

# Indian Opinion

No 44—Vol. XXX.

Friday, November 4th, 1932

Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper.  
PRICE FOURPENCE.

## MAHATMA GANDHI'S HEROIC EXPRESSION OF TRUTH

BY DR. RABINDRANATH TAGORE

**T**HE following is the authorised translation of Dr. Rabindranath Tagore's speech delivered before the students and staff of the Viswa Bharathi University at Santiniketan:—

A shadow is darkening to-day over India like a shadow cast by an eclipsed sun. The people of a whole country is suffering from a poignant pain of anxiety, the universality of which carries in it a great dignity of consolation. Mahatmaji, who, through his life of dedication, has made India his own in truth, has commenced his vow of extreme self-sacrifice.

Each country has its own inner geography where her spirit dwells and where physical force can never conquer even an inch of ground. Those rulers who come from outside remain outside the gate, and directly they are called away from the cloud-topping tower of their foreign possessions, the stupendous fabric of unreality vanishes in the void. But the great soul who achieves victory through the power of truth continues his dominion even when he is physically no longer present. And we all know such achievement belongs to Mahatmaji. And the fact that he staked his life for a further and final realisation of his hope fills us with awe and makes us think.

### Not A Ritual But A Message

At this solemn moment we have a cause for fear. It is our unfortunate habit to reduce the truth that belongs to the inner spirit into signs and observances that are external, and after a cheap welcome to bid it adieu. Our leaders have requested us to observe fasting for this day, and there is no harm in it. But there is the risk of some unthinking people putting it in the same category with the fasting that Mahatmaji has begun to observe. Nothing can be more disastrous for us than the utter lessening of the value of a heroic expression of truth by paying it the homage of a more ceremonial of feeling by a people emotionally inclined.

The penance, which Mahatmaji has taken upon himself, is not a ritual, but a message to all India and to the world. If we must make that message our own, we should accept it in right manner through proper process of realisation. The gift of sacrifice has to be received in the spirit of sacrifice.

Let us try to understand the meaning of his message. From the beginning of human history there has continued the cleavage between classes,

some favoured by circumstances exploiting the weakness of others and building the stronghold of their own pride of superiority upon the humiliation of a large section of the community. Though this practice has been prevalent for long, yet we must assert that it is against the true spirit of man. No civilised society can thrive upon victims whose humanity has been permanently mutilated, whose minds have been compelled to dwell in the dark. Those whom we keep down inevitably drag us down and obstruct our movement in the path of progress; the indignity with which we burden them grows into an intolerable burden to the whole country; we insult our humanity by insulting man where he is helpless or where he is not of our own kin.

### Primitive Barbarism

To-day there are thousands in India, confined in prisons indefinitely and without trial, inhumanly treated, and there can be no doubt that not only they are a heavy burden upon the Government, but they permanently lower its dignity. The contemptuous vindictiveness ruthlessly pursued against prisoners whether political or belonging to other classes, reveals the primitive barbarism lurking in the dark recess of civilisation, perpetually burdening it with hard problems and tainting its soul. We on our part in India have banished a considerable number of our own people into a narrow enclosure of insult branding them with the sign of permanent degradation. A dungeon does not safely consist of brick and mortar confinement, but setting narrow limits to man's self-respect is a moral prison, more cruel for victims than the physical one and more demoralising for those who encourage it passively or with pious fervour.

The concrete fact of inequalities between individuals and races cannot be ignored, but to accept it as absolute and utilise it to deprive men of their human rights and comradeship is a social crime that multiplies fast in its heinousness. We, who imagine ourselves superior to those whom we have tied down to their abasement are punished by enfeebling them and losing them from us. The weakness engendered by such alienation has been one of the principal causes of defeat in all our historical conflicts. Where numerous divisions have been made among the people by dark gaps of dishonour, balance is upset and social structure is ever in

danger of toppling over. The signs of such trials are not lacking in the western continents where the chasm between wealth and want is widening and is darkly nourishing earthquakes in its depth. The moral channels of communication should never be obstructed if man must be saved from degeneracy or destruction.

### Social Iniquities

Mahatmaji has repeatedly pointed out the danger of those divisions in our country that are permanent insults to humanity, but our attention has not been drawn to the importance of its rectification with the same force as it has been to the importance of *Khaddar*. The social iniquities upon which all our enemies find their principal support have our time-honoured loyalty, making it difficult for us to uproot them. Against that deep-seated moral weakness in our society, Mahatmaji has pronounced his ultimatum, and though it may be our misfortune to lose him in the battle field, the fight will be passed on to everyone of us to be carried on to the final end. It is the gift of the fight which he is going to offer to us and if we do not know how to accept it humbly and yet with proud determination, if we cheaply dismiss it with some ceremonials to which we are accustomed, and allow the noble life to be wasted with its great meaning missed, then our people will passively roll down the slope of degradation to the blankness of utter futility.

