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Topics of the Week.

Withdraw the Bill.

COMMENTING on the Indian situation, the *New Statesman* of 8th February says, it believes that the Labour Party ought to fight the India Bill in the spirit of men who mean to deal with India on a very different footing when they get the chance. The Delhi discussions make it possible to withdraw the India Bill and to throw on Indians the responsibility to frame a constitution, as suggested by Mr. George Lansbury.

The paper suggests that there should be two stages in the constitution. Firstly the constitution of autonomous provinces. Then, without delay, there should be a combine of the self-governing Provinces to form an all-India Federation, the Princes joining such a Federation on the same terms as the autonomous provinces, namely a common charter of civil and political rights and a common electoral system. This will be possible by laying down that within a year after the formation of the autonomous Provinces the popular chambers in the Provinces should elect delegations to form the constituent assembly. In the interim period Indians should be free in debate and in association, unlike today when they are under repressive legislation.

If the Government does not adopt the plan, the *New Statesman* hopes that the Labour Government will arrive in time to carry some such programme before this fatal Federation is actually brought into being.

Communal Involvements of the Congress.

THE leader of the Congress party in the Assembly, in moving his resolution on the J. P. C. Report, made an appeal to his Hindu and Mahomedan

colleagues not to raise the communal issue on the essentially political question that was being considered. The appeal was quite proper and should have been heeded. The Congress itself did not bring up the question of the constituent assembly, nor did it present the reforms question in the controversial aspect of rejection. The Congress aimed at bringing about a united front, and was quite prepared to jettison some of its cargo in order to make it possible for all progressive parties to unite. Other parties should have followed suit.

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BUT they did not; they chose to raise the communal issue and provoked a controversy. The question, however, is what the Congress policy should have been when once the unpleasant issue was raised. One can understand the Congress adopting a neutral attitude in the sense that it would like to keep the question in the background. But does neutrality involve acceptance of a solution which the Congress considers wrong? The Congress members in the Assembly abstained from voting on the first part of Mr. Jinnah's resolution and thus helped pass it. This part of the resolution expresses acceptance of the communal award till an agreed solution is found. The Congress attitude has been that of neither accepting nor rejecting the award, but by the conduct of its deputies in the Assembly it has put itself in a position in which acceptance of the Award becomes its duty. Mr. Bhulabhai in his speech warned the members of communal parties against playing into the hands of their enemies. He disregarded his own warning and marched the Congress army into the enemy's camp.

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THE dilemma in which the Congress has placed itself is thus described by the *Bombay Sentinel* :—

"The dilemma that faces the Congress is not less intriguing (than the one facing Government). By risking a vote on their own demand for neutrality towards the communal award, the party invited defeat.

By remaining neutral when Mr. Jinnah's motion for acceptance of the award was put to the vote, they have allowed the approval of the Legislature to be registered by a substantial majority.

This produces an entirely new situation vis-a-vis the award. The logical conclusion is that Congress is bound now to abandon its attitude of neutrality and accept the award.

Is it prepared to do that? Had it considered the inevitable implications involved in its abstention from the division on Mr. Jinnah's motion for acceptance?

Having gone into the Assembly, Congress cannot follow the vicious example of the Government and ignore its mandate on an issue on which they did not care to vote.

Had the motion been carried against their own vote, the party could have reasonably continued their attitude

of neutrality. An Opposition party is always there to oppose, but when it deliberately stands aside on an issue of the first importance it cannot ignore the verdict.

To our mind the issue raised by the vote on the communal award should be the first to be taken into consideration and disposed of. Unless a genuine and earnest effort is now made to bring about an agreement between those who want to insist on keeping the award and those who are bitterly opposed to it, there can be no settlement of the major issue before the country and this secondary issue will remain as canker eating into the heart of the nation."

* * *

Younger and Older Congressmen.

MR. N. V. GADGIL of Poona, even in his maiden speech in the Assembly, found it necessary to condemn and to repudiate, in the name of the younger section of Congressmen, the whole ideology of the older section represented by its leader, Mr. Bhulabhai Desai. Mr. Desai, in all his fierce denunciation of the federal scheme, had no word of protest against, or regret at, the position proposed to be given in the federation to the rulers of the Indian States to the entire neglect of the rights and interests of their subjects. He just referred to the matter, but only to say that British India must acquiesce in whatever arrangements the rulers may offer.

* * *

IN his speech on the J. P. C. Report Mr. Bhulabhai Desai said :

"For very good reasons I do not propose to refer except perhaps just in passing to the part that the Indian Princes will share in the making of the Federation which is visualised in the constitution. It appears from the Press, it appears from whispers which often become very loud noises, that the Princes do not seem to be very much impressed (hear, hear) with the utility of this Federation. They say, irrespective of their own advantage or disadvantage, that British India does not seem to look upon them as convenient or adequate partners of such a nature that we can be clubbed together. They seem to think that there is a necessary inconsistency between an absolute monarchy or, in the Greek sense, despotism which they represent and the progressive state which British India must necessarily represent. However, we leave them to their judgments. It is not for us to dictate to them as others may. All we can do is to show them the line."

