

INDIA TO-DAY

A Report on Conditions in India and
an Outline of Policy by the I.L.P.
Indian Advisory Committee.

INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY
14 GREAT GEORGE STREET, LONDON, S.W.
SIXPENCE

FOREWORD

WE have taken the utmost care to make this Report accurate in every detail and have only included statements where the authority could be given. We have had the advantage of the help of Mr. Tom Johnston, M.P. who has brought back from India the latest facts regarding economic conditions. The Committee desires to acknowledge the valuable research work of Mr. Tarini P. Sinha.

Copyright is reserved in India.

THE I.L.P. AND INDIA

The Report is issued for purposes of information and discussion. The National Council of the I.L.P. has tabled the following resolutions for submission to the Annual Conference of the Party (April 4th to 6th) :—

The I.L.P. demands the immediate withdrawal of all repressive measures in India, the declaration of an amnesty for all political offenders, and the recognition of the right of India to self-government and self-determination, by acceptance of the proposal of the Indian Legislative Assembly that a representative Indian Convention should prepare a constitution for India and by using British influence to secure the withdrawal of the disabilities from which Indians suffer in the British Empire and other countries.

The I.L.P. urges upon the British and International Labour movements the necessity of assisting the workers of Asiatic and African countries which are passing under Capitalist control to organise industrially and politically for their protection and for their ultimate emancipation. It recognises that the interests of the workers throughout the world, of whatever race, colour, or creed, are one, and that International Socialism cannot be fully realised until the workers of the world have united for their political and economic liberation.

PREVIOUS DECLARATIONS OF THE I.L.P.

The following official declarations indicate the attitude of the I.L.P. towards India during the period of Labour in office and since :—

RESOLUTION ADOPTED ON THE ADVENT OF LABOUR TO OFFICE.

The National Council of the I.L.P., on the advent of Labour to office, once more fully associates itself with the people of India in their demand for political and economic liberty.

It assures the Indian workers of its sympathy and support in their struggle against the inhuman conditions of their labour ; welcomes the release of Mahatma Gandhi ; calls for the unconditional release of other Indians imprisoned for purely political offences dissociated from acts of, or incitement to, violence ; and reiterates its view that the Kenya decisions as affecting the relations between white and Indian settlers should be reconsidered.

It urges that the Commission to be set up for the revision of the Government of India Act should not be delayed for five years, but should be immediately appointed, and, in view of the adoption of Pundit Motilal Nehru's resolution in the Legislative Assembly, asks the British Government to consider the advisability of inviting representatives of the various parties in India to consult with it regarding the acceleration of full self-government, which should be impeded by no claim that Britain is the rightful ruler of India.

February 20th, 1924.

RESOLUTION ADOPTED DURING THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT'S TERM OF OFFICE.

The National Council of the I.L.P. welcomes the statement of the Prime Minister at York, on April 19th, that the British Government will be prepared to meet elected representatives of the Indian people to discuss the present position with them, and reiterates its view that a conference should be held of representatives of the different Indian parties with representatives of the British Government, with a view to considering the operation of the Government of India Act.

May 17th, 1924.

FROM THE ANNUAL REPORT, 1924-25.

The National Council of the I.L.P. have accepted every opportunity of urging that bold measures should be taken to hasten the securing of political and economic liberty of the Indian people. The following motion was tabled in the name of the I.L.P. at the Labour Party Conference :—

This Conference is of opinion that the time has arrived to seek a settlement of the problem of the Government of India by calling a conference of representatives of the various parties in

India and inviting them to prepare a scheme of self-government for discussion with the British Government with a view to immediate application.

The I.L.P. motion was included in a composite resolution which was unanimously adopted. . . . Frequent consultations have taken place with Indian representatives. . . . A special committee has been appointed to watch Indian affairs and to make recommendations to the National Council.

Annual Report of the National Council of the I.L.P., 1924-25.

FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS, ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 1925.

I think our continuance of the old governmental psychology has hindered our treatment of India. If ever there was a group of nations with an ancient civilisation, a noble people entangled in centuries of misfortune, who would respond to a gesture of understanding, it is the Indian peoples. A word, exquisitely tuned in their sufferings and ideals, proving we knew that without their help we could not solve the complications, for which neither they nor ourselves were responsible, but which we inherited—a word such as that would create an opportunity of incalculable value to the welfare of India and the peace of the world, and would reveal the practical importance of the Socialist outlook. But for us to speak in terms of power, when the power was ill-begotten, is to add one more injury to the misfortunes of India, and one more uncertainty as to the Socialist view of liberty.

Clifford Allen at the I.L.P. Annual Conference, Gloucester, April 12th, 1925.

RESOLUTION AT I.L.P. CONFERENCE, 1925.

This Conference sends its cordial greetings to the workers of India, and assures them of its sympathy and support in their struggle for political and economic independence.

It welcomes the recent offer of Mr. C. R. Das, the leader of the Swarajist Party in the Bengal Legislature, to co-operate with the British Government, on terms of honourable and equal partnership, and as an immediate means of establishing confidence between the British and Indian peoples, urges the Government to accept his proposals for self-government in the provincial Parliaments, increased power in the Legislative Assembly, the release of political prisoners, the repeal of the Bengal Ordinance and of all coercive legislations, and a loan for village development.

At the same time this Conference expresses agreement with the conclusion of the Minority Report of the Indian Reforms Enquiry Committee, that the defects inherent in the Government of India Act, 1919, cannot be remedied by any amendment of the Act or of the rules made thereunder, and urges that immediate steps should be taken to place the constitution of India on a permanent basis, with provisions for progressive development.

To this end the I.L.P. asks the Labour Party to press the Government to appoint a Royal Commission forthwith with a view to

examining the basis of such a constitution, without waiting for the expiry of the maximum period of ten years laid down by the 1919 Act, and to invite representatives of the various political parties in India to meet in conference with a view to submitting a constitution to the Commission for immediate adoption.

The I.L.P. is further of opinion that the needs of the workers of India demand more urgent and sympathetic consideration than is given to them at present. It therefore draws attention to the immediate necessity of improving the lot of the Indian workers, and looks forward to the time when India, self-governed, shall establish her own Co-operative Commonwealth on Socialist lines. It assures the workers of India of its solidarity with them in their needs and demands.

Resolution moved by A. Fenner Brockway, Annual Conference of the I.L.P., April 14th, 1925. Carried unanimously.

RESOLUTION AT LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE, 1925.

This Conference recognises the right of the Indian peoples to full self-government and self-determination. It welcomes the declarations of representative Indian leaders in favour of free and equal partnership with the other members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and is of opinion that the policy of the British Government should be one of co-operation with the Indian people with this object in view.

The Conference declares its agreement with the conclusions of the Minority Report of the Indian Reforms Inquiry Committee that the defects inherent in the Government of India Act, 1919, cannot be remedied satisfactorily by an amendment of the Government of India Act or of the rules made thereunder.

It is convinced that the political situation in India makes it imperative that immediate steps should be taken to place the Indian constitution on a permanent basis, and, with a view to a new atmosphere of friendly discussion, that all coercive measures and repressive legislations should be withdrawn.

It notes the declaration of the Secretary of State for India that the Government would most carefully examine any constitution framed by Indians and carrying with it a fair measure of general agreement among the peoples of India; regrets that this invitation has in effect been delayed until 1929; and asks the Secretary of State to examine the Commonwealth of India Bill and any other proposals that may be submitted, and to call a conference of representatives of the various Indian parties, with a view to the immediate application of a constitution in accordance with the wishes of the Indian people.

Moved by G. Lansbury, M.P. (for Labour Party Executive) and seconded by A. Fenner Brockway (for I.L.P.). Carried unanimously.

THE " INDIAN " NAVY.

The National Council of the I.L.P. protests strongly against the decision of the British Government to establish a Navy for India. It draws attention to the fact that, whilst the Indian peoples will be called upon to meet the costs of the Navy, control will not be in their hands and that only one-third of the officers are to be of Indian nationality. It points out that this action, in conjunction with the re-establishment of the Singapore dock, is likely to aggravate naval rivalries in the East with serious dangers of war and urges the Labour Party to give the proposal their vigorous resistance.

February, 13th, 1926.

THE CONDITION OF INDIA

*(being the Report of the I.L.P. Indian Advisory
Committee)*

PART I POLITICAL

IN 1858 the British Government, through a proclamation issued over the name of Queen Victoria, declared its will that "our subjects of whatever race or creed be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability and integrity duly to discharge." The loyalty of India being essential to the British Government during the war, this sixty-year-old pledge was revived. On August 20th, 1917, the Secretary of State for India said "the policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire." Yet India is still denied the rudiments of self-government.