### Effect Of Mahatmaji's Action

It is not possible for us to realise what effect Mahatmaji's action will have upon the people who govern us, and to-day it is not the day for us to discuss its political aspects. Only one thing we must make clear to those who seem to have our destiny in their hands. We have observed that the English people are puzzled at the step that Mahatmaji has been compelled to take. They confess that they fail to understand it. I believe that the reason of their failure is mainly owing to the fact that the language of Mahatmaji is fundamentally different from their own. His method of protest is not in accord with the method which they usually follow in cases of grave political crisis. I ask them to remember the terrible days of atrocities that reddened in blood at their door, when a dismemberment was being forced between Ireland and the rest of Great Britain. Those Englishmen who imagined it to be disastrous to the integrity of their Empire did not scruple to kill and be killed, even to tear into shreds the decency of civilised codes of honour. The West is accustomed to such violent outbursts in times of desperation, and, therefore, such a procedure did not seem strange to them, though to some of them it must have appeared wrong. The dismemberment of a large portion of Hindu society is certainly fatal to its wholeness and when all our appeals are stubbornly dismissed the reason should not be incomprehensible to other people as to why Mahatmaji is voicing the extreme form of protest on behalf of India.

It asks them to imagine what would have happened when the Roman Catholic community of England suffered from a forcible deprivation of its common rights, if some foreign power would come and with efficient benevolence alienate them from the rest of the nation. Very likely, the people would resort to the method of protest which they consider as honourable in its red fury of violence. In our case the feeling may be similar, though Mahatmaji has made use of its expression which is his own. The message of non-violence so often as expressed by him in words and in deeds finds to-day its final exposition in a great language which should be the easiest to understand.

## THE CONGRESS AND THE COMMISSION

IN our issue of the 14th October we published the news of the appointment of a Commission by the Union Government in the Transvaal. The Transvaal Indian Congress and the South African Indian Congress have passed unanimous resolutions to resist passively the Asiatic Land Tenure Act. It was also announced that the Passive Resistance Struggle will be started after the report of the Commission is published. The Agent-General for the Government of India, the Union Government and the whole world know this fact. The Congress definitely declared that it will never accept this Act. It is intended under this Act to bring about the business and residential segregation of the Transvaal Indians. The Congress has always opposed the principle of segregation. Even the Government of India delegation has condemned the policy of segregation. As the Congress has publicly declared its policy against the Land Tenure Act, it is obvious that the Congress under no circumstances can co-operate with the Commission that has been appointed. As the Congress has passed the resolution to passively resist this Act the logical outcome of it is that it cannot offer its co-operation to this Commission. But we think that it is not even necessary to make an explanation about it. We understand that the Agent-General, Kunwar Maharaj Singh, wants to know from the Congress whether or not it will co-operate with the Commission. The Congress has passed the resolution unanimously to resist the Act passively in his presence. He was present during the sittings of the Conference of the Congress. He had patiently and calmly listened to the speeches of the delegates when the discussion on the resolution was carried on. And the chairman of the Committee, Advocate Godfrey, requested the Agent to express his views before the fateful resolution was put before the delegates, not minding even the adverse effect his speech will create on the minds of the delegates. The Agent had his full say on the resolution and even after listening to his arguments against the resolution, it was unanimously carried. Having fully acquainted with the views of the Congress we do not understand why the Agent to-day wants to know from the Congress whether or not it will co-operate

with the Commission. Has the Agent after representing the views of the Congress to the Union Government been able to obtain such conditions from the Union Government that will permit the Congress to reconsider its final decision and offer its co-operation to the Commission? We are not aware of such conditions offered and hence the Congress resolution in itself is an answer to the Agent-General's question. The Indians in the Transvaal now will be compulsorily segregated. Most of them will be asked to clear away from the proclaimed land and be compelled to live and trade in defined areas. It has been argued that in the Transvaal there are previous laws such as Law of 1885 and the Gold Law of 1908 which established the principle of segregation. It is true to some extent but the Law of 1885 never compelled the Indians to trade and live in segregated areas. Under that Act the Government had no power to eject them, and it was the policy of the Government not to enforce the Gold Law of 1908. Hence the Indians in the Transvaal have been allowed to create vested interests with the free knowledge of the authorities. The Indian community in the Transvaal has always very strongly protested against these laws. Many a time they have requested the Government to repeal these iniquitous legislations. After the great Passive Resistance struggle in 1914 when Mahatma Gandhi left this country for good he wrote a letter prior to his departure to the Department of the Interior saying:—

"As the Minister is aware, some of my countrymen have wished me to go further. They are dissatisfied that the trade licence laws of the different Provinces, the Transvaal Gold Law, the Transvaal Townships Act, the Law of 1885 have not been altered so as to give them full rights of residence, trade and ownership of land. They have asked me that the above matters might be included in the Passive Resistance struggle. I have been unable to comply with their wishes. Whilst, therefore, they have not been included in the programme of Passive Resistance, it will not be denied that some day or other these matters will require further and sympathetic consideration by the Government."