* * *

MR. GADGIL, like all other younger Congressmen, neither sees any good reason for reticence on the question of what the Princes should surrender in the interest of a democratic federation, nor is he prepared to allow the last word to the Princes in this matter as Mr. Bhulabhai is. Like Mr. Lansbury Mr. Gadgil feels that the effect of bringing about a federation on the Princes' own terms would be "to place on autocracy a facade of democracy", to use Mr. Lansbury's phrase. Mr. Gadgil has no use for a facade; he wants democracy itself, and he is not therefore content, like Mr. Bhulabhai, to reject the constitution merely on the ground that the British Government does not accede to British India's demands but also on the ground that the Princes do not accede to them. He wants not merely to wrest power from the hands of the foreigner, but to make the Princes adopt democratic practices at least in so far as the federal sphere is concerned.

* * *

British Indians Migrate to the States !!

MR. DAVIDSON, the Chairman of the States Inquiry Committee, very hotly repudiated, in his speech

in the Commons debate, the charge brought against the British Government that federation was being ushered into existence in order to overload the Indian constitution with conservative and reactionary elements in the shape of the Princes' nominees. In trying to defend the British Government from this charge of following Machiavellian practices, Mr. Davidson overshot the mark. He claimed not only that the States as a whole were not politically backward, but that they were even more advanced than British Indian provinces, and that, at any rate, their subjects were happier and more contented under indigenous rule than British Indians were under foreign rule. As concrete evidence of this fact, he said he had found that British Indians were ever ready to migrate to the Indian States territory, but Indian States' people were never willing to migrate to British Indian provinces !!

* * *

THE Chairman of the Indian States Inquiry Committee made a discovery in India which no Indian or any other Englishman has ever made before. British Indians migrating to States and States' people staying contentedly where they are ! It only shows how utterly unfounded and prejudiced the whole inquiry must be over which he presided. Why is all this pother then about the re-transfer of the people of Berar from foreign to native rule? Can Mr. Davidson explain it? And what does he say to a fact which in Poona the other day the President of a Conference of a small State in this part of the country, viz. Bhor, brought to the notice of the public?

* * *

IT would appear that the Government of Bombay had definitely promised to hand over to the Bhor Durbar certain villages in the Presidency in recompense for the area which it had acquired from the Durbar for the construction of the Lloyd Dam, which is the longest dam in the world. In order that the compensation should be full, it was necessary not only that the Bhor Durbar should derive as much revenue from the British Indian villages to be surrendered to it as it used to do from its own villages before, but that it should wield over these villages all the powers, civil and criminal, as it wielded over its own. The Bombay Government had promised to satisfy the Bhor Durbar in both these respects and it had fully intended to transfer to the Durbar civil and criminal jurisdiction over the villages as well as the revenue that was being collected in them. But it was unable to carry out its promise. It could only surrender the villages with inam rights, but civil and criminal jurisdiction it had to retain in its own hands.

* * *

WHY? Because the people in the villages in question refused to exchange their allegiance to the British Government for an allegiance to the Chief of Bhor. The people in these villages are as great votaries of swaraj as those in the rest of India, and yet when they were implored to go under a swaraj government, they preferred, obstinately and very unpatriotically, to remain under *feringhee* rule! And it should be remembered that Bhor is among the well-administered States in India. The people have certainly more independence in this State than in States like Hyderabad, Patiala, Kashmir and Bikaner. Mr. Davidson would certainly put it among the most progressive States. If such a State cannot attract the loyalty of British Indians groaning as they are under a foreign bureaucracy, what is to be said of the other States? Can Mr. Davidson, on the other hand, point to an instance where the States'

people had a chance to go under British rule and did not avidly take it?

TO superficial observers this may all appear topsy-turvy. But it is not. Racial distinctions are fast disappearing from politics as they are disappearing from social life, and what British Indians want is not a brown autocracy in the place of a white bureaucracy, but a popular government, no matter of what colour. The federation as planned is in fact a proposal to turn over the British Indian people to autocracies, themselves working, however, under foreign overlordship. It is like putting Africa under the "indirect rule" of the native chiefs. British control over India would hereafter be mediate instead of immediate.

Red Shirts Ban.

WHEN on the withdrawal of the campaign of civil disobedience last year the Government lifted the ban on Congress organisations, it was specially retained in the case of the Red Shirts organisation in the Frontier province. The violent nature of the activities of Red Shirts was given as the reason for this discrimination to their disadvantage. All the protests which the action drew from the public proved unavailing, the Government making no further attempt to justify the retention of the ban against the Red Shirts.