HOW INDIA IS GOVERNED.

THE Government of India Act of 1919 was described as a charter of political freedom for India. How unreal that freedom is, a broad outline of the present system of government and administration will show.

Governor-General in Council.

The Governor-General of India (commonly designated the Viceroy) is appointed by the Crown on the nomination of the British Government. The supreme authority in India is vested in the Governor-General in Council. The members of the Council—six in number (or, if the Commander-in-Chief is included, seven)—are also appointed by the Crown. The Governor-General in Council

acts under the orders of the Secretary of State for India, a member of the British Government, responsible to the British Parliament.

The " Legislative " Bodies.

It is true that there are two national legislative bodies in India—the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State—but their powers and their representative capacity are strictly limited.* The Council of State has a permanent Government majority of members either nominated by the authorities or appointed to represent special constituencies, whilst nearly one-third of the Assembly are also nominated. In the case of finance, the Governor-General has the power to certify as necessary for "peace, order and good government" any proposal, even though the Legislative Assembly has rejected it.† This power he has not infrequently used. In the case of legislation, the Council of State has the power to reject the measures of the Legislative Assembly. Effective authority thus remains in the hands of the Governor-General and his nominees.

Moreover, even the elected members in the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State are responsible to the merest fraction of the Indian people. The population of British India is more than 247 millions. The voters for the Council of State number less than 20,000; for the Legislative Assembly less than one million. Only property owners and university graduates have votes.

The Provincial Councils.

The democratic basis of the eight Provincial Councils is also severely limited—only 3 per cent. of the total population having votes. Though they contain a majority of elected members, their powers are meagre. Their functions are separated into "transferred" and "reserved" departments. Whilst the former are under the control of responsible Ministers, the latter are administered by a nominated Governor and Executive. The "reserved"

* Moral and Material Progress and Conditions in India, in the year 1924-25 (H.M. Stationery Office), p. 53.

† Ibid page 54.

departments in all provinces include Law and Order, Revenue, Finance, Forests (except in Bombay), and Irrigation.

Even, in the case of the "transferred" subjects—Local Government, Education,* Industries, Sanitation, Excise (except in Assam), Agriculture, Fisheries and Co-operation—the Parliamentary control has proved ineffective.† In the first place, the "reserved" subjects have the foremost call on the revenue, which has meant that the "transferred" departments have been starved.‡ Secondly, the secretaries of all departments—"transferred" as well as "reserved"—are members of the British-controlled civil service, whose interest lies in the retention of the powers of the services as against transference to the legislatures, and who have used their right to approach the Governor behind the backs of Ministers.|| Thirdly, the Ministers, unlike the Executive Councillors administering the "reserved" subjects, have no power to appoint, transfer, or promote their subordinates who belong to the Civil Service, and who, in fact, largely hold the Ministers at their mercy.|| These three factors have made responsible government impossible even in the limited sphere where it is supposed to exist.

Further, there has been little attempt to make the boundaries of the provinces reflect racial or linguistic characteristics. They have largely been decided by administrative or military exigencies. The variety of race, language and outlook within a province has enabled the Government to exploit differences and has prevented proper representation of certain sections of the Indian people. Provincial autonomy cannot be effective or democratic so long as the existing boundaries remain

* The whole of the Education Department is not transferred, while some of the Universities are in the hands of the Central Government. In the Provinces, too, certain types of schools continue to be administered by the Governor-in-Council.

† Ibid p. 52.

‡ Ibid p. 53.

|| Ibid p. 60.

Communal Differentiation.

The popular element on the legislative bodies of India is not only small and elected on a narrow basis, it is restricted by communal representation, which intensifies the divisions among the Indian people.* The Mohammedan, Sikh, Indian Christian, Anglo-Indian (Eurasian), and European members are returned, not by the general electorate, but by their own communities. Whilst communal differences in India cannot be ignored, as evidenced by the unwillingness even of many Nationalist leaders to abolish separate representation immediately, a policy aiming for the welfare of the Indian people would seek to limit them as much as possible. The vicious principle of communal differentiation has, on the contrary, been extended, during the past few years, to appointments in the Imperial and Provincial Services. Certain communities are also specially treated in other respects. The Parsees, for example, are admitted to the Volunteer Corps; the railway and telegraphic services, on account of their strategical value, are reserved for Anglo-Indians (Eurasians); the Sikhs and Indian Christians are favoured in colonising and irrigation facilities. Whilst recognising the circumstances which have given rise to such differentiation, and the fact that there is as yet no united demand for its abolition, we cannot escape the conclusion that the historic Imperialist motive of "divide and rule" has played an important part in British policy.

Power of Civil Service.

The Civil Service of India is responsible to the Governor-General in Council, and subject to dismissal only by the Secretary of State.† Its powers are enormous, so great, that it can, without exaggeration, be described as the Government of India. Even in the Governor-General's Council three of the six ordinary members represent the Civil Service. The Permanent Secretaries of all departments (including even the Army) are members of the Civil Service. In the judiciary there is a preponderating element of the Civil Service. Nearly all the higher posts

* Ibid p. 62.

† Ibid p. 64.

in this all-pervading administrative army are held by Englishmen, and the thirty-six per cent. of Indians employed in it are for the most part restricted to subordinate posts. This great machine, which dominates the entire administrative life of India, is almost wholly controlled by Englishmen. Its membership is largely drawn from classes in sympathy with the Capitalist Parties in Britain, and reflects their point of view. It can always count upon their support.

The Judiciary.

The judicial organisation of India in criminal matters is entirely subordinated to the British-controlled executive. Locally, both executive and judicial functions are vested in one official, who also controls the police. His power is almost complete. Civil Servants preside over the Court of Sessions, and even in the High Court there is a statutory proportion of judges recruited from the Civil Service.

The Army in India.

The Army in India is entirely under British authority. It is controlled by a Commander-in-Chief appointed by the Crown on the nomination of the British Cabinet, and he acts under the general direction of the Army Council in London. The cost of the maintenance of the Army is nevertheless borne by the Indian people, more than one-third of whose heavy taxation is devoted to military purposes. The injustice of this arrangement is intensified by the fact that the military policy pursued is in Imperial rather than Indian interests, and is not devised on a purely defensive basis. The costly draft system by which regiments go out to India for a specific period, and are constantly being changed, is with the object of giving the benefit of field training to the British Army at India's expense. One of the chief objectives of the British military policy has been to bring under British rule the independent Pathan tribes beyond the Indus. This has necessitated the maintenance of a large military force in the North-West Frontier Provinces. The psychological effect of the presence of such a large force, ready at hand for any eventuality, has been disastrous, especially in the Punjab.

The "Indian" Navy.

The decision of the Government to establish an "Indian" navy aggravates the position still further. Whilst the Indian peoples will be called upon to meet the cost, control will not be in their hands and only one-third of the officers may be of Indian nationality. The establishment of the "Indian" navy, in conjunction with the re-establishment of the Singapore Dock and the naval developments in Ceylon, is likely eventually to intensify naval rivalries in the East, with serious dangers of war. Yet the Indian people have no voice in the initiation of this policy.

Repressive Measures.

It has only been possible to maintain the alien Government of India by repressive measures. During the past few years, liberty of speech, press, meeting and person has been seriously affected by Viceregal Ordinances and the enforcement of obsolete laws, giving extra judicial power to the Executive. In Bengal, a very large number of political workers of high standing have been arrested and deported without trial, and even without the formulation of any charge in a Court of Law. In the Punjab, too, many Akalis are still confined in prison as they refuse to "recant" and make an apology for a religious demonstration which involved a technical breach of law. These measures have not stifled the growth of democratic thought in India; they have only served to accentuate the feeling of resentment against the authorities.

Education, Social Reform and Public Health.

The bureaucratic Government of India is sometimes defended on the ground of its achievements. It has been comparatively efficient as a tax-gathering and military machine, and in the development, particularly, of transport and irrigation; it has not succeeded in the more important matter of raising the standard of life of the people.

Its failure in education is demonstrated by the fact that after 120 years of British rule, only 7.2 per cent. of the population can read any language whatever.

In Britain, free and universal education was established between 1870 and 1881; in twelve years the attendance

at the schools had risen from 43.3 to nearly 100 per cent. Before 1872 Japan had only 28 per cent. of her children of school-going age attending schools ; in twenty-four years the proportion had risen to 92 per cent., and in twenty-eight years to 100 per cent. In the Indian (Native) State of Baroda, education is free and 91 per cent. of the boys of school-going age attend school ; in Travancore, another Native State, 81.1 per cent. of the boys and 33.2 per cent. of the girls attend school, and in Mysore the proportion is 45.8 per cent. of boys and 9.7 per cent. girls. While Baroda spends 6½d. per head per annum on her school-going children, British India spends only 3d. Fifty-nine years after the inauguration of the Education Department in British India, the percentage of children of school-going age attending school was only 20.4. In Bombay, in 1924, only 2 per cent. of the girls of school-going age attended school.