This was written 18 years ago and yet that "some day" for sympathetic consideration had never arrived. In spite of all the prayers of the Congress to give relief to the Indians by repealing these legislations, they have been further tightened up and the Asiatic Land Tenure

Act has been passed branding them over as undesirables. When this intolerable situation has been created and the Congress failed in its constitutional agitation it has finally decided to resist this humiliating Act. It is argued that many Indians in the Transvaal have filled in the forms issued under this Act and it is futile to talk of Passive Resistance. It may be true that many of them have filled in the forms. But does it signify that they have done so because they liked the Act? They knew that if they don't fill in the forms their businesses which they built up by many years of labour will be entirely ruined. Under such terrible circumstances they have been compelled against their will to fill in the forms under protest. Even the Agent of the Government of India did not hesitate to declare that he and his Government condemned this Act, though very naturally, he said that neither he nor his Government would be able to support us in our resistance to the Act. We venture to say to the Agent that if he wants the Congress to co-operate with the Commission it rests with him and the Union Government to bring about such a condition. If such a condition is created the Congress will not fail in its duty to rise to the occasion.

## Reception To Agent-General

The Natal Indian Congress, Maritzburg Branch, gave a public reception in the City Hall on Saturday 29th October to the Agent-General for India, Kunwar Maharaj Singh and Kunwarani. The Deputy-Mayor, Mr. E. Collins presided, Mr. R. B. Maharaj, president of the Maritzburg branch of the Congress, garlanded the Kunwar and the Kunwarani and the Deputy-Mayor.

Fully 1,000 people were present in the City Hall, including several hundred Europeans, while the gay sarees of a number of Indian women sitting at the back of the platform added a splash of colour to the assembly.

Mr. Sorabjee Rustomjee, President of the Natal Indian Congress, Advocate A. Christopher and Mr. P. R. Pather, Secretary of the Natal Indian Congress went from Durban to attend the function.

There were many prominent European and Indian friends on the platform.

In welcoming the Agent Mr. R. B. Maharaj enumerated the distinguished Indian statesmen who had already visited South Africa, including the late Mr. Gokhale, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Sir Mahomed Habibullah and the Kunwar's two predecessors as Agents-General Mr. Sastri and Sir Kurma Reddi.

The Indian community in South Africa is very fortunate in the choice the Government of India has made in your appointment as their third Agent-General in South Africa. Your distinguished career, your outstanding ability, your many travels, and your personal experience of problems affecting Indians in other countries which you visited, emi-

nently fit you to the high office which you occupy to-day. In the difficult, and I might say trying task in this country, you have one advantage over your predecessors. The Kunwarani, who has already taken interest in the welfare of our women, is with you, and she will, I have no doubt, by her enthusiasm for the work you have on hand, be a source of assistance not only to you but to us.

At a function of this kind, it is far from my desire to introduce any subjects, which might give room for controversy. However, I should be failing in my duty if I omitted to touch on the great importance which the Indian community attaches to the 'uplift' clause in the Capetown Agreement. To us the very declaration in that clause is our Magna Charta. We have pinned our faith to it, and we shall look forward with eagerness to the day, which I hope is in the near future, when the Parliament and the people of South Africa will give it its full effect. The substance of the 'uplift' clause in the Capetown Agreement is that the Union Government adheres to the principle that it is the duty of every civilised government to take all possible steps for the uplifting of every section of their permanent population to the full extent of their capacity and opportunities. The Government further accepted the view that in the provision of educational and other facilities the Indians will not be allowed to lag behind other sections of the people.

Since this declaration some disadvantages which impeded the progress of Indian education have been removed, notably the application of that part of the Union subsidy for Indian education. The Provincial Government is not giving from its revenue a single penny towards Indian education. A good percentage of children of school-going age has not yet been absorbed into schools. More schools are wanted, and, whilst expressing gratitude to the Superintendent of Education and his staff for the attention they are giving to Indian education, we feel that there is ample room for further improvements in the advancement of Indian education.

Above all matters that are engaging attention to-day, one that is immediately affecting us is the question of distress among our people. Unemployment and poverty are rife among our people. The City Council generously voted a grant of £100 to relieve distress, and money from other sources enabled the Indian community to carry on and continue relief work for the past 12 months. Indians are finding no place in the relief works opened by the Council and Public Works Department. In this connection I must mention with gratitude that the representative of the Maritzburg City Council drew attention to the fact that Indians should be assisted by Government subsidy for the relief of their distress caused by unemployment. I can personally vouchsafe that a large number of unemployed is living on the borderland of starvation. Our people are chary of taking relief. They want work, and they do not want charity, unless hunger forces them to accept relief.