WITH the return of Congressmen to the Assembly in large numbers, the question was bound to be raised there. In this respect public expectation has not been disappointed. It was expected that the occasion would be seized by Government to confound their opponents with a long catalogue of the Red Shirts' violent misdeeds. As a matter of fact only two or three acts were alleged against them, an allegation which was hotly contested by Congressmen.

IF that is all that the Government have to urge in support of their action, it must be said that their case is based on very weak foundations. As pointed out by Mr. Jinnah, in a huge organisation like the Red Shirts' a few lapses from the general policy of nonviolence are unavoidable. But to fasten upon them as a justification for the continuance of the official ban on it is hardly just or statesmanlike. The Red Shirts are a part of the Congress organisation which is wedded to non-violence. When it was considered safe to regard Congress as a lawful body, there was no reason to treat the Red Shirts organisation less favourably. To do so is needlessly to alienate public opinion which, as the success of the recent adjournment motion in the Assembly showed, regards the Government action as utterly unwarranted. Will not the Government profit by the result of the debate?

"Blatant Self-Interest" !!

HOW clear-sighted is the *Times of India* upon foreign affairs! The Congress of the United States passed an Act conferring independence upon the Philippine Islands. This law, our contemporary is clear, was not born of any generous impulse towards raising the position of a politically backward people. Foreigners are quite foreign to such an impulse. It is only the British who are inspired by the unselfish thought of giving freedom to subject peoples. The *Times* says: "Congressional haste in the offering of the gift (of independence) was merely due to blatant

self-interest. (Where this was concerned,) it did not matter what other great issues were involved. The Philippines had to get independence quickly for the sake of trade interests."

YES, but is it not better for the United States to give freedom to the Filipinos for the sake of American trade interests than for Great Britain to keep Indians out of their freedom for the sake of British trade interests? How we wish the British Parliament would desire to give independence to India in order to safeguard the true interests of the British commercial classes! And is not Britain supporting the preposterous demands of the Princes, knowing well that all such demands are at bottom in the British interests? If self-interest is the common motive of both England and America, it impels America to do the noble thing and England to do an immoral thing.

AND even when independence, selfishly offered by America was refused by the Filipinos, it was withdrawn and a search is being earnestly made to find out a substitute which would be to their liking. England however draws up in her self-interest a hateful constitution and forces it down the throats of Indians! If unselfishness makes her do so, we wish she were a little less unselfish.

Ambernath Strike.

MR. PARULEKAR'S article appearing in another column in this issue gives the reader relevant information about the causes of the Ambernath strike. The strike has been in progress for more than three weeks but does not even yet promise to end soon. Since Mr. Parulekar's article was written, the strike situation, instead of improving as might have been generally expected, has unfortunately taken a turn for the worse. For this no blame can indeed be laid at the door of the strikers. They for their part have not departed in the least from their peaceful methods of agitation for ventilating their grievances and have studiously refrained from action which might even seemingly necessitate official intervention.

THIS however seems to have been sought by the employers who are naturally in a hurry to see the strike concluded, not by any means by a sympathetic consideration of the strikers' principal demand for the restoration of the wage-cut, but by coercive methods. The result has been the issue of magisterial orders prohibiting strikers' meetings not only at Ambernath but within a radius of two miles of it. Nor does the prohibition stop here. It also extends to the distribution of handbills dealing with the strike situation in the Ambernath area. Whether the strike collapses as a result of this comprehensive action by the overzealous magistrate remains to be seen.

BUT how can this action be reconciled to the local Government's policy of "keeping the ring clear" for the contestants in industrial disputes? No violence can be and is in fact alleged against the strikers even by their worst enemies nor was there any reason to apprehend any breach of the peace by them. Under these circumstances it is difficult to find any justification for the issue of such arbitrary and despotic orders placing undeserved restrictions on the strikers' liberty to draw public attention to their grievances.

THE FEDERAL APPLE-CART UPSET.

THE Assembly alone, among all the representative bodies existing in the country, could speak for the nation on the question of constitutional reforms, and it has spoken in no uncertain voice. The Congress and the Liberal Federation or the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha represent only sections of opinion, and though these bodies have voiced the same opinion as that so overwhelmingly endorsed by the Assembly, it could be said that they represent each a fragment of the country. The same criticism could be urged against the provincial Councils, though they too have but echoed the Assembly's verdict. Besides, these bodies were elected at a time when the constitutional issue had not crystallised and when the constituencies could not be consulted thereon. The Council of State, which it is quite likely will speak with a different voice, will suffer from this handicap. In so far as its view differs from that of the Assembly, it must be discounted, as the Council of State has had no opportunity of receiving the country's mandate on the question. The Assembly elections have taken place recently; they have taken place on this one question; and if the representatives so elected, and belonging to various communities and attached to various interests, vote by a decisive majority against the reforms scheme, that vote must be taken as the considered opinion of the whole country. The vote was recorded, besides, after a declaration that the pledge of dominion status, though not to be incorporated in the Act, stands.