Since the transference of the Education Department to elected Ministers in the Provincial Governments, under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reform of 1918, the legislators have affirmed the principle of universal and compulsory education. In 1918 the Bombay Provincial Council passed a private Bill to that effect. Other Bills followed for Behar and Orissa, for Bengal and for the United Provinces in 1919. Government measures making education universal were passed in the Punjab in 1919 and in the Central Provinces and Madras in 1920, and subsequently in Assam. But while the legislators in those Provinces have shown themselves clearly favourable to universal education, the actual introduction of the system and its adoption by local bodies have been handicapped for lack of finance, which is a "reserved" subject and in the allocation of which the Ministers have no voice.*

In social reform the Government has often been an obstacle. Under the plea of religious neutrality, it has constantly refused to support progressive movements, and has thus strengthened the resistance of Indian reactionaries. Measures introduced by private members in Indian legislatures, for eradicating indefensible social customs, like child marriage, have met with strenuous Government

* Ibid p. 281.

opposition (in addition to the formidable opposition of the conservative elements among Indians), and Government influence has been on the side of the retention of caste privileges. Until recently, for instance, the Government tacitly supported the claim of the upper castes for the exclusive use of certain roads, and even now, at least in one province (Madras), the authorities have by no means abandoned their attitude of taking the part of the high castes against the so-called "untouchables."

The Government has failed to bring sanitation to the villages, and even in the cities the administration of public health is grossly unsatisfactory, as evidenced by the high mortality rate and the constant recurrence of preventable epidemic diseases, like smallpox, cholera and plague, which take such a heavy toll of the population every year. We recognise that in this connection the natural Indian prejudice and suspicion must be taken into account, but experience shows that by a right approach these can be overcome. Commendable efforts have been made to combat malaria and similar diseases, but success so far has been very limited.

In irrigation, however, the Government has undertaken large schemes (especially in the Punjab and the United Provinces), which have helped the agricultural population in these areas to a very considerable extent. The development of the railway system has also been a noteworthy achievement. While recognising these contributions to the development of India's economic life, it has been a standing complaint in India that the money spent on constructive undertakings has borne no proportion to the enormous expenses incurred on the military and the strategic railways.

The Indian States.

The administration of India is complicated by the existence of a large number of Indian (Native) States. There are 108 such States, with whom the British Crown, through the Governor-General in Council, is in treaty obligation. In addition, there are over 600 other States recognised by the British Government on grounds of expediency or strategy. Most of these States are subject

to the satisfaction of the Viceroy regarding the standard of administration, but are otherwise self-governing. There is a British Resident for each of the major States and for groups of minor States. The Viceroy is responsible for the relations between his Government and the Indian States, which are entirely outside the purview of the Legislative Assembly. Each State is required to maintain a small military force, which, controlled by the Government of India, is maintained at the expense of the State.

Though some of these States, in such matters as education, present a marked advance over conditions in British India, there are practically no representative institutions in most of them. The rulers have a tendency to treat the State revenue as their private purse, and only one or two of these States have created a civil list.

The Frontiers of India.

The present frontiers of India do not represent the natural historical boundaries.

On the north-west, as indicated above, it has been sought for strategical reasons to include within the British sphere a large area populated by the Afridis. After the disastrous massacre of the British troops in the Second Afghan war, the British Government recognised the Durand line as the Afghan boundary and agreed to maintain the independence of the Afridis between the Indian and Afghan frontiers. The British Government has, however, pursued a constant policy of penetration and the creation of the North-Western Frontier Provinces on a military basis by the late Lord Curzon was deliberately designed with the object of subjugating the Afridis. The British Government has for more than twenty years been openly entering the Afridi country and building fortresses, railways, and roads there, with the result that there has been constant conflict.

On the north-east, Burmah has been annexed for trade reasons, particularly because of the rich oilfields and coal and teak supplies, although it has never formed a part of India, and there is no natural affinity between the two countries. Indians have been encouraged by the British Government to assist in the exploitation of Burmah,

with the result that bitterness has arisen between the two peoples. Helpless to legislate against European exploiters, the Burmese Provincial Council has exercised its powers to legislate to the detriment of Indians.

INDIA, THE BRITISH EMPIRE, AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

India and the Imperial Government.

THE Imperial relationships of India have two aspects : first, to the Crown and Parliament, and secondly to the Colonies and self-governing Dominions.

Constitutionally, the British Parliament is responsible for the administration of India, and the India Office has always held that the Viceroy's Government in India is only a subordinate branch of the administration. Successive Secretaries of State have, in fact, openly alluded to the Government of India as their "agent." Whilst, however, the control exercised by the Secretary of State is very real and all-pervasive, the responsibility to Parliament is only nominal. Since Burke's day, India has been considered as a subject above Party controversy, and the point of view of the Civil Service has been accepted by both the Conservative and Liberal Parties.

The Secretary of State and Council.

The Secretary of State is advised by a Council, although, unlike the Viceroy, he does not act through it. The Council is a purely consultative body and is constituted by nominations from amongst the retired officials from India, the representatives of British financial interests, and Indians whose advice is thought to be of value to the Government. We have indicated the general powers of the Secretary of State in preceding paragraphs ; it is necessary to add the facts regarding his control of Indian finance.

All revenue in India is collected in the name of the King, and the Secretary of State for India, as the King's minister, has the entire control of it. In consultation with the Viceroy and the Finance Member of the Viceroy's Council, he allocates portions of the Indian revenue to the Indian Legislative Assembly. The rest of the revenue, to be

spent on (1) the "non-votable departments" (i.e., the budget or expenses outside the control of the Legislative Council), and (2) pensions and other charges in Britain, is held by the Secretary of State. He spends this revenue with the advice of such portions of his Council as he chooses to consult. He also authorises the issue of currency notes in India on the gold and silver bullion which he invests in this country, only too frequently in ways suitable to British finance rather than to Indian interests. By keeping the bullion both in gold and silver, he is able to manipulate the rate of exchange by the control of the issue of currency notes in India. This control is exercised to the detriment of Indian industry and in the interests of British banking finance.

The High Commissioner for India in London, though technically under the direct authority of the Viceroy of India, is largely under the influence of the Secretary of State. This is particularly the case in the chief function of his office, i.e., the purchasing of military stores and of goods for the Indian railways. Goods have not always been bought economically to the advantage of India, but rather with a view to giving custom to British manufacturing firms.

India and the Self-Governing Dominions.

The relation between the self-governing colonies and India has always been on the basis of inequality. In the case of Australia and New Zealand, Indians are practically forbidden entry, while in Canada and the Union of South Africa, they are ill-treated and denied rights on the basis of colour. This is glaringly illustrated in the Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration Bill, introduced by the South African Government, which has for its objects, among other things, the segregation of Indians and the deprivation of practically all rights of land ownership. The suffering undergone by Indians in this respect is all the more intolerable because as subjects of the British Empire they cannot seek naturalisation in a British Dominion, a right they would have been able to exercise had they been subjects of any other State. The position in the Crown Colonies is no better. In Kenya, Fiji, the Malay

States and the West Indies (with the single exception of British Guiana) they are treated quite differently from any other Asiatic or European settlers. Even in foreign States, like the United States of America, this differentiation is made without any effective action being taken by the Imperial Government.

India and the League of Nations.

India is an original member of the League of Nations. Her financial contribution is the third largest, though her delegations are always nominated by the Secretary of State on the recommendation of the Viceroy, in spite of the repeated protests of the Indian Legislative Assembly. The head of the deputation has always been a non-Indian. In consequence of this autocratic method of appointing her delegates, India in reality has never exercised the right to vote in the League of Nations at all.

OUR POLICY.

THE I.L.P. approaches the political problem of India by recognising the full right of the Indian people to self-government and self-determination. The question whether India should belong to the British Commonwealth of Nations is one for India to decide. We have confidence that the Indian people in applying this principle of self-determination will consider the good of the rest of mankind, and the interests of peace and economic co-operation. Should the Indian people elect to belong to the British Group of Nations, it must be on the basis of absolute equality and freedom. This is essential, not only for the sake of Indian self-respect, but for the sake of British democracy. The necessity for Britain to create a ruling class for India, accustomed to govern by autocratic methods, has added a dangerous element to our public life. On their return to this country, those who have served as British officials in India nearly always play the part of extreme reactionaries and militarists.