Since you have been in this country, we note with pride that you are unsparing in your efforts to promote our welfare, and to represent to those in authority our wants and wishes. You have by now, I hope, found that the Indian community has never been unreasonable in its demands. What they deplore is differential treatment.

We feel bound to look forward with expectation that you, Sir, during your term of office will better the position of the Indian community in South Africa.

Once again in the name of the Indian community I extend to you and to the Kunwarani a most cordial and hearty welcome.

Professor J. W. Bewes, principal of the Natal University College, said that India had always sent its very best to South Africa. The Kunwar not

only represented the culture of India, but had absorbed that of Western civilisation, represented by Harrow and Oxford.

From the culture standpoint the Kunwar would be faced with many interesting problems. In many ways the world had not advanced for 2,000 years, for while it was very easy to adopt new machines it was not so easy to gain a new moral standpoint.

Here in South Africa it was the conflict of different culture contacts which created the most pressing problems, which would not be solved by politicians until they had been analysed by those who were fully qualified to understand them. It was in this way that the Kunwar and the Kunwarani, by their own education and experience, could help in the solution of national problems.

The Dean of Maritzburg, the Very Rev. R. L. White, welcomed the Agent-General and his wife on behalf of the Bishop of Natal, the Rt. Rev. L. N. Fisher, who was unavoidably absent at Capetown.

### Marvellous Country.

India, he declared, was a great and marvellous country, and it was important that both Indians and Europeans in Natal should learn to understand it and some of its problems. He hoped that the Kunwar and Kunwarani would be able to execute good work in the cause of their country in South Africa and that they would see it brought to success.

Mr. W. J. O'Brien, M.P., said the relations between South Africa and India had been considerably improved during the past and would no doubt still further improve during the stay of the Kunwar and the Kunwarani.

He advised those who knew little about India to read a book entitled "The India We Served," by Sir Walter Lawrence, in which they would find reference to the Kunwar's princely family.

Mr. Hugh Bryan said he had few ties with India beyond a personal acquaintanceship with Ranjitsinhji and Mr. Sastri.

Referring to the need for education, he said that any section of the community which remained illiterate would continue to be a shame to any country.

It was necessary to-day to find a true sense of values, which was only obtainable by a realisation of humanity. It was necessary for people to put themselves in the position of "the other fellow," as the laws of justice and fairness were necessary for everyone.

Mr. A. Christopher, of Durban, said the Indians looked to the Kunwar and Kunwarani to be their advocates with the Government to represent the reasonableness of their rights in the cause of humanity.

The white labour policy was a most inhuman one, which was responsible for thousands of Indians being out of employment. It did not recognise any standard of civilisation, but only colour. He was grateful to the Kunwar and the Kunwarani, who had already identified themselves with this question.

### Kunwar Maharaj Singh's Reply

Kunwar Maharaj Singh thanked all present for the reception, which he had particularly asked to be carried out with as little expense as possible, in view of the need of money for other purposes.

He had refused to believe his friends in India who had told him that his work in South Africa would be an impossible task. There was no such word as impossible, as had been proved by many events in the past 30 years, and he believed that with the goodwill and co-operation of Indians and Europeans much could be done.

He did not believe in revolutionary changes, or even that a big change was necessary, but both his wife and himself would feel more than amply repaid if the cause of goodwill and co-operation went forward steadily.

Individually there was a great deal of fellow feeling between the two races, and he was convinced that many Europeans had been fully satisfied with their associations with Indians.

### The "Uplift" Clause

He appealed for a fuller realisation of the "uplift" clause of the Capetown agreement. Already more money was being spent on Indian education, but there was much more that remained to be done. More than half of the Indian children in Natal received no education, and it was necessary that more funds should be provided for this purpose by the Union Government or Provincial Administration.

He thanked the Corporation of Maritzburg for contributing £100 to Indian unemployment, and allowing a street collection to be made in the City for the same purpose.

The British Empire, to which he was proud to belong, was the heritage of no one race, but the result of co-operative effort between the European and non-European races, and would only continue so long as its constituent races were willing partners.

### Justice For Other Races

It was for the Europeans to see that justice was meted out to those other races who lived with them in South Africa. There was a British sense of fair play with which he was well acquainted, and he appealed to Europeans individually and collectively to translate into action that innate sense of fair play.

His appeal was for a fair opportunity for Indians, not only from a humane point of view, but because it would increase their economic value to the community. Indian market gardeners and traders could, with the aid of education, have their value greatly enhanced, thus bringing benefit to the consumer.

