

# THE Servant of India

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## TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

WE are afraid there is a good deal of misconception regarding the Satyagraha or passive resistance movement at Vaikom in Travancore. In the first place it is alleged to be an anti-Government movement, an item in the programme of non-co-operation, and the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee has been taken to task for meddling in the affairs of an Indian State in violation of Congress tradition. As we have understood it, it is not an anti-Government movement. Its object is not to embarrass the State or destroy its prestige. As made perfectly clear by the statement of its leaders, its object is to assert the right of way of certain classes of people to a public road. It is the removal of an atrocious and out-of-date civic disability. The movement owes its origin to the genuine growth of self-respect among the "untouchable" classes. Mr. T. K. Madhavan, (now in jail), the real leader of the movement, has been devoting all his energies for some years past for the removal of social and other disabilities of his (the Thiyya) community. He has been editing a paper, has convened numerous meetings, addressed memorials to the authorities and has only now sought the help of the Congress. That is to say, the Congress has come in only as an ally—a powerful ally, it is true—and is not the principal in the quarrel. As to the objection that, whether as principal or ally, the Congress ought not to interfere in the affairs of Indian States, it has to be remembered that not now but some three or four years ago the Congress broke away from former traditions, and extended itself to Indian States, in

some of which it has opened branch organisations. It is true the Congress has agreed for the present not to start non-co-operation or general propaganda for self-government in Indian States, but as regards its "constructive" work the States are on the same footing as British India, and the present struggle is concerned with the most important item, according to the Congress, of its constructive programme, viz., the removal of untouchability. The Congress therefore cannot be said to have gone out of the way.

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THEN again it is argued that this question of allowing unclean castes the use of the road in Vaikom is a religious question for the solution which the State cannot make itself responsible, that the temple and the street around it are really trust property, the State managing them only as trustee, and that therefore it is not at liberty to change an immemorial custom unless the orthodox people approve of the change. As to trusteeship, it is very easy to ride that doctrine too far in Travancore. The whole State in theory belongs to the temple at Trivandrum and the Maharajah is only trustee. That, however, has not prevented the State from adopting modern principles of administration and admitting persons of low castes and non-Hindus into public institutions and public service, against the sanction of custom. The temples of Travancore are managed and very largely financed by the State. When out of their total income of Rs. 16½ lakhs not less than Rs. 16 lakhs is contributed by the State, it is difficult to understand how the State can be called only a trustee. The road in front of the great shrine at Trivandrum, to which in legal fiction the State itself belongs, is not closed to any class of persons. There can therefore be no valid objection to the State bringing the Vaikom temple into line with the Trivandrum temple and throwing open the road round its temple to all classes. If the theory of trusteeship has not stood in the way of other reforms, it cannot and need not stand in the way of this one.

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THE reformers are asked to be patient and try to win over the orthodox people by persuasion. To assist in this process Pandit Malaviyaji has promised to bring learned Sanatanists from North India. But the orthodox people of the west coast, the Nambu-

True Passive  
Resistance.

dries in particular, do not recognise any outside authorities and the Panditji's well-meant effort is bound to fail. In giving this advice to be patient and win over the opposition, some people really mean that the process should be continued until practically there will be no opposition whatever. If one is to wait so long, no reform in any sphere of life will be possible. Judging by public meetings and the number of volunteers offering to join the movement in spite of the hostility of the authorities to it, we should unhesitatingly say that the majority of the public interested in the temples of Travancore and who think at all of such matters, are in favour of the road in Vaikom being thrown open to the prohibited castes. There is also much lecturing about the evils of direct action. What is forgotten in this instance is that the leaders have taken every care to make it a movement of peaceful passive resistance. Their object, like the object of every passive resister or conscientious objector, is to awaken the conscience of the community by disobeying the existing law and drawing on themselves the consequences of such disobedience, and not the paralysing of society. It is not therefore direct action in the usual sense. Then it is said that the movement leads to a breach of the peace. When it is not made a mass movement, but only three persons at a time offer themselves for arrest, there can be no breach of the peace, unless the police abdicate their functions. Altogether, it is a movement similar to the great passive resistance movement of South Africa of 1913 and deserves the support of all persons who are opposed to religious or class domination.

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*Young India* of the 17th contains an important expression of opinion by Mr. Gandhi regarding the boycott of schools and law courts. A correspondent who gave up the Law College three years ago in response to the call for non-co-operation and is now head-master of a national high school, points out in a rather pathetic letter the complete failure of the boycott of schools and law courts, mentioning that his own school in spite of the best efforts has barely succeeded in retaining 30 students on the rolls while two recognised high schools in the same town have 500 students each, and asks Mr. Gandhi to permit him to finish the law course and practise as a lawyer. The correspondent admits that he looks upon non-co-operation only as a means to an end, and not as a question of conscience or religion. Mr. Gandhi's reply is that those who believe in boycott should face all difficulties and continue it; but those who do not believe in it, like the correspondent, may rejoin the profession without any disgrace attaching to their action. He continues:

"As I do not believe in the mandate theory, I do not consider it to be obligatory on any school master or lawyer to refrain from rejoining Government schools or law-courts because of the continuance of the boycott resolution. I would still advocate the retention of the

boycott, to be worked out not by propaganda for emptying Government schools and courts (that was done and had to be done during 1920 and 1921) but by the constructive method of establishing and popularising national schools and punchayats."

That is to say, the theory of sin attaching to these institutions is given up. We welcome this statement because to our knowledge there are some very fine young men who have not rejoined their colleges and professions, though they have lost faith in the efficacy of boycott, believing the Congress resolution to be a mandate and believing that some disgrace attaches to rejoining. We hope their scruples will now be set at rest.