The Government of India Act contains provisions for its own revision in 1929. Neither India nor Britain can afford to wait until then. Labour should press for immediate action.

What the British Government Should Do.

The best course would be for the British Government to declare frankly that it is prepared to reconsider the whole question of its relationship to India on the basis of self-determination and self-government. It should announce its readiness to end the external British control and should prove its new spirit by withdrawing immediately all repressive measures in India and declaring an amnesty for all political offenders. It should withdraw all Indian troops from non-Indian territories and should separate Burmah from India. It should take the first steps to abolish all measures, administrative and legislative, which impose disabilities on Indians in countries under the control of the Imperial Parliament, and should demonstrate its intention to use its influence to secure equality for Indians in the Dominions and other countries. It should place the appointment of India's representatives to the Assembly of the League of Nations in the hands of the Indian Legislative Assembly.

India Should Prepare Its Own Constitution.

At the same time, the British Government should respond to the proposal of the Indian Parties in the Legislative Assembly that the Assembly should appoint a Convention representing the essential Indian interests to submit a scheme of Indian self-government for immediate adoption. It is important that the Convention should include adequate representation of the Indian working-class and of the interests of the peasant population. Its personnel should approximately correspond to the various races concerned, as one of the problems with which it would have to deal would be the reformation of the provincial boundaries according to racial and linguistic considerations.

The Secretary of State has already invited the Indian Parties to submit proposals for a new Constitution, but the value of this invitation has been destroyed by the intimation that any proposals for a new Constitution will not be considered until 1929, and by the maintenance of oppressive measures. If the confidence of India is to be regained, British sincerity must be evidenced by a recognition of the

urgency of the problem and by an unmistakable gesture of goodwill.

Such a representative Convention as the Legislative Assembly has proposed would have the advantage of considering, should it so desire, the draft of the Commonwealth of India Bill, already prepared by a convention called by Dr. Annie Besant, attended by many members of the Legislatures, and endorsed by a considerable number of representative Indians, for submission to the British Parliament. Whilst recognising the value of this Bill, the fact remains that it has not been accepted by several of the most important and representative bodies in India, and in these circumstances we think it would be better for an authoritative measure to be endorsed by a representative Convention.*

A skeleton of a new Constitution is also provided in the terms of the resolution adopted in the Indian Legislative Assembly on September 7th, 1925, on the motion of the Swaraj and Independent Parties. The amendment demanded :

1. That the Governor-General should be responsible to the Indian Legislature.
2. That the Council of the Secretary of State should be abolished.
3. That the Secretary of State should assume the status of a Colonial Secretary.
4. That the nominated members of the Central and Provincial Legislatures should be abolished.
5. That the electorate should be based on as wide a franchise as possible.
6. That the central Legislature should be responsible for all subjects, except military, foreign and political (i.e., consular, diplomatic and relations with Indian States) for a limited period.
7. That the army should be Indianised.

* The Commonwealth Bill contains proposals which British Socialists must deplore. Second chambers are created; the educational qualification for the National Assembly is on the university graduate standard, and, while the average Indian income may be about £4, the property qualification for an elector to the National Assembly is put at Rs50. per month, or £40 per annum. A constitution on these lines might mean a long period of class rule, and followed eventually by a bitter class struggle.

Whilst whole-heartedly supporting the claim of the Indian people to self-government, we recognise that the parties now demanding "Swaraj" for India largely represent the middle and upper classes, and that there is little hope for the working masses of India in political development unless they come within the franchise of the new Constitution and form their own party to give expression to their needs. It is of the first importance that immediate effect should be given to the Universal and Compulsory Education Acts passed by the Provincial Councils, in order that the workers may take a full part in the political life of the country. We take hope from the fact that the Indian parties generally are pressing for extended education. The British Labour movement, and, indeed, the whole International Labour and Socialist movement, should assist those in India who are seeking to organise the Indian workers for their political and economic emancipation.

We refrain from making any detailed suggestions regarding a new Constitution for India, because we feel strongly that its formulation is a matter for Indians, and not for a British Party, however sympathetic. The responsibility of the I.L.P. lies in arousing the British public to a sense of the urgency of the question, in advocating the policy for the British Government outlined above, in pressing for an immediate opportunity for the Indian people to establish their own Government, and in assisting the Indian workers to develop their own political (as well as industrial) organisation, as suggested in the second part of this Report.

DISSENTING MINUTE TO POLITICAL SECTION

The Commonwealth of India Bill.

A PART from the possibility of there being certain errors of fact in the Report (and the Committee has had no opportunity of referring all the statements to India), we dissent from the Report on the following grounds :—

1. *That Pundit Motilal Nehru at the Indian National Congress last month stated that he was not satisfied with the Assembly resolution referred to in the Report. He made it clear that the Congress did not endorse the Assembly demand but only considered it as minimum and diluted.*

2. *That the provisions of the Commonwealth of India Bill are more comprehensive and go further than the Legislative Assembly resolution referred to in the Report.*

3. *That the appointment of a round-table conference by a Conservative Government is unnecessary and would inevitably delay self-government for India.*

4. *That the Commonwealth of India Bill has already been introduced into the House of Commons.*

Labour and the Bill :—

In England: On 17th December, 1925, the Commonwealth of India Bill was presented to the House of Commons and is now printed as a Government paper. It was backed by the following Labour members of Parliament :—

Messrs. Lansbury, Snell, Dalton, Haden Guest, Scurr, Charleton, Lees-Smith, Bromley, Baker, Gillett, Hudson and Colonel Wedgwood.

The Party has since adopted the Bill as an official measure to be balloted for in the coming session.

In India: The Madras Labour Union has passed a strong resolution in favour of the Commonwealth of India Bill, and has now decided to bring the Bill before the next session of the All-India Trade Union Congress for adoption. The Union realises that this Bill safeguards the rights of Labour so far as franchise and representation are concerned.

The Commonwealth of India Bill was drafted by the National Convention which was established in April, 1924. It included members of all parties—Liberal, National Home Rulers, Swarajists, Nationalists, Independents, etc. It numbered 228 members, 13 from the Indian Council of State, 71 from the Central Legislative Assembly, 120 from Provincial Legislative Councils, 23 from the National Home Rule League, and representatives from Political Sections, 1921 Clubs and the Women's Indian Association.

It asks for all that India would wish. It is for those who disagree with the Bill or any portion of it to produce a Bill which will receive greater national support in India.

BASIL P. HOWELL,
D. GRAHAM POLE,
JOHN SCURR (M.P.)

January, 1926.

PART II.

ECONOMIC.

Distribution of Population.

THE Indian Empire has an area of 1,805,332 square miles, of which 1,094,300 square miles (61 per cent.) lie in the British Territory and the rest (711,032 square miles, or 39 per cent.) form part of the Indian (Native) States. Over this area there is distributed, according to the census of 1921, a population of 318,942,480, of which 247,003,293 (or 77 per cent.) are in British territory and 71,939,187 (or 23 per cent.) are in the Indian (Native) States. These figures show a growth in population of just over three millions between the years 1911-1921.* This increase is probably due to more accurate census returns rather than to any improvement in the conditions of living.

Over the whole of India the population per square mile averages 177, the mean density in British provinces being 226 and in the States 101.† If the districts are taken as units, and the cities are excluded, the mean density ranges between the minimum of 1 and the maximum of 1882 per square mile. This unusual and disproportionate distribution is due not only to physical causes, but to a variety of social and economic factors, such as the available means of communication or the facilities for irrigation. Industrial factors are also becoming more and more important as the population moves out of the congested rural tracts to supply the labour needed in the towns and the plantation areas.

For the purpose of comparison, the manner in which population is distributed in other countries of the world is indicated below‡ :—

* Census of India 1921, page 3.

† Ibid page 4.

‡ Ibid page 5.

<i>Countries.</i>	<i>Population per sq. mile.</i>
Belgium	654
England and Wales	649
The Netherlands	544
Germany	332
Japan	215
Austria	199
France	184
Spain	107
U.S.A.	32
New Zealand	11.8

The census figures show that of the total population, 10.1 per cent. live in towns and 89.9 per cent. in the villages. The 2,316 towns have thus between them a population of 32,456,276, while the 685,665 villages contribute 286,467,204.* Of the total population of the country, 72.98 per cent. are engaged in agriculture and pasture; 10.49 per cent. in industry; 1.37 per cent. in transport and 5.73 per cent. in trade. Owing to the constant shifting of population due to the stress of economic circumstances, it is impossible to analyse the distribution of population in definite terms; it may, nevertheless, be stated broadly that the urban population consists of officials, merchants, traders and industrial wage-earners, while those living in the rural areas are mostly landowners, tenants, or part of a landless proletariat.