It was expected that the official members of the Assembly would be ordered to abstain from voting, as the official members of all the provincial legislatures were ordered. On a question on which merely public opinion is to be gauged, it is obvious that officials must not vote. But in the Assembly they were under orders to vote against the unofficial members' amendments to the official resolution. Though this procedure is highly objectionable, it is well in a sense that the official *bloc* was used and sustained a crushing defeat. Mr. Jinnah's resolution on the reforms was adopted by 74 votes to 58; but of the 58 dissentients as many as 26 were officials and 11 nominated non-officials, and only 21 elected non-officials. Even among these elected members 8 were Europeans, 3 representatives of landlords, and most of the others were extreme communalists among Mahomedans. The only Indian members belonging to the advanced group of politicians who cast their votes against Mr. Jinnah's hostile resolution were two: Sir Cowasji Jehangir and Mr. Mody. A clearer expression of opinion could not be imagined. Since the Government of India used all its resources to turn down Mr. Jinnah's resolution, one would think that it would be willing to abide by the resolution passed by a large majority. What otherwise could be the object of the Government of India in making officials vote against it whereas the provincial Governments left the voting to non-officials? If a resolution condemnatory of the reforms is to be thrown to the winds, whether passed by 10 to 1 or 10 to 9 votes, it would be entirely unmeaning for Government to diminish the thump-

ing non-official majority somewhat by the use of official votes. But, as we have said, it is just as well that the Government put forth all its strength and yet were heavily defeated.

What is the precise import of the resolution carried? It is variously interpreted. Anglo-Indian papers take comfort in the fact that a resolution of total rejection sponsored by the Congress was lost in favour of Mr. Jinnah's resolution, which recommended summary rejection of the federal scheme but somewhat less hostile treatment of the provincial part of the reforms. Mr. Jinnah himself would apparently put this interpretation upon his resolution, but the Government spokesmen, in their speeches, refused to look upon the resolution as any less destructive of the official scheme than the Congress resolution. Mr. Jinnah's resolution that was eventually adopted pronounced the federal scheme to be "fundamentally bad and entirely unacceptable to the people of British India" and recommended the entire withdrawal of it and substitution for it of another scheme concerning British India alone. The Home Member and the Law Member both declared that as an all-India federation was of the essence of the Government's scheme, any proposal to scrap federation amounted to a proposal for nothing less than flat rejection of the whole scheme. They said in effect: "The British Government would never agree to divide the whole scheme into parts, drop the most vital part and proceed to give effect to that which is not so vital. If federation goes, everything goes with it." Whoever adopts this interpretation of Mr. Jinnah's resolution must refrain from indulging in cheap jibes that the Indian people desire at heart to save the reforms scheme, however loudly they may speak of rejection. If the other interpretation is adopted, what the Government ought to do is to improve the provincial part of the scheme, lay aside the federal plan and to consult Indian opinion as to how best to establish responsible government in British India. The Government is welcome to adopt whichever of these two interpretations suits it. Let it withdraw either the whole Bill or only the federation part of it. But if it has any regard for public opinion, it cannot go on with federation, or rather with the particular scheme of federation that it has placed before the country.

Indeed, there is good ground for discriminating between the provincial and federal parts of the official scheme. Although both parts are unsatisfactory and disappointing in the extreme, it would still be wrong to put them on the same footing. In the provincial part it would be possible to mention improvements which, if introduced, would make it quite well worth considering, and Mr. Jinnah's resolution therefore mentions a few of these improvements: abolition of second chambers, extraordinary and special powers of the Governors, restrictions in regard to police rules, etc. But the federal part of the scheme is "fundamentally bad and totally unacceptable". No improvements can be suggested in regard to it in the present circumstances, when the Princes

have been encouraged to form exceedingly inflated ideas of their rights of sovereignty, and all that can be done immediately is to halt the proposed all-India federation. Mr. Jinnah's resolution calls upon the Government to adopt this course. They have declared in the White Paper that "if causes beyond their control should place obstacles in the way of this programme (of bringing federation into being), they will take steps to review the whole position in consultation with Indian opinion." Federation being impossible on account of the opposition of the Indian people, time has now come for the whole question to be considered afresh. This is Mr. Jinnah's suggestion. It is no use saying that British India accepted federation, that even Mahatma Gandhi accepted it, and that it was now too late for the Assembly to oppose it. The fact is that Mahatma Gandhi and others only accepted the principle of federation, but their commitment to it extended only so far that they were willing to consider details of it in order to see how it would shape in private conferences. They did consider the details and have found that if they had to agree to the Princes' demands, it would be a monstrosity which it would be quite unthinkable for them to accept.