The Indian traders had their faults. He would like them to have a higher standard of commercial morality and of sanitation, and to educate their women and girls, but they had many good points as well, such as politeness and thrift.

He appealed for the resuscitation of the Maritzburg Indo-European Council on the lines of the one which was still doing useful work in Durban.

### The Kunwarani

The Kunwarani said that she and her husband had a big burden placed upon them, and one which they were fully willing to take, but it was also one which those present must share.

She deprecated the emphasis on the difficulties of the situation which had been made by other speakers. She herself was full of faith. Maritzburg had already shown its faith by taking the lead in helping the Indian community, and she hoped that the city would continue to give a lead to all South Africa.

Durban people had told her of the beauties of their own town, but she had a real preference for Maritzburg, and was convinced that its people would rise to the occasion.

In moving a vote of thanks to the Deputy Mayor for presiding, the Rev. A. J. Chochoo once more thanked the Council for its generous attitude to the Indian community. He appealed to the Council to give a little more attention to the area below Retief Street in the way of street lighting and anti-malarial measures.

Amongst those present on the platform were Mrs. Norman Collins, Mrs. Hugh Bryan, Senator W. Thrash, Mr. G. O. Jolliffe, Mr. Sorabjee Rustomjee, president of the Natal Indian Congress, Mr. S. R. Naidoo, secretary of the Maritzburg branch, and others.

## Kunwar Maharaj Singh's Lectures Criticised

We reproduce from *The Natal Mercury* the following criticisms for and against the Agent's lectures by its readers:—

Sir,—I read your report of the address given on Oct. 24 by Kunwar Maharaj Singh to the Durban Christian Council with great interest, and I am afraid that the Kunwar is steering into very stormy waters with his lectures and will not always get the polite hearing which, up to the present, has been given him.

The premises from which the Kunwar usually starts are entirely wrong. He starts with comparisons between South Africa and other countries. South Africa's attitude towards Coloured races is, and must be, different from that of any other country, if we do not want to become a nation of Eur-afr-asi-ans. The Kunwar, on account of the fact that he is a Christian is outside the Indian caste system altogether, and apparently overlooks the truth that the majority of the Indians who in South Africa come from the lowest castes in India and the poorest classes, and left India of their own free will with the idea of bettering their lot in life, and there is ample testimony to show that they have done so and have achieved a certain measure of prosperity. Their cultural horizon has also widened in comparison with the standards of the original immigrants, but their comparative morality and culture are still frightfully low according to European measure. I do not think that I am too cynical if I assert that if a higher culture meets with a lower culture the inevitable result is that the higher culture will always be the loser and suffers by too close a contact with a lower culture. Consequently I consider the Kunwar's demand for admission of Indian children to European schools unjustifiable, apart from our great South African "colour prejudice," as non-South Africans choose to call South Africa's greatest virtue. I call it virtue, because if we South Africans did not possess this "colour prejudice" we as an active and conquering race would suffer the fate of all conquerors and invaders, namely, to be absorbed by the conquered races, in the same way as the Goths and Vandals were swallowed up by the subjected Romans and have disappeared from the face of the earth. This, all over history, has in every case been the revenge of the conquered. Wherever a white race and coloured races meet, the white race will degenerate if it does not foster and cherish this colour prejudice, and we South Africans know it and therefore wish to live in separation from the Coloured races.

Our attitude, as the Kunwar has pointed out, has caused ill-feeling in India towards us South Africans. This, of course, is deplorable, but after all East is East and West is West, etc., and I am afraid South Africa and India can never see eye to eye on this subject and can only compromise to a certain extent.

The solution of the Indian question which the Kunwar proposes—that of the more equal distribution of Indians over all the four Provinces—is very clever. The only trouble is that the other three Provinces will decline with thanks. They have seen what a problem the Indians have become in Natal and do not wish to become saddled with the same difficulties, and after all who can blame them?

I am afraid that South African ideals and Indian ideals are irreconcilable.

SOUTH AFRICA FIRST.

## Indian Agent-General And Racial Relations

Sir, Your correspondent, "South Africa First," in his letter of Oct. 29, suggests that the Agent-General for India may not "get the polite hearing which up to the present has been given him" if he persists in expressing the views of the Indian position, which he enunciated in his address to the Durban Christian Service Council.

May I express the hope that his fear (or desire) is groundless? The Agent-General is in South Africa by express agreement between the Governments of South Africa and India, and his office entails the duty of placing the views of his Government on racial relations before the Government and the people of South Africa. We shall surely not be impolite to one with whom we have agreed to collaborate in a difficult matter.