General Poverty and Its Results.

Whether one looks at the urban or the rural section of the population, one is struck first and foremost by the appalling state of poverty prevailing everywhere. Forty millions of people, according to one great Anglo-Indian authority—Sir William Hunter—pass through life with only one meal a day.† According to another authority—Sir Charles Elliot—one half of the agricultural population of India, which Mr. G.K. Gokhale calculated to be seventy millions, go hungry from day to day, not having even one single square

* *Ibid* page 3.

† Sir William Hunter: *India of the Queen and other Essays*, page 151.

meal during the course of a whole year *—and the standard of a square meal adopted is no higher than the food supplied in the Indian prisons.

Professor Gilbert Slater, who has an intimate acquaintance with labour conditions both in India and in Britain, writing about the poverty of the Indian peasant says : "A reasonable estimate of money income per head would be, for the present day, somewhere about 4½d. a day. Taking the whole population together, rich and poor, it may be said that about two-fifths of the available income (i.e., 1¾d. per day) must be spent merely on the grains that form the basis of the Indian dietary—rice, millets and wheat ; . . . this, or something like this, being the average condition, that of the poorest classes can be guessed. A detailed examination, family by family, of a Madras pariah settlement in the middle of the city, showed an average income of only 2¼d. per head per day, which means a ½d. per day, in addition to a bare sufficiency of rice ; and a very recent enquiry into the Godavari Delta yielded an estimate of an average income of only 1†d. per head per day. Of these people, and of those kindred castes, on whose labour the cultivation of the rice fields of Southern India mainly depends, it may be said generally that their earnings in grain and coin barely suffice for the subsistence of families, large enough to maintain their numbers, from one generation to another, the surplus offspring dying ; that they are habitually hungry ; and that it is only because they make their own huts in their spare time, collect their own fuel, need scarcely any clothing, and enjoy abundant sunshine, that they can subsist at all." †

This absolute lack of a decent standard of living has two most disquieting results ; one is the extremely high death-rate and the consequent reduction in the average duration of life ; the other is the almost incredibly high infant mortality rate.

* Sir C. A. Elliott, K.C.S.I., when Settlement Officer in the North-Western Provinces, and subsequently Lieut.-Governor of Bengal and Chairman of the Finance Committee, London School Board, quoted by William Digby, C.I.E., in his " 'Prosperous' British India," page 509.

† Gilbert Slater in the Introductory Note, pages 12-13, of "Economic Conditions in India," by P. P. Pillai, 1925.

The death-rate per thousand, which in 1882 was 24, is now no less than 30.9—the highest on record in the world. This is not as much due to the climate as due to the low vitality of the poverty-stricken masses and their consequent inability to resist the attack of disease. An epidemic in any part of the country, once started, is thus hard to control; bubonic plague has between 1901 and 1921 claimed a death-toll of 9,750,000, while the recent influenza epidemics carried away between 12,000,000 and 13,000,000 of India's population in two years.

The average length of life in India, which in 1881 was 30.75 years,* has come down to 23.5 years.† It compares very unfavourably with the 44.5 years of a Japanese, 64 years of an Afghan, or 53.5 years of an Englishman. The statistics regarding infant mortality are equally disconcerting. Out of every 1,000 children born in British India, 206 die before they are a year old, while in the cities the death-rate of children before they are a year old is even greater. In Bombay 572, in Calcutta 386, in Rangoon 303, in Madras 282, in Karachi 249, and in Delhi 233 out of every 1,000 children born were recorded to have died within a year of their birth in 1924-25,‡ while the result of an investigation carried on by the Health Officers of the Government of Bombay into the condition of women workers of that city shows that 828.5 out of every 1,000 children born in one-room tenements died within the year of their birth in the year 1922.¶

I.—AGRICULTURAL CONDITIONS.

LEAVING aside for the present the question of the urban population, let us consider the condition of the rural workers and the directions in which improvements could be attempted.

* Sir W. Hunter: "The Indian Empire," page 667.

† William Rigby, C.I.E.: "'Prosperous' British India," page 193.

‡ Census of India, 1921, page 8.

¶ Annual Report of the Executive Health officer, 1921, quoted in Report on an Enquiry into the Wages and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mills Industry. Prepared by the Labour Office Government of Bombay and published by order of the Governor-in-Council of that Province. Page 26.

Land Tenures.

The ancient Hindu system of land holding was a heritage from the past when the invading Aryans possessed themselves of the country and divided the land among their families. After the Mohammedan conquest, all land belonged to the king and was held by him. This system is, in its main outlines, continued to-day, so that the Government of India, as representing the British Crown, is the sole proprietor of both the cultivated and the uncultivated lands. It would be quite impossible to reproduce here in outline all the different systems of land tenure in India, systems which owe their origin to different ages and different rulers, but, speaking in broad terms, the two main systems are the Zemindari and the Rayatwari.*

In the Zemindari system, which covers 53 per cent. of the land in British India, the Government collects its share of rent from the landowners, who, in their turn get it from the tenants. The payment which the Zemindar (the landowner) makes to the Government has either been settled permanently since the days of Lord Cornwallis (1793) or is assessed periodically. The greater part of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, the eastern districts of the United Provinces and parts of Madras and Assam have thus been permanently settled. In many places, while the amount which the Government receives from the Zemindar is fixed, the Zemindar himself can vary his assessment on his tenant every twelve years. The permanently settled Zemindars were assessed at first at 90 per cent. of what they collected from the tenants, but to-day, partly owing to the improvement of the land and partly because of more accurate information as to what the Zemindars get from the tenants, the assessment is about 27 per cent. of the actual income of the Zemindars. In the case of the temporarily settled Zemindars, where lands are assessed periodically, the Government gets about 50 per cent. of what the

* The Inamdari system is in origin distinct from these two, as is also the system of Taluqdari ; but it is not possible for reasons of space to describe these subsidiary systems and other systems in detail. The Inamdars are landowners who hold land directly from the ruling power, usually for services rendered. Their tenure is now similar to that of the Zemindars and the total amount of land held under this tenure is an inconsiderable fraction of the whole.

tenants pay to the Zemindars. Of the total land under the Zemindari system, 27.1 per cent. is settled permanently, and 72.9 per cent. settled temporarily.

In the Rayatwari system, the tenants hold their land direct from the Government. Resettlement in the Rayatwari holdings takes place every thirty years. There are large Rayatwari holdings, but most are small. The average holding of a family, according to Mr. W. H. Thompson, of the Indian Civil Service, in his Analysis of the Census Report of 1921 *, is 2.215 acres. It must be remembered that even this has to be sub-divided amongst the various members of the family.

Besides these numerous tenants and sub-tenants, there is also working on the land a shifting proletariat of landless workers, who number about 40,000,000. This section of the workers has no occupation for nearly six months in the year. They migrate then to the industrial centres, to the factories or plantations, and form a part of the floating population there.

The Census Superintendent of Bengal says :—“It is largely the land system of the country that is responsible for the present conditions. In other countries, where the holdings are comparatively large and the farmer can manage only with his own hands a fraction of what work there is to be done, he employs hired labourers and engages as many as are required to do the work and no more. In Bengal the holdings have been so minutely sub-divided that there isn't enough work for the cultivators ; but on the other hand there is no other work on which they can turn hand.” **

In Madras, Mr. Calvert has recently shown that the work done by the average cultivator does not represent more than 120 days of full labour in twelve months.†

General Results.

The most notorious feature of both the small Rayatwari holders and the small tenant holders under the Zemindari system is their invariable indebtedness to moneylenders.

* Census of India, 1921 (Bengal), page 382.

** Census of India, 1921 (Bengal), page 383.

† H. Calvert: “The Wealth and Welfare of the Punjab.” Page 170.

The revenue has always to be paid in cash on fixed days. This, together with the prevalence of social customs involving extravagant expenditure, keeps these tenants in a state of chronic poverty. In the absence of a better and sounder system of State or co-operative lending, they fall easily into the clutches of moneylenders, who sometimes charge compound interest as high as from 40 to 50 per cent. The Zemindars often exact high rent, so that there is no effective correspondence between the rent paid and the crops raised. The inability of such a tenant to wait till his produce brings better prices or to transport it to a more remunerative market puts him at a great disadvantage. An inquiry into the condition of the peasant proprietors of the Punjab, conducted by Mr. M. L. Darling of the Indian Civil Service, shows that only 17 per cent. of these proprietors were free of debt ; that the total debt represented twelve times the land revenue paid by all concerned, whether indebted or not ; and that in the whole province, with a population of a little over 25,000,000, there were 40,000 moneylenders.*

The general results of the smallness of the holding, and of the still further fragmentisation of these among descendants from generation to generation, are the ever-increasing poverty, ignorance and mortality rate of the masses. The condition of the landless worker has become appalling, while the small artisan class is also gradually and tragically being merged into the same class. A larger and larger number of these small tenants is being divorced from the soil, only to swell the ranks of the wage-earning proletariat.