Let the Government on the other hand take the resolution passed by the Assembly to be a resolution for wholesale rejection of the scheme. In that case the Assembly's immediate demand would be that the Government withdraw the entire scheme and go on with the present constitution. The least that the Government could do in this case in deference to public opinion is to desist from imposing by force upon the country a constitution which it has declared runs wholly counter to its wishes. Their duty is only negative, but it is imperative. If a federal union cannot be terminated, however unhappy it may prove in actual working, then it is surely necessary, in the name of commonsense, at least to see that the union is truly voluntary on both sides. It will not at all be voluntary in this particular case on the side of British India. Do the Government then propose to force a union on those who think that they would be ill-mated and then compel them to remain in wedlock for all their lives, denying them divorce at any period in future? This would be the worst scandal ever perpetrated in the whole course of history. On the other hand, look at what is happening in the Philippines just at this moment. A constitution, and an advanced constitution too, was framed for the islands and even passed by the U. S. Congress. But it was stipulated, even while passing the constitution, that it would be brought into operation only when the Philippines legislature approved it. The Philippines legislature disapproved it, and it was immediately put on the shelf. Now another constitution has been formulated after six months' strenuous labour by a convention specially formed for the purpose. This will be considered by the U. S. Congress but will not be enforced till a plebiscite of the Filipinos is taken on it and the plebiscite results in a favourable verdict thereon. The constitution will not be interminable and unamendable as in this

country, and yet such precautions are taken to see that it wins popular support in the Philippines. In India, however, the Legislative Assembly elected on this specific issue turns down federation by a large majority. It imposes no further obligation upon the Government than to stay where they are. Still they insist upon saddling the country with a constitution which they warn in advance can never be repealed in future!

Even if the British Government, contrary to their traditions, are bent upon practising such naked coercion in a matter of fundamental importance, the Indian Princes can yet save the situation by refusing to be parties to this tyranny. It need not be supposed that they will thereby lay themselves open to a charge of breach of faith. They can declare that, in so far as they themselves are concerned, they are eager now as they were before to enter the federation, but as British India is decidedly opposed to it, they cannot consent to a forced federation. They will wait till British India changes its opinion. The onus of bringing the negotiations to an abortive conclusion will clearly lie upon British India, and British India has no desire to throw it on to the States. The Princes will be wholly absolved from blame. In the House of Commons it was openly charged that the Princes were being coerced into a federation by the Viceroy and other agents of the British Government. This charge may not be true; but hereafter the Princes stand in imminent danger of being coerced. The British Government are greatly chagrined at British India's emphatic rejection of federation; they would desire to impose it upon British India if only to spite it. If at such a time the Princes show any conscientious scruples against entering into an imposed federation, the British Government would be deeply annoyed and mortified. The Princes are not easily intimidated, but it remains to be seen whether they are possessed of courage enough to stand up to the British Government in such a mood. One can only hope that they have the courage of this high order. They have often said that they wish to come into the federation, partly at any rate to make it possible for British India to obtain central responsibility. They may or may not be able to help British India acquire self-government. But they certainly have it in their power to rescue it from the sheerest form of coercion which threatens it. May they be given the wisdom and the high heart which the occasion demands!

We are certain that even the extreme federalists among British Indians will not now desire, in face of the Assembly resolution, to have federation forced into being without a full opportunity being given to the people to reflect further and form a favourable judgment on it. It was wrong in a coterie of people to recommend with such assurance as they displayed a federal scheme so full of anomalies and so full of difficulties. Now they discover that what they recommended with such ardour is unceremoniously discarded by the public at large. They ought to have kept this contingency in view from the start. But they did not, and they did a grievous wrong to

the people. Now they find that they reckoned without the host, they will, we make no doubt, cheerfully agree to wait till public opinion swings over to their point of view. They made up their mind from the beginning that the Princes would not agree to better terms than those that had been offered. For such assumption there is little ground. We have more faith in the reasonableness of the Princes than they. The Princes put their demands at the highest at the commencement of the negotiations as every one engaged in such negotiations does. If the other party does not put its point of view before them as forcibly as they themselves did, it was not to be expected that they would gratuitously lower their own demands. But now that they know that British India does not agree to their demands, they will be anxious to accommodate British India. Sir Samuel Hoare says that if this opportunity of establishing a federation is allowed to slip, it will never recur. He says so because he wants British India to accept the Princes' maximum demands. That way lies the self-interest of the British Government. He desires, as we have said before, to establish an *alibi* for the conservative elements with which he wants to load the Indian constitution. But if the federal scheme now placed before the country is withdrawn, a better sort of federation can come into