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IN refusing permission for the holding of the ensuing session of the Kathiawar Political Conference at Bhavnagar, Sir Prabhasankar Pattani explained to the promoters of the Conference, who waited in deputation on him, that the reason for his doing so was that, as admitted by many responsible workers of the Conference, 'the proper limit of decency was crossed by many speakers at the last session of the Conference which met at Wadhwan and personal remarks were freely and unreservedly passed over many of the Chiefs and officials of Kathiawad.' The relations of Bhavnagar with the other States were excellent and he did not like them to be spoiled by similar speeches being delivered in Bhavnagar jurisdiction. He further advised them not to drop the idea of the conference but hold it at Songadh which is a short distance from Bhavnagar in British territory, and if they conducted this session there on right lines then 'he would in future undertake to approach the Chiefs of Kathiawad at the head of the promoters of the Conference, and try his utmost to see that no State or Chief in Kathiawad would object to the Conference to meet in its or his territory.' This advice no doubt sounds paternal, but Sir Prabhasankar's position in the public life of Kathiawar and his influence with the Chiefs as well as the paramount power are unique, and if the promoters of the Conference are as solicitous of its future as he is, they will take his advice in the right spirit, unpalatable as it may be to some of them. Whether Songadh be acceptable or not, one cannot blame Sir Prabhasankar for discountenancing a conference which is not confined to the people or affairs of Bhavnagar, and which on the other hand is likely to involve it in complications with other States and the paramount power. It is of course of the first importance that the tone of speeches in any Conference should be unobjectionable. Apart from it, where the affairs of several States are to be discussed it is better that the venue chosen is always British territory. We hope the promoters of the Kathiawar Political Conference will show their sense of responsibility by appreciating the difficulties of Bhavnagar and not attempt to hold the Conference there in defiance of Sir Prabhasankar.

**Liberal Conferences.** THE U. P. Liberals held a successful session of their provincial conference this week at Allahabad. We have published elsewhere extracts from the able presidential address of Mr. B. N. Srivastava. As an adjunct to the political conference a social conference was held which had the good fortune to be presided over by Mrs. Jwala Prasad, who is a niece of Dr. Rabindranath Tagore and is reported to be an able administrator. This conference passed a resolution fully sympathising with the members and friends of the depressed classes who are fighting at Vaikom in Travancore for the full rights of citizenship. The conference appropriately ended with a cosmopolitan dinner where *kuchcha* food was served, which in North India is a point of considerable importance. We hope the Bombay Provincial Liberal Conference which will meet next month in Ahmednagar will have an equally successful session and that in accordance with true Liberal principles, a social conference with an intercaste dinner will be arranged in connection with it.

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**Swarajist reasoning.** A FRIENDLY warning is given to the Swarajists that an unreasoning obstruction of all Government measures will result in an undue exercise of reserve powers and, if persisted in for a long time, in the withdrawal of reforms. One should have thought that the Swarajists, who have always professed to regard the reforms as sham, would exhibit little concern at this result, but, for a wonder the minds of some Swarajists are in fact greatly exercised over it, and Mr. Aney, the leader of the party in the Central Provinces, where the obstructionist policy is in force in an undiluted strength, tries to make out that the apprehension that the reforms would be cancelled is groundless because such a step "would be tantamount to the violation of the solemn pledge contained in the pronouncement of 10th August, 1917." A violation of the solemn pledge of 1917! We had thought that the Swarajists desired nothing so much as a violation of a pledge which emphasised a gradual evolution of democratic self-government in India and conditioned even such a gradual advance on the co-operation Indians would give in running Governmental machinery. Such is the cleverness of the advocates of self-government in the Swaraj party that what constitutes a clear justification of the extreme measure of withdrawal of reforms is advanced by them as the strongest argument on their side. But no one need trouble about the windings of Swarajist reasoning. For another shining light in the same camp remarked on the same occasion that the men of his party—"might hereafter decide to accept Ministerships and compel the Governor to dismiss obdurate Ministers" and thus compel the Government to concede the rights of Swaraj. This power of "compulsion" already exists; only the Swarajists have not shown the sense to exercise it. But this speaker clearly stated that responsive co-operation was their policy and thus obstruction seems to be receding backward in the Swarajist programme.

## THE COMMONS DEBATE ON INDIA.

THE telegrams which announced the approach of the recent debate in Parliament on Indian affairs had given it a degree of importance which it did not assume in point of fact. Owing to lack of time, the promised amendments were not moved and the discussion tailed off without any result, except disappointment in India. Here indeed owing to an imperfect understanding of the methods and incidents of Parliamentary proceedings, anything appears sufficient to rouse expectations up to a high pitch. It is true the Prime Minister did not wind up the debate with a pronouncement, as was expected. This, however, means only that if he had been present he would have returned substantially the same answer as the Under-Secretary for India; as in fact he did in his opening speech at the annual conference of the Independent Labour Party which met at York on the 19th inst. That the attitude of His Majesty's Government has become rigid is evidenced by the stereotyped language in which the decision is conveyed from time to time: "Our intentions are good, we desire to establish Dominion Self-Government in India at the right and proper time of which Parliament is the judge. The Government of India's departmental enquiry will prepare the necessary preliminary material. We would encourage and take into full consultation the party which has hitherto co-operated in the working of the reforms. But we are likewise anxious to understand, and if possible, conciliate the new Swarajist party. At the same time, we are perfectly convinced that the time has not come for any material advance in the constitution of India." That is the sum of the various pronouncements made during the last few weeks by His Majesty's Government. No one is particularly pleased, no one is violently outraged either. The Government of India must feel relieved that their original position remains unshaken hitherto. We do not attach any importance to the enquiry of which the beginning has been semi-officially announced. If it was meant to be taken seriously, it is difficult to understand why the co-operation of non-officials has not been sought. The point cannot have escaped public notice that the fine-spun distinction between responsible government and dominion status, of which Sir Malcolm Hailey made so much, has been quietly dropped by Imperial spokesmen. Mr. Richards makes the emphatic declaration that "every party in the House subscribed unreservedly to the desire that some day India would be a full-fledged dominion attached to the great commonwealth of British nations." No one in India will be deceived by the misleading statement made by Earl Winterton to the effect that the Secretary of State for India was not exercising excessive control over the Government of India. In point of fact it is the undue interference of Lord Peel's administration which, more than any other single cause, has converted the Indian politician's hope

into despair. We are told of another debate that is coming on. While we are not elated at the prospect of it, we however regard it as a sign of an increasing difference on the subject of India between the Labour Government and the Labour party. The growth of opinion friendly to Indian aspirations is an encouraging feature of the situation. What the chief Liberal politicians think we have no means of knowing. As if by common consent, they have remained silent on the Indian question. It may be that their judgments are not fully formed and to that extent the deputation which is on the eve of sailing for England may find the soil not unsuitable for its labours. We trust the appeal we made last week to ex-ministers has not fallen on deaf ears.