The position of the larger tenants and landholders furnishes a striking contrast in all these respects. The smaller tenant usually sells away all his surplus, so that, when the monsoon fails, he becomes an easy prey to famine. The old custom of keeping a year's supply in hand has disappeared. The larger landholder is much better off. He is also more and more inclined to extract from the land raw materials for industry rather than food grains, as the former bring him a much better return. The appreciable diminution in the supply of grain caused by this change is very unfavourable for the worker.

* M. L. Darling: "The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt," page 5.

An examination of the available agricultural statistics for British India from 1911 to 1919 shows that there has been on the average a yearly deficit of about 10.3 millions tons of the necessary supply of food grains and pulses to feed the population, and that it could not have been met even if the entire export were strictly prohibited.* Commenting on this, Prof. Dagashanker Dubey says: "64.4 per cent. of the population lives always on insufficient food, getting only about 73 per cent. of the minimum requirement for maintaining efficiency. In other words, two-thirds of the population always gets only three-quarters of the amount of food grains they should have."

Thus, while the small tenant is sunk deep in debt, the large tenants and Zemindars get an abundance of wealth and are able to live a life of great luxury. Nowhere has the inequality in the distribution of wealth become so poignant as among those connected with the land of India.

The landless workers constitute a serious problem of Indian rural life. The Indian emigrant usually belongs to this class, but he is not welcome even in the Crown colonies. It is this section also which forms the bulk of the rural exodus to industrial towns. Constituting as it does a shifting population, it makes the organisation even of urban workers a matter of great difficulty.

WHAT IS REQUIRED.

Many remedies have so far been suggested to meet the above situation. Every attempt made in the direction of improvement will, of course, have to be adapted to varying environments. Yet the broad lines along which efforts towards progress should proceed can be laid down.

Attempts should be made in the first place to ensure a more equitable opportunity to use the land. There should be security of tenure and the landholding middlemen who stand between the cultivators and the Government should be eventually eliminated. Under the terms of our political report, the effective ownership of the land would be transferred to the Indian nation.

The creation of a sound rural credit system should be another step in the agrarian reforms. The establishment and maintenance of agricultural and co-operative

* Professor N. N. Gangulee: Asiatic Review, July, 1925, p. 434.

banks would remove the evils due to reckless borrowing from unscrupulous moneylenders, while the facilities afforded by these institutions for obtaining advances at critical times would relieve the pressure of famines and other allied hardships.

The establishment of co-operative institutions for purchase, sale, and transport, could be still further encouraged and through them arrangements made to secure scientific implements and to lend them by rotation to their members. They could also ensure better marketing.

The methods of production and distribution themselves require to be brought up-to-date. Much of the land is cultivated to-day in India exactly as it was cultivated in the sixteenth or seventeenth century. Scientific agriculture is practically unknown to the mass of Indian peasants.

Although there are several Agricultural Colleges under Government auspices, the number is very limited compared with the needs, and the students are drawn from a very restricted class, leaving the problem in the mass untouched. The colleges should be greatly extended and an opportunity allowed for peasants to learn practical agriculture. Much might also be done by travelling lecturers and demonstrators.

The prevailing method of "strip" farming renders difficult the adoption of some of these proposals. The possibility of the establishment of a system of communal organisation of cultivation through the village Panchayats should be considered. The provision of modern agricultural machinery would hasten this development.

The co-operative farming in Ireland and the co-operative dairying in Denmark supply excellent models of what might be done by an extension of scientific knowledge and organisation.

The Royal Commission which has been announced in connection with the reforms in agricultural matters ought to represent all the interests concerned and particularly that of the tenants and the peasants. Its terms of reference deliberately exclude questions of land tenure. This restriction will prevent it going to the root of the question, and every pressure should be exerted to broaden the scope of its work so that it may deal with the fundamental evil of agricultural conditions in India.

II.—INDUSTRIAL CONDITIONS.

The Industrial Organisation of India.

THERE are broadly three types of industrial organisation.

First, there is the capitalist urban industry, in which the wage-earner is completely divorced from the raw materials and the instruments of production. Cotton, jute, sugar refining, silk, wool, leather, iron, paper, oil, and fats, and largely coal and gold-mining are such industries. In some of the seaports, there is also a large number of workmen employed in the docks. In these industries most of the problems between employer and employed, which are a source of conflict in the West, are steadily arising in India.

The second important type is the capitalist rural industry, in which the worker is domiciled in the country and there is generally a closer contact between the employer and employed. Tea, rubber, coffee, indigo, opium and lac, all of which are plantation industries, are in this group. The fact that these industries are situated in more or less isolated parts of the country means that the workers' hardships receive little publicity or attention.

The third type may be designated cottage industries. Lace, locks, cigar-making and some part of cotton and sugar growing are examples. They are generally akin to the domestic system which prevailed in Britain before the modern era of steam and mechanical invention.

We review briefly below the circumstances and conditions of the leading industries in India.

The Government as Employer.

The largest employer in India is the Government itself. It manages a number of services which entail a complex industrial organisation. The railways, the mint, the post and telegraphic departments, and the Government printing presses employ a vast number of workers. On the railways alone there are 1,500,000 employees. The excise department, the forest department, the Government monopoly of salt, and the control of liquors, spirit, and opium also involve the employment of many thousands of manual

workers. There are, in addition, a number of purely commercial undertakings, like the Kerala soap factory. In many of the Indian (Native) States also, as in the case of the Mysore sandalwood factory, the governing body acts as an employer in commercial undertakings on a large scale.

The conditions of the mass of Government employees are practically identical with those of the wage-earning proletariat in capitalist industries. On the State-owned railways, for example, many workers who have been employed continuously for many years are treated as temporary "hands" employed from day to day.

In the Postal and Telegraphic Services the average wage is extremely low. A postman gets between £2 and £3 per month. Packers, runners and vanmen get between £1 to £2 a month, while the boy messengers are paid as low as 10s. a month. In the Chief Presidency towns, however, the wages are slightly higher. Sorting and cart postmen also get an additional allowance of from 10s. to £1 per month.

There is little trade union organisation, and such as exists among the better paid workers is rarely officially recognised. Trade unionism is generally held to be incompatible with the obligations of Government service.

The Cotton Industry.

More Indian capital is invested in the cotton industry than in others. Since the opening of the first power-driven mill in Bombay in 1851, the cotton industry has made rapid strides. There are 280 cotton mills at work in British India and the Indian (Native) States, of these eighty-two are in Bombay alone, and Sholapur and Ahmedabad together have almost as many. There are mills in Madras, Coimbatore, Madura, Calicut, Trichur, Agra, Nagpur, Calcutta, and in almost every important centre. The production of these mills in 1920-21 was 660,000,000 pounds of yarns and 367,000,000 pounds of woven goods. There were in 1923 approximately 347,380 people in the industry, working 7,927,738 spindles and 144,794 looms. Of these workers 66,226 were women and 15,766 children. In Bombay the average wage for a man worker is 1s. 11d.

per day of eleven hours, and for the woman worker it is only 1s. 0½d. a day.* Children working half time receive between 4d. and 6¾d. a day. Outside Bombay the wages are even lower. The wages are still further reduced by the frequent imposition of fines, which the mill managers impose on the workers for being late, for absence, or for inferior work. It is a common practice not to pay the wages earned during one month until the middle of the following month, with the consequence that a great proportion of the workers have to borrow at a high rate, varying from 75 to 300 per cent. Many of them are never out of debt.

The inability to pay contributions, the lack of education and the fact that a large proportion of them are land workers employed in the mills for restricted periods only, make the organisation of the workers into trade unions very difficult. The Bombay mill operatives have a union, but it has little permanent strength, is without financial support, and has no legal status. Sporadic strikes take place, but the time for these is often ill-chosen. Indeed, it is stated that the employers sometimes encourage strikes during a temporary slump in the industry when they have surplus stocks on hand. Assistance in organisation and proper guidance are the most urgent needs of the cotton workers at the present time. It is worth noting that at the conclusion of the last big strike in Bombay, won with the assistance of monetary support from British trade unions, the Executive of the Millowners' Association gave a pledge to T. Johnston, M.P., that they would in future recognise the Bombay Cotton Mill Workers' Union.

The Jute Industry.