existence some time hence, for we are certain that the Princes will be prepared to scale down their own demands and adjust them to popular wishes. But even if that did not happen, there would be nothing to militate against central responsibility being obtained for British India. We can never agree to the doctrine that central responsibility is bound up with federation. To all such theories the British Government itself would give the go-by if it finds that federation is not possible. Even the present Conservative Ministry will do so. We need not wait for the Labour Party to come into power, and nobody in India is pinning his faith to that event. The existence of a large majority of popular representatives in the Assembly in a position of power divorced from responsibility will be to the Britishers, even of tory persuasion, a standing argument of great potency for the conferment of central responsibility. All constitutional theories will undergo a suitable change in the presence of this inexorable fact. It is surprising how elastic constitutional theories really are. Let no fear be entertained in the breast of any timorous soul that all would be lost with the loss of the Hoare constitution. All would in fact be put in the way of being gained if the Hoare constitution is first thrown on to the scrap-heap.

USE OF THE JACKBOOT.

SWIFT on the heels of the Assembly resolution condemning the Indo-British Trade Agreement and calling for its immediate termination comes the news that the Secretary of State has decided to ignore the opinion of the Assembly and to bring the Agreement into operation as if Indians were in favour of it. We have discussed the Agreement on its merits and do not wish to repeat what we have said before. It may be, as is contended, that the Agreement merely codifies tariff principles which India in her own interests has already adopted in her fiscal policy; that if the Indian Government is now required, under the Agreement, to impose lower duties on cotton piecegoods imported from Great Britain, it would only be doing what India's national interests clearly dictate; that in this matter there is such a clear community of interest between Lancashire and India that, merely by making a friendly gesture, India can win British good-will both in political and economic spheres without making any special concessions to Great Britain. Let us grant all this for the sake of argument. But the question of Trade Agreement is transformed by the Assembly's resolution from an economic into a political problem. The question now is not, what the right economic policy is for India, but whether the Secretary of State should or should not, in such a matter, defer to Indian opinion, irrespective of the merits of that opinion; and the Secretary of State has shown by his decision that he has no regard whatever for Indian opinion expressed through proper constitutional channels.

This decision also exposes the real character of the Ottawa Pact. It is in operation, not because India wants to join an imperial preference scheme, but because our British masters wish it so. What is the value of the consent given by Indian representatives to the Pact if behind the consent stands the overriding will of the Secretary of State who says: Whatever you do, there shall be a Pact and India shall be a party to it. In the Supplementary Agreement recently entered into, no additional concrete concession to Lancashire is proposed in the form of a lower import duty; it merely crystallises the existing practice. What harm, one wonders, would then have come to Lancashire if the Agreement had been terminated in response to Indian opinion? The *Statesman* very rightly says: "If the Government were to decide that, in view of the Assembly's vote, the Agreement must now lapse, the immediate natural result will be nil. Things will go on exactly as they are." Where, then, was the need of demonstrating to the Assembly that it has no power to order its own fiscal policy, that it must submit to the dictation of higher authority? The Government of India itself intended the Agreement to be no more than an expression of good-will towards Great Britain, and it also thought that it would help "to relegate the safeguards," as Sir Joseph Bore said, "to regions where they will be unused." On the contrary, what has happened has only served to bring home to the Assembly how utterly impotent it is even to take a decision which *ex hypothesi* does not adversely affect Lancashire; and it has already destroyed India's

good-will. The *Statesman* correctly observes: "The damage done is in the realm of good-will, and that damage has been done by the Assembly's vote, whether the Government now says the Agreement is on or calls it off. In our opinion it is better to admit the damage and not to dwell in the atmosphere of self-deception." Whatever damage has been wrought by the Assembly's vote will be increased hundredfold by the Secretary of State's imposition of the Agreement upon India. Definite ill-will will now take the place of the good-will that was sought to be created.

The State Council of Ceylon is exercised over a similar problem as that which was considered by the Assembly. In August last the Colonial Secretary imposed a quota system upon Ceylon whereby the imports of cotton and rayon goods from Japan were restricted in the interest of Lancashire in spite of the unanimous protest of the Board of Ministers and the State Council. Ever since then this is an open sore with the Ceylonese people, and the State Council on the 1st inst. unanimously passed a resolution in the following words:—

"This Council is of opinion that, in view of the grave hardships and serious economic loss sustained by the people of this Island, the Secretary of State for the Colonies should be asked to withdraw the operation in Ceylon of the quota system against foreign textiles."