### MR. GANDHI AND NATIVE STATES.

THE sharp differences between Mahatma Gandhi and Swami Shradhdhananda, probably the two living Indian leaders with the greatest dynamic force in the matter of the uplift of the untouchables, will draw pointed attention to some points in the former's interview to the *Bombay Chronicle* on Vaikom Satyagraha which might otherwise have escaped public notice. The removal of untouchability is made by the Mahatma a vital constituent of non-co-operation, and this activity being conducted by the peculiarly non-co-operative method of Satyagraha in Travancore, the Vaikom movement was naturally regarded by the general public as one of the many moves which are eventually to hold the British Government in check. So widespread was the feeling that even the representative of the *Chronicle* could not understand the propriety of launching the non-co-operation campaign within the borders of an Indian State. "Does not the location of this Satyagraha in a Native State detract from its value?" this correspondent naively asked, and the Mahatma had to disclaim Vaikom Satyagraha as a part of non-co-operation. Non-co-operators have no political quarrel with Native States, and if they happen to make an effort in any of them for the banishment of untouchability, the Mahatma says in effect, it is not as a political movement but as a purely social and spiritual movement.

This is a perfectly cogent answer, but may not one ask, Why should the anti-untouchability movement be carried on even in British India as part of a political campaign? Does this evil owe its origin to British rule? Or is its continuance due even in part to the British Government? Is it not, on the contrary, the fact that the Indian *intelligentsia* is conscious of the evil and is keen to root it out because of British influences? Is not the British Government at the present moment one of the strongest factors on the side of the reformer and by no means an impediment in his way? These questions can be answered only in one way—viz., so as to exclude the idea of untouchability being a

count in the indictment against British rule. Why, then, should not our endeavours to raise the depressed classes be made independently of the non-co-operation movement even in British India? But, of course, a similar question can be asked of the whole gamut of the constructive programme. Why is the *khaddar* campaign part of non-co-operation, and indeed how can it rationally be part of it. We know of several stoutest opponents of the Government and adherents of the principle of non-co-operation who do not believe either in the economics of *Khaddar* or its political potentialities; on the contrary, we know of several men who are popularly regarded as friendly to Government, and who are critical of non-co-operation, who love *khaddar* and usually go about in it. Is it impossible to picture to one's mental eye a Viceroy bent upon ruthlessly repressing non-co-operation and yet promoting hand-spinning and other cottage industries and discouraging large-scale industries carried on by power?

These questions have been asked before, but Gandhiji has not vouchsafed any more convincing answer than a re-affirmation in a ten-fold more emphatic language that *Khaddar* is not only a part of non-co-operation, but the most vital part of it. The fact is that the whole constructive programme is part of a social movement with no reference to politics except in its indirect reaction thereon, and with a few minor variations was being presented by social reformers for decades past. Mahatma Gandhi himself preached it before launching upon non-co-operation (which in itself is a conclusive proof that the constructive programme is distinct from politics), but his preaching fell on deaf ears. When, however, he found that in politics he succeeded better, he evidently saw the expediency of tacking on items of a social movement, unpopular in themselves, to a surpassingly popular movement, so that by representing that the essentially social items were no less directed against the Government than the avowedly political ones, the former would catch on. If he reasoned in this wise, events have proved that he was right. The social programme is now in better favour with the people than it otherwise would have been, but has not right thinking any claims on us? Is it justifiable to put a thing in what after all amounts to a false light with a view to increasing its popularity? And is nothing to be debited from the expediency of this step because it deprives the movement of the active support of those who sympathise with the social but are opposed to the political movement?

Mahatma Gandhi shows in this interview that he shares with the average politician a misplaced tenderness for Indian States, a disposition to attribute the evils prevailing therein to the weakness of the Princes and their domination by the British Government, and an anxiety to exclude States from the sphere of one's political operations. This is certainly not a correct attitude to assume.

British rule may be Satanic, but no one can justly credit Native States with an angelic quality. The fact that even the bait of full Swaraj is not enough to tempt the people of the Berar back into the Nizam's parlour where they are so pressingly invited, makes it even arguable that the British Government, however wicked, is a trifle less so than most of the Native States. In that case there is not less but greater need for political agitation in Native States than in British India, and yet Mahatma Gandhi does not wish to introduce the "complication" of Native States in his political work. Surely he does not choose British India for his sphere of work and leave alone the Native States because in the former he will have to contend with foreigners, while in the latter with his own compatriots? This would be a spirit of racialism to which Mahatmajl is utterly foreign. But still does not his selection of one and avoidance of the other imply a subconscious racial bias which prompts him to ascribe the evident blemishes of Native State's administrations to their political subservience to the British Government? "A mere Resident or Political Agent is enough to frighten the Rajas and the Maharajas out of their political wits." It is so, but nothing can be further from the truth than the suggestion contained in it that if the Princes were independent of the British Government, they would be more considerate to their subjects. Nothing is more fatal to the growth of constitutional government in States than that the Indian Princes should be put in a position of doing what they pleased to their subjects.

In fact, the complaint at present of thoughtful people is that under cover of the non-intervention policy the British Government allows an altogether excessive amount of misrule in Native States, and the power which a mere Resident or Political Agent wields over Princes arises just from the fact the latter are guilty of gross injustice to the subjects, which makes it necessary for them to keep the powers above pleased. Surely what the subjects of Indian Princes want now is that the British Government should draw its reins tight over the States. Mahatma Gandhi says that the Travancore Durbar has intervened on behalf of orthodox people at Vaikom "purely in the interests of peace, fearing rightly or wrongly that the presence of Satyagrahis in these prohibited roads would result in a breach of the peace." That may be so, but why not show equal consideration to the British Government on those occasions on which it was evidently influenced "rightly or wrongly" by the desire to maintain peace? In the Gurdwaras affair the Government had, with all its desire to weight the scale in favour of the reformers, had to intervene in the interests of public peace when the reformers resorted to direct action. But at the time there was none to put on its action the charitable construction of which Mahatma Gandhi is willing to give the benefit to the Travancore Durbar. This again is presumably due to a sub-conscious racial bias,

and that one is able to detect it in Mahatma Gandhi makes one despair that in inter-racial affairs absolute justice is not to be expected and that the balance is surely to tilt towards persons of one's own race.

A JAIPURI.