The spinning, pressing, and weaving of jute employed 493,099 workers in 1924. This represents an increase of over 130,000 in ten years. The industry is centred in Bengal, but there are a few mills and presses in Assam, Bihar and Orissa, and Madras also. The first mill was

* Report on an Enquiry into the Wages and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mills Industry, prepared by the Labour Officer of the Government of Bombay and printed by order of the Governor-in-Council, 1925, page 6.

opened in 1855, and in less than seventy years the output has grown from eight tons to 4,000 tons per day. In 1924, in the factories alone, there were employed 399,500 workers, using 47,000 looms and 985,000 spindles.

The management of the industry is almost entirely in the hands of European companies, though more than half the capital invested in it now is Indian.

The jute industry has during the last fifty years gradually shifted from Scotland to India. In 1874 nearly half of the world's output came from Dundee. Since then, two-thirds of the trade has been transferred to India. Cheap labour and proximity to raw material and Eastern markets tempted the Scotch and other millowners to set up factories in Bengal. There was no question of Indian competition, because the jute industry has never, unless to a very small degree, attracted the Indian industrialist. While enormous fortunes were being made in Bengal, the jute industry in Dundee rapidly deteriorated.

Even allowing for the lower productivity of the Indian worker, the wages paid in this industry are very meagre. A well-known authority, Sir Clement Simpson, has estimated that for factory work, five Indians are equivalent to two British workers. In the jute industry, the combined average weekly wages of three Indians are 14s. 5d.

In 1915 the jute industry in India made a profit of £40,000,000 though the entire capital invested that year was only £24,000,000. It was not altogether a war profit for after the war and until 1920, the profit was well over £26,000,000, though the capital and debentures that year were shown to be £28,000,000. And yet shortly after the war the weekly wages paid to the workers were 3s. for a carder, 3s. 6d. for a rower and 4s. 9d. for a spinner. Weavers' wages ranged from 9s. a week, hemmers and sewers got 7s. and tenters 12s. a week.

Weavers are known to have paid two or three months' wages to the foreman to obtain work, but the average "footing" is about 13s. The first toll paid, there is further regular "backshees" to pay and that ranges from a penny to twopence a week.

Of the total employed in the industry, 16 per cent. are women and 10½ per cent. children.

Mining.

There is coal-mining in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, and at Singareni in Hyderabad and in the Central Provinces. The conditions both of the mines and of the mine workers are unsatisfactory. Many of the mines are unsafe and accidents taking place in them are not published. Such legislation as there is for the protection of limb and life has not been fully applied. The housing conditions are as a rule particularly disgraceful. The workers dwell in squalid little huts scattered about the mine, questions of water supply and sanitation are little studied, and in consequence there are frequent occurrences of epidemics like cholera, dysentery and plague. Boards of Health, however, have recently been established at Asansol and Jheria to introduce more hygienic systems and surroundings, but so far little has been done.

During the year 1922, the daily average number of persons working in and about the mines regulated by the Indian Mines Act was 229,511, of whom 137,917 worked underground and 91,594 on the surface. Of the total number employed both over-ground and under-ground 142,103 were men, no fewer than 78,806 women, and actually 8,602 children under twelve years of age. The average wages earned by women under-ground is between 8d. to 11½d. per day, while the hours of labour are fifty-four per week, with no restriction as to the hours worked per day. Since 1924 the employment underground of children under thirteen years has been prohibited, though still there are 60,000 women working underground.

Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa are the only provinces in which iron ore is mined for smelting by European methods. Special mention must be made of the Tata iron and steel works at Jamshedpur (where, after a prolonged struggle, the Jamshedpur Labour Union, with its 9,000 membership, has just been recognised by the management). The iron industry is also carried on in Mysore.

Other Industries.

The woollen industry in India is still comparatively weak. The production is estimated at 60,000,000 pounds per annum. The mills are mostly in Cawnpore and Bombay.

The leather industry is centred at Cawnpore, Gwalior and Calcutta. Lack of organisation and expert skill has placed the industry at a great disadvantage, though it is now beginning to show signs of rapid growth. It is a protected industry.

There are large paper mills at Titagarh, Kankinara, and Raniganj in Bengal, and one each in Lucknow, Poona, Bombay and Surat. They enjoy large Government custom, and the Government is experimenting at Dehra Dun with a view to facilitating the progress of the industry.

In addition to these industries, there are growing up, as before indicated, a considerable number of trades based on large scale production which are slowly but steadily transforming India to a greater and greater degree of industrialism. They include sugar refining, rubber goods, silk and lace work, sandalwood, perfumery, oils, candles, and soap.

Plantations.

Some of the worst evils of the Indian industrial system are found in what are called the plantations. A very considerable European capital is sunk in these undertakings. Most of the plantations are carried on in Assam and in the vicinity of Darjeeling, where tea is grown; in Bihar where poppy is cultivated; and in Burmah, where oil is extracted. In Coorg, Malabar, and Travankore there are a large number of rubber, cotton, tea, and pepper plantations. Gold is dug out in Kolar in Mysore, while the lead-zinc ores of Bawdwin are used to obtain silver as a by-product.

Though it would be unsafe to generalise, it can be said that in most of the plantations the conditions of employment are disgracefully inhuman. The labour is recruited from all over the country and men and women of all kinds are mixed together promiscuously. Here and there, there are a few plantations where more humane treatment is accorded to the "coolies" employed, but of most of the plantations it could generally be said that the conditions are scandalous. Once a worker accepts employment, it is almost impossible for him, in many instances, to leave,

owing either to the isolated situation, or, as is the case most often, to his indebtedness to his employers, from whose shops on the plantation he buys all his foodstuffs and fuel. The evils from which he suffers find little publicity ; some of the plantations are jealously guarded and strangers rigorously excluded. Intimidation is far too common, so that when untoward events, and even deaths, occur information rarely leaks out. The manager is usually a European who has grown callous in his relation to Indians. The overcrowding and the promiscuous conditions of living give rise to an extensive degree of immorality.

The average weekly wage on a plantation is 3s. to 4s. for a man, and 1s. 6d. to 3s. for a woman. The average weekly wage for a child is about half that of a man's. On Assam plantations a man gets 8d. for eight hours a day work a woman 6d. for the same eight hour day work, while a child gets 3d. for a day's work. Children as young as three years of age are "employed" on some of the plantations. In the tea factories a worker gets 9d. for an eight-hour working day. He works six days a week, and gets rent free land for cultivating rice for himself in his spare time. The "coolies" on the plantations get no bonus, but 6s. 8d. per "coolie" is allowed every month for road expenses. Every coolie has to work two-and-a-half acres each month.

The Cottage Industries.

As indicated above, there are many small industries which have not yet been industrialised. Some of them are still essentially cottage industries, carried on by hereditary artisans in their own homes ; examples are the making of the Delhi bangles, most of the Moradabad and Benares brasswork, and the well-known Mirzapur carpets. Others are run by small masters, employing a few workers and themselves working partly as supervisors and partly as artisans. The Benares silk and gold cloth, and the Surat lace are largely the product of this system. The conflict between employers and employed has not yet arisen acutely in these industries, but as industrialisation develops they will certainly arise.

General Conditions of the Workers.

A broad review of the conditions of industrial life in India reveals that the general conditions of the workers is pitiable. An enquiry by the Labour Office of the Government of Bombay indicated that an average working-class family of 4.2 persons (excluding dependents living outside Bombay) had an income of 17s. 1d. per week.* The average earnings for men in this budget were 14s. 1d. per week; for working women 5s. 7d.; for working children 4s. 7d.† Results of investigations carried on into the conditions of peasants and working-class life in India have shown that the poorer classes of the population are compelled to spend 65 per cent. of their income on food, 18 per cent on clothing, 11 per cent. on other essentials, leaving only 6 per cent. for medical attention, education and amusements.‡

The standard of existence is, of course, very low. The daily food allowance on which the Bombay Labour Office based its returns was 1.29 lbs. of cereals and .09 lbs. of pulses for an adult male worker, which compares with the prison allowance of 1.5 lbs. cereals and .27 lbs. of pulses.¶ It is estimated that about 97 per cent. of the working-class families live in single rooms.§ According to the 1921 Census Report there are 3,125 one-roomed tenements in Bombay, containing two or more families. Of these 1,955 contain two families, 658 three, 244 four, 136 five, 42 six, 34 seven, and 58 eight families and over.*†

The congestion and insanitation in the cities are almost beyond belief. The Indian Industrial Commission has given a lurid picture of the filth and squalor of the chawl areas in Bombay, of the ill-ventilated and crowded rooms,

* Report on an Enquiry into Working Class Budget in Bombay, published by order of the Governor-in-Council, 1923, page 10.