Ceylon too was supposed to enjoy fiscal independence as India is supposed to enjoy, for although under the Ceylonese constitution the Colonial Secretary has as it were concurrent jurisdiction with the State Council, by which he can issue Orders-in-Council overriding the Colony's legislature, still such Orders-in-Council were to be limited to matters "affecting the peace, order and good government" of the Island; and as the fiscal policy sought to be imposed upon Ceylon could not be alleged even by the Secretary of State to be in the interest either of peace, order, or good government, the people of Ceylon fondly believed that they could manage their fiscal affairs as they liked. A rude shock was given to them last year by the infliction of the quota system upon the Colony. Even Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister could not assert that the quotas were being imposed in the interest of Ceylon. All that he could say was that "a concerted imperial programme" for stemming the tide of Japanese competition was required and that Ceylon must submit to imperial policy, whatever her own national interests might demand. He said: "This programme forms part of a broad imperial policy of promoting the economic unity of the British Empire," and Ceylon, forming part of the Empire, cannot stand aloof. Europeans in Ceylon are at one with Ceylonese in protesting against this high-handedness, which inflicts great injury upon about two-thirds of the people whose clothing has been made dearer by about one-third. Only the officials supported the quota system, and they too under orders from the Home Government. The Financial Secretary, who is of course a European, laid down the law for the Ceylonese. He said, "The obvious issue is that the Empire should hang together as a unit and should make itself self-supporting and maintain

its standard of living." That is to say, the people of Ceylon must consent to be half-clad in order that Lancashire may keep its high standard of living! The Financial Secretary did not scruple to remark that in refusing to make this sacrifice for Lancashire the people of Ceylon, noted for their hospitality, were acting in a mean spirit and also laying themselves open to the suspicion that they were disloyal!!!

India and Ceylon sail together in this matter: neither has a vestige of fiscal autonomy. And what has happened in Ceylon will happen in India. "We must boycott British cloth," say the Ceylonese, and so will Indians. A member of the State Council in Ceylon, in recommending boycott at all costs, declared: "I say in this matter success or failure is not the true criterion. Human endeavour is much more important. I say that it is feasible, that it can be done. I say that even if it is doomed, even if it is a complete failure, to make every endeavour to introduce a boycott of Lancashire cloth and of such British goods as we can afford is fully worth while." Similar counsels will be urged in India and they will prevail if the Secretary of State, Sir Samuel Hoare, decides, as he has done, upon using the jackboot, as his brother Secretary did in Ceylon. Sensible people in England realise how ruinous such a course would be to their own interests. They are incredulous of the good effect of the Agreement even if it were India's free-will gift. A correspondent, writing from London to the *Times of India*, says: The Agreement entirely ignores the fundamental economic factor on which it was based. "That factor was that, if Lancashire expected to sell more cotton goods in India, it could do so only by buying very much larger quantities of Indian cotton, thus helping to create the additional purchasing power of which it seeks to take advantage." The Chairman of the Lancashire Cotton Corporation, Mr. Orr, said the other day at the annual meeting: "Nothing will help the negotiators of commercial agreements with India so much as an increased consumption of her cotton by Lancashire." This aspect of the question, however, is being ignored, and a so-called Agreement foisted upon India. The *Times'* correspondent deplures it. "A guaranteed consumption by Lancashire of a specified quantity of Indian cotton," he says, "would have helped to narrow the gap (between the prices of raw and manufactured cotton, which is 50 per cent.), but that scheme was turned down in favour of the more nebulous, less helpful and more controversial programme embodied in the new Trade Agreement." That was the real road to good-will and amity; the Government have chosen the way which leads to the creation of ill-will and rancour.

THE AMBERNATH STRIKE.

THREE weeks have elapsed since the workers of the Western India Match Factory at Ambernath went on strikes. The workers are still holding out in spite of many and serious disadvantages under which

they have been forced to fight for their bread. It will be readily conceded that a strike means to the workers privations and misery in a most acute form, but to the employer it might only mean a little loss which need not even remotely affect his routine. The workers, therefore, are prone to snatch at the earliest opportunity to settle the strike and will never be disposed to prolong it a moment longer than is absolutely necessary. The employers, on the other hand, are interested in prolonging the strike, since surrender on the part of the workers means more profits.

The Ambernath Match Factory Management have very shrewdly shown their willingness to concede all the minor demands but insist that the workers should resume work before they can discuss the question of wage-cut which mainly compelled the workers to resort to strike. It is a matter of common knowledge that it is only when the workers go on strike that they can give free expression to all the innumerable hardships and grievances about which they dare not complain for fear of losing their jobs while working. The attitude of the management is to be judged by what they have conceded and not by the consideration of the *number* of demands that they are prepared to concede.

The management are not prepared even to consider, before the workers resume work, the essential and vital demand of restoration of the wage-cuts, which are anywhere between 3 to 63%.

When the profits in the match manufacturing industry were grievously affected by the world trade depression, the management had persuaded the workers to agree to get their burden transferred to their shoulders by accepting a wage-cut of 10 per cent., on the plea that it will enable them to tide over the most difficult days of trade depression. The workers were then assured that the cut would be only a temporary one. But, instead of the cut being restored as soon as trade depression had passed away, the workers were painfully surprised to find that the management transformed it into a permanent one.