#### LABOUR LEGISLATION IN INDIA.—I. THE INFLUENCE OF MANCHESTER.

IT is common knowledge that since the advent of the Textile industry in this country, which was marked by the opening of the first cotton mill in Bombay in 1863, the Lancashire millowners have watched its rapid progress with undisguised jealousy. And so long as it lay in their power to check that growth by any restrictive action on the part of the Government of India they never tired of bringing great and constant pressure to bear upon the successive Secretaries of State. The Indian cotton industry had two peculiar advantages over Lancashire. In the first place being nearer to the source of raw material they were not required to bear the transport charges on it; while their English competitors had not only to import cotton over long distances but had also to pay an import duty when their finished goods were sent back to the Indian market. A second comparative advantage of the Indian manufactures lay in the cheap and abundant supply of labour in this country. The economic transition that had just begun had thrown large numbers of men, women and children out of employment. From an industrial point of view this labour force was extremely inefficient, but taking advantage of its ignorance and weakness the employers could turn it into a commercial asset. In short, even allowing for the insufficiency of the Indian labourer it was still relatively cheap to employ him. The Manchester Chamber wanted to deprive their Indian competitors of this "undue" advantage as surely as of the protective effect of the import duty on cotton goods. A two-fold agitation was therefore taken up and continued unabated till the outbreak of the War. Their success in the direction of influencing the Tariff policy of this country is well known and has been the subject of severe criticism not only from independent critics in this country and in England, but also from high officers of the Government of India. The effort to deprive the Indian manufacturer of the advantages of cheap labour, by restricting with the help of law the employment of ignorant and necessitous workers of both sexes and of all ages was also attended by an equal success. And though the motives underlying their action have been criticised and resented by the employers in this country, still it cannot be denied that they have exercised a strong and ameliorative influence on the conditions of industrial labour in India.

The persistence and skill with which the Manchester Chamber carries on an agitation have already become proverbial. The public press

and platform, deputations and interviews, expert inquiries and authoritative reports all play their part in driving the movement and in keeping ever before the public eye the problem on which they have once set their heart. It would no doubt be very interesting to recount the action of Manchester in respect of the Tariff and Labour policy of the Government of India as a study in the art of public agitation. But for our purpose here it is sufficient to remark that no means were spared to produce an effect upon the action of the Indian Government. Persistent allegations publicly made in regard to the miserable condition of the workers in the Bombay mills led the Government of that province to appoint a committee to inquire as to the need of any legislative action. In keeping with the general economic policy of liberalism which then prevailed, the committee recommended against any legislative measure, and found general support for its action from the Government of India. In these circumstances the Lancashire magnates, feebly supported by the same Indian philanthropists, induced the British Parliament to pass a resolution requesting the Queen to take early action for the regulation of child and woman labour in India. Before this pressure, as before a similar one in regard to Tariff legislation, the Government of India had to yield. The Indian Factories Act of 1881, which fixed the age limits of children at 7 and 12, and their working hours at 9 per day, was a reluctant attempt to meet the wishes of the British manufacturers, whose victory was signalled the next year by the repeal of the import duties on cotton.

It only remained for them now to enlarge the scope of Indian labour legislation. To lend colour to their agitation they sent out an expert in 1882 who inspected the Bombay mills on the spot and made several suggestions to remedy the alleged evils. These suggestions were in the usual course examined by another committee appointed by the Government of Bombay which, however, recommended no action further than the raising of the age limits and the elaboration of inspecting and certifying machinery. Even these recommendations were turned down by the Government of India which itself was chafing at the domination of the Manchester millowners. But these latter knew their own strength and the weakness of the Government of India, and, as has been said above, they were past masters of the art of agitation. In 1887 they sent out another inspector to watch the conditions on the spot, and as can easily be expected his report was much more startling than that of his predecessor in 1882. The alleged inhuman treatment of the workers at Bombay appealed to the sensitive British public, which strongly supported the demand of Lancashire for its abolition. The report when presented to the Government of India by the Secretary of State was repudiated by the former. This only embittered the rivalry between the Manchester millowners and the Secretary of State on the one hand and the

Bombay millowners and the Government of India on the other. The Bombay employers in particular, though they admitted the need of some ameliorative action, heartily resented the selfish solicitude of their Manchester brethren, which was further expressed in 1888 when they went in a deputation to the Secretary of State and pleaded as usual for the extension of the British Factory Act to India. But the Government of India and the Secretary of State could not agree on the exact provisions, chiefly owing to the insistence of the latter on extra strictness. In the meanwhile the millowners at Bombay, as an earnest of their desire to take independent action, granted a weekly day of rest to their workers, and for the time the pressure from Manchester proved ineffective.

But good fortune was on the side of Lancashire, and came to it in the form of an international labour conference of West European nations held at Berlin in 1890. The chief recommendations of this conference were the raising of the minimum limit of childhood to 12 in Western Europe and 11 in Southern Europe, and the limiting of the work of women to 11 hours per day with an interval for rest of not less than one hour and a half. These resolutions served as one more instrument in the hands of the Manchester Chamber, which now began to declare that Great Britain, which had taken a prominent part in the conference, was in honour bound to see them enforced at home and in its dependencies. It is instructive to notice that these recommendations were never adopted in the United Kingdom itself. But the powerless Government in India was so far humiliated as to be called upon to present its proposals in this direction to the consideration of the Parliament. This course, being obviously unconstitutional, could not be forced upon the Government of India, which itself appointed a committee to recommend measures. The proposals of this committee were again considered to be inadequate by the Secretary of State and a long controversy carried on through despatches followed, which ultimately resulted in the passing of the Indian Factories Act of 1891.

This Act provided for the fencing of machinery and for sanitary arrangements such as free ventilation and adequate supply of drinking water. A mid-day stoppage of work and the weekly rest on Sunday were also included in this Act. But the most important provisions were those that related to the employment of children and women. The age limits of the former were fixed at 9 and 14, and they were not to be employed for more than seven hours or during the night. Women also were not to be employed at night, nor for more than 11 hours a day, with an interval of an hour and half. To ensure a satisfactory enforcement of these provisions, Inspectors of Factories and certifying surgeons were also appointed. These measures, though the representatives of Indian labour had done very little to bring them about, had a salutary

effect upon the condition of the factory-workers, and they were so far comprehensive that it seemed probable that Manchester would soon be satisfied. Unfortunately the passing of the Act of 1891 was followed by a series of currency difficulties and famines. These put a great strain on the finances of the Government, which had perforce to be allowed to reimpose the import duty on cotton goods and yarn, which was, however, to be accompanied by a countervailing excise duty. This incident, by the very bitter discussions that surrounded it, did much to widen the gulf between Manchester and Bombay. The cotton mills at Bombay, supported by the rock-foundation of comparative advantage, continued to hold their own and even showed signs of a steady development.

