princes also indicate a retrocession in their views. The conception of a Federal constitution for the whole of India made a great appeal to the Indian Princes and the people of British India, and during the first two conferences, the Princes were inspired by sentiments of a common nationality and a desire for national freedom. I regret to say, judging from the sentiments expressed at the last session of the Chamber of Princes, that some of the Princes have receded from these ideals. They are more anxious now for guarantees for the preservation of the monarchical order and the prevention of the democratic sentiment spreading into the States than for a Federated India. Notwithstanding the courageous utterances of the Maharaja of Bikanir and others, I feel that they are continually higgling for better terms and are putting off their decisions on the ground that the "completed picture" is not still available. In these circumstances, the prospects of an All-India Federation are gloomy. One tries to pierce the darkness and uncertainty that hides the future of this country from our eyes. Will the future be a dreary resemblance of the past, or will it be anything better? I am not a pessimist. I see before me a long period of struggle and strife. In his speech in the recent debate, Mr. Baldwin referred to the Irish parallel and appealed to the Parliament that if the Indian problem is not satisfactorily solved in time it would end in the same way as Ireland. We are already on the highway for the creation of another Ireland in this country and the present scheme is not, I venture to say, of a kind that will divert the course of events. Unless the present proposals are very substantially improved, there is no chance of any political peace in this country. We may be driven to accept an imperfect constitution but even a poor constitution may work and yield results if a strong and united party in this country with its roots among the masses is bent upon extracting from it the ut-

most that it would yield. The essential need, therefore, is united action among the political parties and leaders at this supreme crisis in the affairs of the country. Many of those who have preceded us in this national struggle have been gathered to their fathers, while some of us who are still in the field belong to a fast vanishing generation. My last words are, therefore, addressed to the younger men whom I see before me and who have to carry on the fight for our national freedom till our emancipation is fully assured. Difficult as your task is, do not despair, for despair is a keynote of failure. The pendulum may be swinging forward and backward, but the hand of invisible time is perpetually marking its progress on the dial of the destiny of our country. There is no royal road to freedom. Reverses there must be; but reverses should only stiffen your backs. I exhort you, therefore, to carry on the fight for the evolutionary progress of our country and for the attainment of our freedom till the goal is reached.

BANDE MATARAM.

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