It is very easy and very dangerous to appeal to racial and national prejudice and fear as the history and the present condition of South Africa show, but no satisfactory solution of the local or of the world-problem of race will ever be thus attained. It is slowly—too slowly—becoming clearer that in these matters the only lasting settlement will be gained by the application of the Christian principles, for which the White races are supposed to stand; a settlement which will include mutual respect, the granting of the inalienable rights of every civilised man, and where rights seem to clash, as they may appear to do in an imperfect society, the exercise of the Christian charity, which looks on the things of others and worketh no ill to a neighbour.

J.P.

## The Indian Agent General's Lecture

Sir,—The letter published in your issue of Friday from the pen of "South Africa First" must not remain unanswered.

It is good to note that the fact of the Christianity of Kunwar Maharaj Singh is admitted by the writer of this letter. That fact explains the attitude being adopted by our distinguished friend, and raises one or two questions which ought to be faced. Is it true that we live in a land which is controlled by a Government and administration of professedly Christian representatives? Can it be said that the attitude of Government and the people as a whole towards the Indians is truly Christian and Christlike? Is it not time that professed Christianity should be supported by practice, and our so-called superior race adopt an attitude which is more likely to be approved by our Lord and Master Jesus Christ?

As a matter of fact, "South Africa First" seems not to understand the Kunwar's attitude. The plea is not for admission of Indian children to European schools; but a plea for just and effective dealings in the matter of "Indian education."

You, sir, in your sub-leader on the same day used the phrase "collaboration of the Indians." That is higher than to which there will yet be worthy echoes if the Christian spirit prevails in our contacts. Because of the Christian spirit there are some of us who feel that the Kunwar must have our support while he faces the truth courageously and goes on stating his impressions soberly and fearlessly.

ALTRUIST.

## British Labour And India

London, Wednesday.—The decision of the Parliamentary Labour Party not to participate in the forthcoming Indian Round Table Conference, due to meet on November 15, is reported.

Political correspondents state that the decision is due to the absence of representation of the Indian Congress and the Government's general Indian policy.—Reuter.

## The Transvaal Enquiry

The *Hindu* of Madras writes editorially in its issue of October 1 under the above caption:

Our South African correspondent has cabled to us the personnel of the Commission appointed by the Union Government to investigate into the legality or otherwise of the occupation by Indians of land in proclaimed areas. It is understood that it will be the duty of the Commission to ascertain from the people living in the neighbourhood whether they do or do not object to the presence of such persons in their midst and advise the Minister accordingly. We are told that the Indian community is satisfied with the composition of the Commission. The public in India would, however, do well not to make the mistake of thinking that the results of the Commission's inquiry would go in any considerable measure to alleviate the humiliations and hardships imposed upon the Indian community by the Asiatic Land Tenure Act. That pernicious legislation, while it gives protection to a few individuals, renders the development of the coming generations impossible and condemns them to live in segregated areas, branding them as "inferior" people. Mr. Sorabjee Rustomjee, the President of the twelfth session of the South African Indian Congress which met in Johannesburg at the end of August last, thus summarised the effect of that legislation:

The occupation of proclaimed areas by a coloured person is illegal and constitutes a punishable offence. It repeals Sub-section 1 of Section 131 of the Gold Law which permitted occupation on proclaimed land, thereby prohibiting occupation as well as residence. The Act nullifies the Springs judgment, and deprives our people of their right to occupy and reside in Townships such as Springs. It prohibits Indians from occupying even deproclaimed areas. It fleeces away the protection that was afforded to us by Act 37 of 1919. Sections 130 and 131 of the Gold Law were never enforced, and as a result our people have created vested interests with the free knowledge of the authorities.

Those who have been continuously trading from 1919 to May 1930 on proclaimed land will be allowed to continue their business, but they form only about two per cent. of the traders. Even this attempt at justice being done is done, the President said, to the fact that time is needed to enable Europeans trading which these licences to realise their outstandings. The fact is that the Act has been contrived to drive out Indians and it is therefore not difficult to understand the widespread bitterness and resentment felt among Indians. The President made no attempt to disguise the fact that from the point of view of Indians in the Transvaal, the last Round Table Conference was a dismal failure in that it did not secure to them the enjoyment of their rights. It was not without the utmost deliberation that the Congress resolved to embark upon resistance to the Land Tenure Act. "The Indian," Mr. Rustomjee said, in his concluding speech, "has come to the last road of toleration, for he can no longer bear the indignities, the dishonour and the status of inferiority to which he is gratuitously subjected. Are we going to be suppressed and oppressed and gradually eliminated from this country, or are we going to be allowed to live as decent citizens and permitted to improve our lot?" The colonisation scheme was not going to improve matters. The majority of the Congress was opposed to taking part in the inquiry which is proposed to be started in conjunction with the Government of India as to



the places to which Indians either in South Africa or India could usefully emigrate. But we are told that they agreed to subordinate their views because no scheme had been prepared and there was no harm in a mere investigation. But the Congress made it clear that in taking this step it refused to subscribe to the view that Indians were undesirable and that the Indian population was to be reduced.