Then came the regime of Lord Curzon who by an instructive irony of history, awakened the first efforts of the people in this country for political and economic independence. A powerful section of the Indian intelligentsia then held that both these ends could be simultaneously and speedily attained by a general movement of Swadeshi attended by Boycott. The cotton industry of Bombay drew a very great impetus from this sudden increase in the demand for its wares. But the peculiar atmosphere of the times not only rekindled the dying embers of Lancashire agitation but even added to its flames by throwing the Anglo-Indian community on its side. Complaints were again made regarding the 'inhumanity' of the treatment meted out to the workers in the Bombay mills and Government was moved to appoint a committee in 1903 for inquiring into the allegations. In this agitation the philanthropists and labour men in this country were more in evidence than at any time before. The committee was extremely dissatisfied with the conditions, of factory employment, which on an average extended over 14 hours, and recommended a statutory limit of 12 hours per day for all adult males. But the Government of India thought it advisable to hold another inquiry by a Commission in 1907, which inspected the conditions in all factories besides the textile industry. The recommendations of this Commission, however, were opposed to any extension of legislative restrictions. But the pressure from British and Anglo-Indian quarters was irresistible and finally the Government had to undertake a comprehensive piece of legislation which was passed as Act XII of 1911. The chief feature of the Act was the restriction of male labour in textile mills to 12 hours a day and the reduction of permissible child labour to six hours. Besides these special clauses the Act extended its general provisions to all places of employment where work was carried on with mechanical power and where more than 50 persons were employed. The local Governments were also authorised to extend the operation of the Act to such places of employment where more than 20 persons were employed. This Act came into force from the 1st of January 1912 and seemed to satisfy all except the employers in this country.

D. G. KARVE

## REVIEWS.

**THE PROBLEM OF THE RUPEE.** By Dr. B. R. AMBEDKAR D. Sc. ( Lond. ), BOMBAY. Published by P. S. King & Son, Ltd., London. 1923. Pp. 309. Price 15 s.

THIS book deals with the Indian Currency Problem from its origin to date and suggests a solution. It consists of seven chapters of which the first two are devoted to the history of the Indian Currency from 1800 to 1893. This portion of the book is very interesting and helps to dispel the wrong popular idea that India was from the beginning a Silver standard country. The third chapter deals with "the silver standard and the evils of its instability." The next three chapters fully explain how from the beginning attempts were made by different bodies, including the Government of India, to have the Gold standard introduced, how they were thwarted by the British Treasury and how India came to light upon the "Gold Exchange Standard" and what were the requirements of the "Stability of the Exchange Standard". In the last chapter Dr. Ambedkar advises India to return to the Gold standard. The whole book is a good critique of the Government legislative policy in currency matters.

The author raises many important issues which should engage the attention of a student of Indian Finance and Currency. His two main points of attack are first the statement made by Prof. Keynes and repeated by the Chamberlain Commission, that the system of currency into which the Government of India drifted, has close affinities with other currency systems in some of the great European countries and elsewhere, and secondly that the Gold Exchange Standard fixed its eye on stabilizing the exchange but did not care for the purchasing power of the rupee on which depended the fixity of exchange. Writing about the first point Prof. Keynes says that the Gold Exchange Standard may be said to exist when gold does not circulate in a country to an appreciable extent, when the local currency is not necessarily redeemable in gold, but when the Government or Bank makes arrangements for the provision of foreign remittances in gold at a fixed maximum rate in terms of the local currency, the reserves necessary to provide these remittances being kept to a considerable extent abroad. In some of the European countries such as Germany and Austria, where the bank rate is not efficacious enough to regulate the outflow of gold, they keep, as additional source of protection, foreign credits and bills which can be drawn upon when necessary. Prof. Keynes thinks that there is likeness between the Government of India selling reverse councils and the European banks selling foreign bills. But Dr. Ambedkar shows by quoting Prof. Kemmerer that there is no analogy between the two, as selling reverse councils amounts to exportation of gold from India and selling foreign credits by European banks amounts to

importation of gold. Besides, Dr. Ambedkar points out that the present Indian system makes the nearest approach to the English system which prevailed in the bank suspension period (1797-1821) and is the opposite of the system outlined by the Government of India in 1898 and passed by the Fowler Committee. Prof. Keynes may reply that the Gold Exchange Standard merely carries somewhat further the currency arrangements which several European countries evolved during the 1st quarter of the 19th century. But this is no justification of the system, as he himself admits. Dr. Ambedkar's exposition deserves a considered reply from Prof. Keynes.

Now about the purchasing power of the rupee. The Chamberlain Commission recommended the Indian Currency System mainly on the ground that the system was capable of maintaining the exchange value of the rupee at a fixed rate with gold. What are the facts? Do they show that exchange value of the rupee was maintained? The rupee was below par in 1893 and did not reach its parity until 1900. After the interval of seven years the rupee again falls below par in 1904. The year 1917 witnesses another fall of the rupee. A meteoric rise since 1917, and again a fall after 1920. Why did the rupee fail to maintain its gold parity on these occasions? Dr. Ambedkar's explanation is that the rupee had lost its general purchasing power, and by giving facts and figures he proves that the fall in the gold value of the rupee is coincident with the general purchasing power of the rupee. The official explanation is that a fall in the gold value of the rupee is due to an adverse balance of trade. Such is also the view of Messrs. Keynes and Shiras. Dr. Ambedkar criticizes these supporters of exchange standard by saying that if the adverse balance of trade is caused by internal prices being higher than external prices, then it follows that the fall of exchange is nothing but the currency's fall in the purchasing power, which is the same thing as the rise of prices. Dr. Ambedkar also thinks that the rupee fell in purchasing power because of currency being issued in excess, and there is scarcely any doubt that there has been profuse issue of money in India since the closing of the mints in 1893.

In suggesting a remedy Dr. Ambedkar thinks that the mints should not only be closed to the public, as they have been hitherto, but also to the Government. He is of opinion that the Indian currency based on gold as legal tender with a rupee currency fixed in issue, will conform to the principles embodied in the English currency system.

