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PREFATORY NOTE.

The task of preparing this report for presentation to Parliament has been entrusted by Government of India to Professor L. F. Rushbrook Williams, O.B.E., and it is now presented under authority and with general approval of Secretary of State for India but it must not be understood that approval either of the Secretary of State or of the Government of India extends to every particular expression of opinion.

FOREWORD.

THE period covered by this Statement presents a striking contrast with its immediate predecessor. From the economic standpoint, the year 1922-23 witnessed a gradual return to more normal conditions. Harvests were good; prices on the down-grade; and wages steady. The improved economic conditions were reflected in the politics of the period. As the failure of the Non-Co-operation programme to achieve its appointed ends became patent, wild and unreflecting enthusiasm gradually yielded to a more sober spirit. The process was aided by the contrast, which grew daily more marked, between the sterility in positive achievement of Mr. Gandhi's movement, and the steady tale of fruitful activities which stood to the credit of the new constitution. In the ranks of the Non-Co-operators the opinion gained ground that the Legislatures were exercising a great and growing influence upon the Executive; that a continued boycott of these bodies would condemn the party practising it to political extinction. The result has been a split in the Congress ranks between those who recognised the failure of their original programme, and those whose reason was still held captive by the power of Mr. Gandhi's personal prestige. Time will show whether the former group will enter the Legislatures in sufficient numbers to exercise a decisive influence upon the course of the Reforms; and whether they will employ destructively or constructively such power as they may possess. For while on the one hand the general atmosphere of responsible sobriety which characterises the Reformed Councils may be expected to modify the activities of those who enter them for the first time; on the other, the working of the new constitution has abundantly revealed the necessity for much give-and-take between the Legislature and the Executive if deadlocks are to be avoided. Indeed the somewhat halting operation, at least in certain directions, of the machinery set up by the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms has served to stimulate a demand, by no means confined to the Left Wing, for further constitutional advance, which seems likely, after no long time, to become a dominant feature in Indian politics.

L. F. RUSHBROOK WILLIAMS.

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NOTE.

Except where otherwise mentioned a pound sterling is equivalent to fifteen rupees. To minimise confusion the rupee figures are also given in important statistics. Three crores (30 million) rupees may thus be taken as equivalent of £2 million sterling ; and three lakhs (300,000) rupees are equal to £20,000.

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