## Will The New Constitution Give India Self Rule?

(By JABEZ T. SUNDERLAND)

(Continued from last week)

4. While in the proposed new constitution for India the Viceroy (or Governor-General) is to be responsible in a measure to the Indian National (Federal) Legislature, and therefore indirectly to people of India, he is to be given autocratic and arbitrary power quite as great as any past Viceroy has ever possessed. In other words, he is to have power to dismiss ministries at his will, which means that, in what he may claim to be a time of "emergency," he can control legislation, or even dismiss the Legislature, and rule the country by arbitrary edicts, or virtual martial law exactly as Lord Chelmsford did in 1919, by the Rowlatt Acts, which were followed by the Panjab atrocities; just as Lord Irwin did in 1930-31, by edicts which caused the imprisonment of more than 60,000 (high Indian authorities say more than 100,000) of India's worthiest citizens and filled the land with unpardonable acts of physical force; and just as Lord Willingdon hastened to do at the close of the second London Round Table Conference by his Bengal and other Ordinances which equalled, if they did not surpass anything that preceded them.

Nor is this all. Even the national Legislature is to be so constituted as not only to be always under the Viceroy's control, but as actually to uphold and strengthen his autocracy. This is to be brought about by the following plan, namely, by making the number of members of the main national Legislative body very small (only 300 for a population of nearly 350,000,000), and then, of this very small number, giving an unjustly large proportion to the Native States (not elected by the people but appointed by the Princes and sure to be conservative) and an unjustly large proportion to certain "minorities," (that can be controlled by the Government,) and filling a considerable number of seats with direct nominees or appointees of the Government, the members of all these taken together being sufficient always to form a majority of conservatives, of die-hards of government supporters. Thus "Ossa is to be piled on Pelion." It is not enough that the Viceroy is to be made an autocrat, with absolute power in his hands over the legislative part of the government, over the army, over finances, over everything, but his power is to be fortified by the chief legislative body being so fashioned (the "disc so loaded") as to insure that he shall also have the support of the legislature in all his autocratic power, thus giving to the world the impression that he is not an autocrat at all, but that he rules by the "will of the people."

There is more still. The autocracy is not to stop with the Viceroy. It is to extend in large measure to the Governors of Provinces. Since these Governors (as well as the Viceroys) are to be appointed by

Great Britain without India having any voice or power in the matter, there appears to be no way in which India will be able to prevent great provinces from being governed by men like Sir Michael O'Dwyer, or to prevent British soldiers like General Dyer from committing in any of the provinces (under the autocratic authority of Provincial Governors or Viceroys, one or both) atrocities as bad as those in the Panjab, including massacres as terrible as that in Amritsar. Will this mean self-rule for India?

Am I told that under the new constitution Britain will be careful to appoint Viceroys and Provincial Governors who can be trusted not to use their autocratic power in these ways? The answer is, where has India any such assurance? Said Patrick Henry: "I know no way of judging the future but by the past."

Such then are the four main "reservations" (there are others but these are the most important) which Great Britain makes an indispensable part of the new constitution which she is framing for the Indian people.

Under such a constitution, will India possess self-rule in any sense whatever, not to say Dominion Status? Instead, will she not be held in abject bondage, as really as in the past? The chains with which she is to be bound will be somewhat different in form, and they will be slightly longer in this direction and in that, so as to allow her a little more liberty of movement in her bondage, but are they not to be chains still, chains of steel, so strong and as bitter as those of the past have ever been?

Great Britain tries to reconcile India to these reservations by saying that they are "temporary," to last only during a "transition" period, then they will be removed. The reply India makes is: How long is the transition period to last? Will it be ten years, or twenty, or thirty, or fifty, or a hundred? The shortest time that we have seen mentioned from any responsible British source is twenty years. Lord Reading and Lord Birkenhead are reported as saying fifty years and a century. A clergyman of the Church of England, writing on the subject, thinks the time should not be less than two centuries. Does any reasonable man imagine that India can be made satisfied to wait any of these periods to obtain what she believes she is ready to receive and ought to receive at once?

Worst of all, there is no date. India is not promised that the transitional period shall end at any definite time at all, even in twenty years, or fifty or a hundred. She is only told that it shall terminate *sometime*. When will that be? Everybody knows that a promissory note simply payable *sometime* is not worth the paper it is written on. Furthermore, and this is vital—India is to have no control over the *sometime*; that control is to be wholly in the hands of Britain. The end of the transition period is to arrive *only when* some future British Parliament shall think the proper time has come. Will any future British Parliament ever discover such a time?