If the present system is to be continued Dr. Ambedkar's suggestion is good and will remedy many of its defects. But it is based on the assumption that the West will be willing to allow gold to go to the East. Prof. Edwin Cannan who has written Foreword to the book seems to be of opinion that "a token rupee currency has been maintained in India not because Indians dislike gold, but because

Europeans like it so well that they can not bear to part with it." Prof. Cannan thinks that the saving in the shape of metallic currency effected by the exchange standard is a trifling amount almost infinitesimal beside the advantage of having a currency more difficult for administrators and legislators to tamper with. He emphasizes the point that the recent experience of the war shows that the simple gold standard is far nearer being fool-proof and knave-proof than the gold exchange standard. Besides he urges that there is so much of gold congestion in the West that prices will not fall for a long time, unless some gold is allowed to flow towards the East by the introduction of gold currency thereinto.

Dr. Ambedkar's book shows deep study and thorough grasp of the subject and although one may not agree with him in some of the conclusions here and there, there will, we think, be no one who will grudge him credit for originality. The language of the book is appropriate and we recommend it whole-heartedly to our readers. The only defect of the book is that its contents and index are meagre which defect, we hope, will be remedied in the next edition.

C. S. DOLK.

**BENGALI RELIGIOUS LYRICS, SAKTA.** By E. J. THOMPSON and A. M. SPENCER. The Heritage of India Series. Association Press, Calcutta. 7 x 4. Pp. 103.

During the period of adoption and adaptation by the Aryans in Ancient India, the portals of the Aryan Pantheon were flung open for admission of non-Aryan deities. Many a deity that receives worship of the Hindus to-day, including Durga and Kali, is supposed to be of non-Aryan origin. The fortunes of the deities are often linked with those of their devotees. Many of the deities of the vanquished Greeks became denizens of the Roman pantheon with a changed orthography.

The traditional conception of Kālī, a manifestation of Śakti or female energy, is that of a female of dark complexion with long dishevelled hair, having on her person nothing but a string of human heads round her neck and another of human hands round her waist and standing on the prostrate body of Siva whose consort she is. The Śaktas are the worshippers of Sakti or female energy and they worship it also in its gentler aspects of Durga or Uma.

How the worship of Durga and Kali has come to be so deeply rooted in Bengal is not very easy to explain. Mr. Thompson suggests that the people of Bengal in their extreme misery during the two centuries preceding the British rule, turned to these grim deities for relief. This, however, seems to be more plausible than convincing, for the melancholy temperament due to economic and social distress was not peculiar to Bengal, nor was the Sakta cult confined within the limits of Bengal.



The most famous writer of Sakta lyrics is Ramprasad Sen (1718-75). His songs are sung all over Bengal in a tune named after him. Most of his songs are of a plaintive nature and not a few of them have the breath of sepulchre about them. He draws his symbols from the most common objects of rural life. The village oil press, the ferry man with his boat, the prevalent system of land tenure, the dilapidated hut, the fallow land, each contributed to the homely vocabulary of Ramprasad. His simple faith debouched in lyrics that were essentially native, a growth of the soil. This explains the hold and the fascination of his lyrics among the people of Bengal. The peasants of Bengal sing out their grief in the plaintive lyrics of Ramprasad. Very often it is the hunger for food rather than for higher life that evokes their devotion to Kali and the eager solicitude for the other world is partly explained by the extreme physical misery of the rural population in the land of Zemindars and malaria.

The following are a few specimens taken from the present collection.

'Mother in my greed for sweets I have spent my whole day with wry, embittered lips. Mother you brought me down into the world, saying 'Let us play.' You have cheated me and in the game that you have played my hope has not found fulfilment. Ramprasad says: In the world-play what was to be has been. Now at eventide, taking your child in your bosom, go home.'

'I perish slaving like a brownie. My days pass in toil. As a blind man grips his stick that he lost and has found again, so would I fain clasp thee, elusive Mother; but in my evil deeds thou fleest from me.'

'Mind, thou dost not know to farm. Thy fields remain untilled; hadst thou sown, a golden harvest had waved. Now make of Kali's name a fence. Scatter now the seed thy teachers gave thee, and sprinkle it with the water of love.'

'Mother, how often will you drive me round and round the Wheel of Being, like a blindfolded ox that grinds the oil?

'Maheswari is my landlord, I am her own immediate tenant, never have my dues to her been left unpaid.'

The Agamani and Vijaya songs are of a different order. During the Durga Pôja, when Durga comes for three days to her parent's house, her welcome and farewell songs are known as Agamani and Vijaya. During the three days of the Pôja, Durga becomes a member of the Bangali Hindu household in a very real sense. When these songs are sung by professional singers, 'the eyes of many a child wife glisten behind her veil and the hearts of the mothers cry out for the daughters who have been taken away from them.' The human mothers and daughters share the sorrow of the divine mother and daughter.

The Sakta songs are a part of the mental furniture of the people of Bengal and along with the culture form an important portion of the social heritage. Even the Muhammadans sing and compose Sakta songs and there is one song by a Muhammadan in the present collection.

The translations are in prose, and if the subtle aroma of the original songs is not to be found in the English prose translation, it is because no translation however faithful can convey the whole of the original. The present translations are as close to the original as possible and not unfrequently lines are to be met with with a poetical swing which remind one of the original. The collection, as stated in the preface, is not exhaustive. The Bengali speaking people have reason to be grateful to Messrs. Thompson and Spencer for having made a beginning in this direction.