† Ibid page 6.

‡ Ibid pages 54, 55.

¶ Ibid page 19.

§ Ibid page 23.

*† Ibid page 25.

the damp floors, the narrow courtyards dumped with rubbish, the insufficient water supply, and the woefully inadequate sanitary arrangements. Attached to some of the large factories in Calcutta and Madras there are commodious settlements for the workers' families, but these remain exceptions.

Labour Legislation.

The legal limitations on the exploitation of the workers are very meagre. The maximum working week is fixed at sixty hours and the maximum working day at eleven hours. No child under twelve may be employed in a factory and children under fifteen may not be employed more than six hours a day. The working hours underground in mines are fixed at fifty-four a week, but there is no limitation of the working day and it is not infrequent for a worker to be under ground for thirty-six hours at a stretch. Children under thirteen are not permitted underground, but women workers still descend the mines.

In 1923 an Act was passed to provide compensation for industrial accidents, but the rates of compensation are very inadequate. There is still no Truck Act to prevent the imposition of fines (a common practice) and there are no provisions to meet the needs of unemployment, sickness, old age, or maternity. There is no prohibited period for the employment of women before or after child-birth.

Reports on Labour Conditions.

Owing to the existence of a large industrial population in the city, the Government of Bombay has recently been preparing reports on the conditions of industries and the working-classes. It would not be difficult for other Provincial Governments to issue similar information, and pressure should be brought to bear on these Governments to this end.

Profits on Indian Industry.

On the introduction of the Maternity Benefits Bill in the Indian Legislative Assembly a few months back, exception

was taken to the principle and provisions of that Bill by the representatives of the Chambers of Commerce, by traders, (European) planters, colliery-owners and millowners. The ground of this opposition was that these provisions would seriously affect the profit of industry. It is instructive in this connection to note that only recently the Standard Oil Company gave a dividend of 80 per cent. per annum; some jute mills pay 160 to 165 per cent. and the average dividend during the past ten years for all jute mills is 90 per cent. The Alliance Jute Mills paid as much as 100 per cent., while one coal company last year gave a dividend of 110 per cent. In the textile industries, the average dividend paid by leading cotton mills in 1920 amounted to 120 per cent., while the highest dividend paid was 365 per cent. During 1918-20, the cotton industry made a profit of £24,000,000, the total capital invested in the industry being only £14,000,000. Several mills paid dividends of 40 per cent., two mills paid 50 per cent., while four others paid 56 per cent., 70 per cent., 100 per cent., and 120 per cent. In the jute industry, the average dividend paid was 140 per cent., and the Kinanison Mill actually paid on their shares a dividend of 400 per cent. It is often difficult to trace the shareholders as dividends are remitted care of a bank.

WHAT IS REQUIRED.

It is clear that immediate efforts should be made to raise the minimum conditions allowed by law in regard to hours, child labour, and women's work. Minimum wage standards should be enforced and the prompt payment of wages made compulsory. The staff of factory inspectors should be improved in personnel (there is evidence of extensive corruption) and increased in numbers. Legislation to protect the workers and their families at times of unemployment, sickness, old age, and maternity, is urgently necessary.

There has of late been a welcome attention to housing, but immense developments are still required. In Bombay a Development Directorate for Industrial Housing had, by the end of 1924, 5,120 tenements ready for occupation, and the City Improvement Trust is also providing accommodation, but the low wages of the workers prevent the

poorest from occupying them and even the better paid workers are unable to pay an economic rent.

Labour Organisation.

But in the long run the improvement of the conditions of the people and their emancipation from the evils and servitude of capitalism must depend upon the education and organisation of the working masses themselves. The destitution of the people, the absence of education, the traditionally low standard of existence, the mobility of the population, the incursion of the rural population into the towns, the irregularity of time-keeping arising from aversion to the conditions, and the practice of bribery, make the effective permanent organisation of the workers' exceedingly difficult. A heroic effort is being made to overcome these difficulties in Bombay, Madras and other centres where there are 170 trade unions with eight federations. The all-India Trades Union Congress, though still outside the law, is widening its influence every day. In times of dispute with the employers the membership of the local unions rises by thousands, and extraordinary solidarity is displayed. But the strike over, most of the workers lose their interest in the union or find it impossible to maintain subscriptions, and only the skeleton of the organisation remains. The total active membership of the trade unions in India may be put at some 250,000, out of a total of a little under 2,000,000 workers coming under the Factories and Mines Acts.

On the political side the organisation of the workers is even more fragmentary. This is to be expected as the workers do not at present possess any political rights. A beginning has recently been made in the direction of forming a Labour Party, but little effective political organisation can be anticipated until the franchise has been extended. It is, however, important that the Indian workers should be educated to demand political rights and organised to exercise them. The present political parties in India are largely financed by Indian capitalists, and are controlled by the employing and professional classes. These parties represent the demand of the Indian people for self-government, but there is a danger that even under an Indian

constitution the franchise may be severely limited. Politically as well as economically, the Indian masses must work out their own salvation.

It is the duty of the International Labour Movement, both on its political and industrial sides, and particularly of the British Labour Movement, to give the Indian workers the fullest possible assistance. If the "international solidarity of the workers" is to be anything more than a phrase, the Internationals, both trade union and political, should be concerned not only in co-ordinating existing national Labour organisations in Europe, but in extending Labour organisation in all parts of the world, and specially in those countries which are now being industrialised. Apart from the duty of doing this as an expression of Socialist internationalism, it is imperative to do it in the interests of the standard conditions in more highly developed countries. The sweated "coolie" labour of the East is a serious menace to the better-paid labour of the West. In the case of India this is particularly true in relation to British labour standards. The jute mills of India are closely associated with the interests which control the jute mills of Dundee, and can be utilised to press down the wage conditions in Scotland. The products of the coal mines of India, with their sweated conditions, are already driving out British coal supplies from the markets east of the Suez, and this argument is being used as a justification of reduced wages in Britain. Alike on grounds of principle and expediency, European, and especially British, Labour must co-operate with those who are seeking to organise an Indian Labour Movement.

Monetary assistance is important, but still more important is consultation and advice and training in methods of organisation. Special steps should be taken to enable the All-India Trades Union Congress to affiliate to the International Federation of Trade Unions, to participate in its work, and to benefit by its knowledge and experience. Contact should be maintained between the headquarters of the Labour and Socialist International and those who are seeking to form a political Labour Movement, with a view to offering all possible assistance. The Internationals might consider the possibility of establishing a training

college for the East, with its centre in India, with a view to equipping Indians and other Eastern workers, for the duties of trade union and political development. Common action should be taken with the object of steadily raising the standards applied to Indian conditions under the regulations of the International Labour Office.

All these proposals should be the immediate concern of the British Labour Movement. It may not be possible for the Internationals to put them into operation, and the British Labour Movement should consider how far it can carry them out. There should be direct and continuous official contact between the headquarters of our trade union and political movements and the headquarters in India. Special efforts should be made to inform the British workers of conditions in India and of the progress of the Indian Labour movement, with a view to eliciting their support. British trade union and Labour representatives should occasionally visit India and Indian representatives should be invited to this country to study methods of organisation. Prior to the establishment of a Labour College in India, it might be possible to make special arrangements for Indians to attend our Labour Colleges, and for a British trade unionist of judgment and experience to go to India, for a time, in an advisory capacity.

The Duty of the I.L.P.

The I.L.P. should itself maintain the closest possible contact with the Indian Labour Movement, and its members should press forward the above proposals in the Trade Union Movement, the Labour Party and in the Internationals.

From its earliest days the I.L.P. championed the cause of the Indian people. Keir Hardie was one of the few men in this country who have been whole-heartedly trusted in India. We must carry on his tradition by the bold and uncompromising advocacy of the full claim of the Indian people to self-government, and by the completest possible co-operation with the Indian workers in the long and difficult struggle which is before them to secure social justice and economic freedom.

A. FENNER BROCKWAY
(*Chairman*)
WALTER BAKER (M.P.)
H. N. BRAILSFORD
C. RODEN BUXTON
G. T. GARRATT
BASIL P. HOWELL
DOROTHY JEWSON
T. JOHNSTON (M.P.)

NORMAN LEYS
JOHN PATON
V. H. RUTHERFORD
JOHN SCURR (M.P.)
TARINI P. SINHA
CECIL H. WILSON (M.P.)
LEONARD S. WOOLF
MARGUERITE C. LOUIS
(*Secretary*).

Owing to his absence in India, it has not been possible to submit the entire report to D. Graham Pole.

BLACKFRIARS PRESS, LTD.
17-23 Albion St., Leicester
and 72 Fumival Street,
Holborn, E C.4