Mr. Gandhi and the people of India can see no need for any reservations at all, or may delay at all in turning over the government of India to those to whom it properly belongs. The British are not abler than the Indian leaders. They are not more honourable. Their knowledge of India and its needs is much inferior. The only thing that can possibly be accomplished by the reservations, in India's view, is to enable Britain to hold India fast for so many years longer.

If such an additional period of forced subjection would improve the Indian people or make them in any way more fit for self-rule, there might be some

excuse for the delay. But how can prolongation of bondage, with its humiliation and degrading influence, and with the irritation and feeling of injury, hostility and antagonism which it inevitably creates, fit men better for self-government? The declaration of Gladstone should be heeded:

"Every year and every month that a subject people are kept under the administration of a despotic government, renders them less fit for free institutions."

If such a delay would make the transfer more willing or more easy on the part of Britain that might do something to justify it. But how can postponement make Britain more willing or the transfer easier? There seems reason to believe that the effect will be the exact opposite. Every year of delay will increase British investment in India and other entanglements between the two countries, which of course will tend to make separation more difficult. Every year will increase the public debt which Britain is piling on India, and through this strengthen her grip, since most of the debt is owed to Britain. Of course, the stronger her grip, the less willing she will be to let go. So that these delays, instead of being paths to India's self-rule, seem serious obstacles in the way of her attaining it within any visible time, if ever.

India feels indignant that reservation of any kind are imposed on her. Is she not a great civilised, historic nation, that has ruled herself in the past for two or three thousand years without reservations, occupying a place of honour and influence in the world second that of no other nation? Cannot such a nation rule itself now? If not, why not? Has hundred and seventy years of British rule caused such degeneration in that she cannot do again what she did for so long a period with distinguished success? India feels insulted by these reservations.

She also distrusts their meaning. What can their real meaning be? Are they not another "smoke-screen" such as she declares she has experienced so often from her present foreign rulers? Is not offering so-called self-rule with these reservations, on the part of Great Britain, another instance of professing to give without really giving? Of "giving with one hand and taking back with the other?"

Under the name of granting India self-rule, does not Britain by these reservations really refuse to give her self-rule? If I may quote the language of the Editor of *New India* (Madras), "In holding out to India so-called self-government with these limitations attached, are India's foreign lords offering her anything whatever but the trappings of self-government without self-government at all?" These are vital questions. All India is asking them with intense earnestness.

## Notice

### INDIAN UNEMPLOYMENT

Will employers of Indian labour kindly notify the undersigned of any vacancies in their establishment.

WRITE: Hon. Secretary, Sir Kurma Reddi Unemployment Relief Committee, 175 Grey Street, Durban, or Phone Central 3506.

## Indian Unemployment And The Durban Town Council

A sub-committee of Town Councillors, comprised of Messrs. G. Reyburn, M. Cornelius, W. Langton and Mrs. Benson has been appointed to investigate the prevalence of unemployment among Indians, and to recommend "steps to be taken by the Council in order to provide relief."

This decision follows a discussion with representatives of the Indian community, including the Agent-General and Messrs. Kujee and Christopher. At this interview, Mr. Christopher declared that the number of Indian unemployed was increasing daily, while so far the community had received no help from either the Government or municipality.

He also referred to the displacement of a number of Indians formerly employed by the municipality, and urged that openings should be found for unemployed Indians as unskilled labourers.

Kunwar Maharaj Singh suggested that Indians might be employed on road making sanitary services and levelling the incorporated areas.

## Mr. H. N. Venn To Retire

Pretoria, Nov. 1

Mr. H. N. Venn, Commissioner for Immigration and Asiatic Affairs, who will retire on March 8 next year, will be succeeded by Mr. P. F. Kincaid, at present Chief Clerk in the Department of the Interior.

Mr. Venn, who was Under-Secretary for the Interior when the present Government assumed office, was the first man to hold this dual post and his administration was conspicuously successful. He was a very popular public servant and his services evoked the keen appreciation of the many Indian delegations which visited the Union.

Mr. Venn's successor, Mr. Kincaid, is a man of high ability. He has had long experience in the Department of the Interior to his credit and has a thorough knowledge of the requirements of his new post. He joined the Department in 1909 after seven and a half years' service with the Cape Railways, being appointed Chief Clerk in 1925.

## Death Of Indian Statesman

Patna, Monday.—The death has occurred of Sir Syed Ali Imam, an eminent lawyer and statesman, at the age of 65.—Reuter.

## Indian Child Welfare Society Centre

150, BROOK STREET, DURBAN

Open daily, Monday to Saturday, 8-30 a.m. to 11 a.m. Infants, young children, nursing and expectant mothers.

Lady doctors give free attendance.

Tuesday morning 8-30 o'clock. Friday afternoon 3 o'clock.