J. B. S.

## MISCELLANEA.

### THE FOURTH U. P. LIBERAL CONFERENCE. PRESIDENT'S SPEECH.

THE Conference met at Allahabad on the 18th inst. and following days. The following are extracts from the able presidential address of Mr. B. N. Srivastava:—

#### FURTHER REFORMS.

The defects have become so patent that a revision of the constitution in the interest not less of good government than of the people is urgently necessary. We must have full autonomy in the provinces and complete power of the purse. The control at present exercised by the Secretary of State must be removed and the central Government made responsible to the Legislative Assembly except as regards foreign affairs, relations with the Indian States, and defence for a specified period, with full responsible Self-Government and Dominion Status at the end of the term. There should be a statutory guarantee of fiscal autonomy including liberty of tariff arrangements and the power, despite the wishes of Whitehall, not to keep in London large sums, no, not a pice more than is necessary to meet the absolutely requisite charges. The proposal of such a statutory provision was pressed to a division by a minority of the Joint Parliamentary Committee. In the report of that Committee it has in case of agreement between the Legislature and the Government of India been left to the tender mercies of a convention expected to be observed in following a codified constitution in which it is not expressly enacted. I would not have a repetition of the experiment of Diarchy in the central Government but I would not mind the power of the purse granted to the central Legislature being made subject to a non-votable minimum which might be fixed for the departments excluded, for the time being, from the control of the Legislature. Educated India is practically unanimous in making these demands. There may be differences of opinion as regards matters of detail or the methods of proceeding in the matter, but there would hardly be a patriotic Indian who does not support the principle underlying the resolution moved by Mr. Rangachariar in the last session of the Legislative Assembly. The Government have shown a deplorable lack of imagination and statesmanship in adopting the attitude of opposition and hostility which they did in reply to the resolution.

#### GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTIONS ANALYSED.

Let me examine briefly the grounds of Government's opposition so cleverly and ably put forward by Sir Malcolm Hailey. First of all, he emphasised the distinction between Responsible Government and Dominion Self-Government and pointed out

hat in the August announcement as well as in the preamble of the Government of India Act they deliberately used the words Responsible Government as contradistinguished from Dominion Self-Government, though he admitted that the latter might be the logical outcome and the corollary of the other. I would wish to remind Sir Malcolm of the gracious message sent by his Imperial Majesty the King-Emperor through his Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught and which was delivered by the latter on the occasion of the inauguration of the First Legislative Assembly and the Council of State. In that message his Majesty said: "To-day we have the beginnings of Swaraj within my Empire and widest scope and ample opportunities for progress to the liberty which my other Dominions enjoy." Again clause 8 of the Instrument of Instruction to the Governor-General of India issued under the Royal Sign Manual on the 15th March, 1921, lays down: "For, above all things, it is Our Will and pleasure that the plans laid by Our Parliament for the progressive realisation of Responsible Government in British India as an integral part of Our Empire may come to fruition to the end that British India may attain its due place among Our Dominions. Therefore, We now charge Our said Governor-General to guide the course of our subjects in India whose governance We have committed to his charge so that, progress towards such realisation may ever advance to the benefit of all Our subjects in India." This message and this instruction show that while the keynote of the Government of India Act is Responsible Government the goal in view is Dominion Status. These instructions are binding as under Section 34 of the Government of India Act (consolidated) the Governor-General is appointed by His Majesty by warrant under the Royal Sign Manual and Lord Reading's appointment has been so made subject to His Majesty's instructions. It might as well be pointed out that under Section 1 of the same Act the territories for the time being vested in his Majesty in India are governed by and in the name of his Majesty the King-Emperor of India. It is satisfactory to note that Lord Olivier also in his statement in the House of Lords has admitted that the ultimate aim of his Majesty's Government is "the substitution of responsible Indian Dominion Government for the present transitional political constitution."

#### STATUTORY COMMISSION.

Continuing, Sir Malcolm Hailey said that the Act laid it down that progress must be by successive stages and that a Statutory Commission was to be appointed at the expiration of ten years after the passing of the Act, whereas it was now asked that these stages be dispensed with and a commission appointed forthwith. When the Report was under discussion in the House of Commons the Secretary of State, Mr. Montagu said: "I cannot reiterate too often that the basis of the whole policy is of a transitory nature. You want to go on to something else at the earliest possible moment." Again, when the Bill was finally passed the Secretary of State, speaking on behalf of the House of Commons, said: "We can say, as I should like to say, with the authority of the House, to the people of India: 'The future and the date upon which you realise the future goal of Self-Government are with you. You are being given great responsibility to-day, and opportunities of consultation and influence on other matters in which for the present we keep responsibility. You will find in Parliament every desire to help and complete the task which this Bill attempts, if you devote yourselves to use with wisdom, with self-restraint, with respect for minorities, the great opportunities with which Parliament are entrusting you.' All this shows clearly that the constitution provided by the Act is, and was intended to be, merely of a transitory character. The question as to whether the statutory Commission could or could not be sent out before the expiration of 10 years was clearly raised in the House of Commons and Mr. Montagu was asked, "Are you going to wait for ten years before any further step in Reforms would be thought of?" Mr. Montagu from his place as Secretary of State said in reply that the ten years was the maximum and on the expiration of ten years the Secretary of State was bound to issue a Commission but it did not prevent the issue

of a Commission within a shorter time and he pointed out that there might be circumstances in which a Commission might be issued in a shorter time. Sir Malcolm Hailey's immediate predecessor, Sir William Vincent, while opposing a resolution moved during the second session of the Legislative Assembly about provincial autonomy and the introduction of responsibility in the central Government, after making quotations from the Joint Committee Report said: 'I do not say for a moment that these decisions are like the law of the Medes and the Persians, or that they cannot be altered; nor do I personally believe that the present transitional scheme of this Government can last as is expected. I think we in the Government of India appreciate that as much as any one, indeed the Secretary of State dealing with this matter himself said: "If there is a remarkable and unforeseen development in Indian conditions in the short space of ten years—because ten years is a very short time—my hon. friend is quite wrong. The Act does not tie the hands of Parliament and there can always be a commission in the interval.'" This will show that while Sir William Vincent recognised that there was no legal bar to the appointment of a Commission before ten years, Sir Malcolm Hailey would now wish to go back on the admission of his predecessor. In any case there is nothing in the terms of Section 84 A of the Government of India Act (consolidated) to prevent the appointment of the Commission before ten years. It has also been said that sufficient time has not yet elapsed to enable the present constitution to be adequately tested. In this connection I may be permitted to quote one sentence from the Government communique published in December, 1922, regarding the Royal Commission on Superior Civil Services in India. It says: "It is contemplated that the Commission will be required, having regard to the necessity of maintaining a high standard of administration in conformity with the responsibilities of the Crown for the government of India and to the declared policy of Parliament in respect of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and having particular regard to the experience now gained of the operation of the system of government established by the Government of India Act." Thus it will be seen that while the experience gained by 1922 was considered sufficient to justify the appointment of the Public Services Commission the experience gained by 1924 is considered insufficient to justify the appointment of the Commission demanded by us!

Sir Malcolm Hailey next put forward the stock arguments based upon the opposition likely to be raised by the Indian Princes and upon minorities and the communal differences existing in the country. As regards the Indian Princes I have already said that I had no objection to excluding the subject of relation with Indian States from the control of the Legislature for a definite period during which a scheme of federation can, in collaboration with the enlightened Ruling Princes, be easily worked out. As regards the protection of the minorities, Sir Malcolm Hailey is aware that at the last Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress in 1916 a settlement was arrived at which holds good till now, and if necessary, it can be reconsidered by agreement of all concerned. With the growth of national consciousness in the country it is to be hoped that before long inter-communal strife would be a thing of the past. In any case, it cannot be denied that the inter-communal relations in the Indian States are very much better than those in British India. Britishers therefore have the least justification to set up this plea against us. It was next contended that the question of defence was an alarming consideration. It is indeed an irony that the British Government while it has so consistently ignored the country's demand for the Indianisation of the Army should set it up as a ground against us. However, this is also a matter in respect of which I have conceded that the Government might retain its control for the time being. Last of all, Sir Malcolm Hailey took his stand on the backwardness of the depressed classes and the illiteracy of the masses. Here also I should point out that the Government can claim no credit for having done anything for the uplift of the de-

pressed classes in respect of which a vigorous movement is at present going on in the country and is sure to bear good fruit before long. As regards the illiteracy of the masses, almost all the world over constitutional reforms have proceeded at the instance of the intelligentsia and the educated classes. Viscount Bryce in his "Modern Democracies" has said, "Nowhere have the masses shown a keen and abiding desire for political power." Though the illiteracy in the country is also a serious blot on the British administration, yet apart from that question, if the Reforms are made to await the spread of education amongst the masses, then I am afraid they must wait till the very crack of doom. When Mr. Gokhale pressed for the introduction on a moderate scale of compulsory and free elementary education the Government strenuously opposed him and defeated his scheme and now for the Government to urge the illiteracy of masses as a ground for staying further progress is really adding insult to injury. In any case, how does the continuance of the present constitution help the submerged classes and the illiterate masses more than would an indigenous government accountable to them?

#### THE OFFICIAL ENQUIRY.

The above brief analysis of the arguments advanced on the Government side should be sufficient to show the weakness of their case. The wooden attitude adopted by the Government is most unwise. I can hardly believe that the Government are ignorant of the extent and immensity of the feeling in the country as to the necessity for further Reforms. They were sadly mistaken if they thought that the Government offer of an enquiry into the defects of the working of the Act, even if coupled with the promise of an advance within the Act, would satisfy any section of the public. It only shows utter bankruptcy of statesmanship on the part of the Government. Unfortunately, I am afraid that the longer the delay the greater would be the difficulties in the future.

As regards the feasibility of advance within the Act by the use of the rule-making powers in the Statute, I do not deny that some progress is possible by this means. For instance, the excessive powers conceded under the rules to the Governors can be curtailed by suitable amendments thereof. Similarly it is possible to increase the number of transferred subjects as well as the powers of the Ministers. So in the central Government the Secretary of State can delegate to the Governor-General in Council most, if not all, of the powers of superintendence, direction and control, now vested in him. Let this and everything else that is possible under the Act be done by all means and as early as possible. I advocate this wholeheartedly. But I must not omit to say with equal clearness that the advance which it will be possible to make by such means, will fall very much short of true Responsible Government which the country demands and is determined to secure.

#### ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE Versus STATUTORY COMMISSION.

Lastly, as regards the means to be adopted, the Government seem to be intent upon an official enquiry, the Swarajists have pinned their faith to a round table conference, the members of the National Conference promoted by Mrs. Besant are for their scheme of National Convention, and the Liberals have been pressing for the Statutory Commission. I have already said that the Government proposal of an official enquiry does not appeal to any Indian and not to Englishmen either. The country has lost all faith in purely official inquiries. It may well be expected that the majority of the members of such a committee would be service men, most of whom have already shown a pronounced attitude of antipathy against the Reforms. The scope of the enquiry also being limited to the four corners of the Act, this alone is sufficient to explain and justify the opposition raised against it. Next, as regards the Swaraj party's insistence on a round table conference, it is easily explained by the fact that they are committed to it or to something like it by their election pledges. I may be pardoned to point out in passing that the round table con-

ference of which this party seems to be so much enamoured is very much worse than the conference which was rejected by Mahatma Gandhi himself in 1921. The amendment which was proposed by Pandit Motilal Nehru in the Legislative Assembly asking for a round table conference left its personnel and practically all its scope and functions in the hands of the Government. The only condition imposed was that it should be a representative conference to recommend, with due regard to the protection of the rights and interests of important minorities, the scheme of a constitution for India. Pandit Motilal must have extraordinary faith in the Government to expect any tangible results from such a conference. If the Government had accepted the amendment, the conference was most likely to be a medley of incongruous elements, on die-hards of the service, such representatives of the India States as the Maharajah of Alwar, and other 'johazur' representatives—whose race has not yet become extinct—of various minorities and other classes, with perhaps a Nehru or a Patel thrown in to add variety to the entertainment. Pandit Motilal in the course of the debate, speaking of the conference said that it "will give us an opportunity of explaining ourselves to you, an opportunity of explaining yourselves to us. I believe that nothing is more likely to restore the old relations, to obliterate the sad memories of the past, as the conference or convention that I propose." If this was the only purpose he had in view perhaps he could achieve it. But if he wanted a sound scheme of constitution the method suggested is ill-adapted for the purpose. A strong point in favour of the Statutory Commission is that it would be in consonance with the Government of India Act and its recommendations would carry greater weight with Parliament with which rests the decision. It may also be reasonably expected that the personnel of a Commission appointed by the Labour Government would include a strong representation of non-official Indian opinion in addition to that of the English Labour party and their sympathisers in Parliament and would no doubt be more satisfactory and acceptable. As regards the National Convention, no doubt if a true national convention could be assembled it best conforms to the principle of self-determination, and is likely to serve the useful purpose of putting into shape a unified scheme for presentation to a Commission when appointed, but I doubt if Parliament would be prepared to accept either a constitution drafted by the Convention or scheme worked out by a round table conference without an enquiry by a Commission as laid down in the Government of India Act of 1919. It seems to me therefore that the proposal for the Statutory Commission is really the soundest. It follows the line of least resistance, being in consonance with the Act, and would also prove most expeditious in the long run.

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