The imposition of the excise duty on matches served them as an excuse to satisfy their long-cherished desire of making the cut permanent. The management wanted the workers to believe credulously that the cut of 10 per cent. which was enough to save the industry from wreckage in the worst period of trade depression was equally indispensable even when normal times had returned. Even the management would not maintain seriously that the rate of profit in the industry has been affected by the excise duty. The burden of the excise duty was transferred to the shoulders of the consumers no sooner than it was imposed on the industry. The 10 per cent. cut failed to satisfy the insatiable desire of the management to lower the standard of earnings of the workers. The imposition of the excise duty created a temporary deadlock in the industry. The factories remained closed by way of demonstration against the excise duty for several months. The workers were turned out of employment and starved.

When the factories were reopened the management could not resist the temptation of taking the utmost advantage of the pitiable situation owing to which the workers were at their mercy. They dictated their terms. The workers had no other alternative but to submit in order to save themselves and their families from annihilation. The management agreed to re-engage workers only on a scale of wages which was very much lower than the rates inclusive of the 10 per cent. cut

The management have resorted to all possible measures of increasing the sweating of labour. They have reduced piece rates. They have resorted to speed-up which has resulted in intensifying labour. They have rationalised. The wages of the workers whose average daily earnings while working on one machine were Re. 1-14-0 have been reduced to Re. 1-7-0 while they work on two machines. The number of workers whose earnings have not been reduced forms a negligible portion of a total number of workers.

In the earlier stages of negotiation the management maintained that they had done nothing beyond standardising the wages of the various classes of workers. Really this is a new definition of standardisation of wages. The management have the audacity to expect that the workers should thankfully accept the wage-cuts and be satisfied with starvation wages owing to the charm of the word 'standardisation.'

S. V. PARULEKAR.

Our London Letter.

(BY AIR MAIL.)

(From Our Correspondent.)

London, 1st February.

THE REFORMS TIME-TABLE.

IT is to-day stated that the Government intend to secure the passage of the India Bill through the House of Commons by the Whitsun adjournment, in order that the Bill may be passed by the House of Lords by the end of July. This would mean that within eighteen weeks of to-day the Bill would pass the third reading, with about twenty days for the Committee stage. How far this time-table can be maintained is yet uncertain. Speculation as to the reason for expediting the passage of the Bill lies between a desire to clear the decks for an early general election and the necessity to get the India Bill out of the way in order that Parliament may be able to devote its full energies to the large programme of domestic reform before it.

THE ASSEMBLY VOTE.

The vote in the Assembly debate on the recently concluded trade agreement has been received here with mixed feelings. Few responsible people here regard the agreement as affecting in any real degree the principle of the tariff convention that has been in operation for so many years, and most people therefore are wondering what is at the bottom of the decision taken by the Assembly. Two explanations have been given. One is that, contrary to the procedure here, the Government of India have been guilty of bad psychology in failing to take the Indian.

commercial organisations into their confidence during the course of the negotiations. On first principles one would certainly be inclined to agree with this criticism. The other criticism is that, in the political circumstances at present prevailing, the agreement was discussed in an atmosphere of strong political resentment, that it has not been dealt with on its merits, and that political considerations rather than economic ones have prevailed. The adverse vote, therefore, is regarded, both by the *Manchester Guardian* and by the *Times* as rather in the nature of a political demonstration. The further deduction drawn by both papers is that this is quite a natural consequence of the irresponsible position of the Indian Legislature (and it might also have been said of the Government of India) under the present Constitution, thereby providing a further unanswerable argument in favour of the proposed constitutional changes extending a measure of responsibility to the Central Legislature. It is held that had there been a responsible minister in office, the Legislature would think more than once before seeking to drag down a Government upon such an issue as this, and be compelled thereby to contemplate the formation of an alternative administration. Solace in the existing situation is taken by recalling the fact that the trade agreement does not require legislative sanction in either country and that it is operative in the absence of the approval of the Indian legislature.

It seems more than ever clear, however, that big business in Lancashire must realise that big business cannot be done with India except upon such terms as are tolerable to Indian sentiment. On the other hand, if business is to be done as between business men, it will be urged that those who negotiate on either side must be able to give firm assurances to the other that they have the backing of the trades and the trades' organisations immediately concerned, and that they will not be repudiated owing to some sudden fluctuation of sentiment in the trade organisations, or to interference by interests of a party or political character foreign to the problems to be solved. If firm agreements are to be reached it can only be as between negotiators who can place implicit confidence both in the *bona fides* and in the representative character of their opposite numbers. Anything else would involve instability, insecurity and continued friction.

DOMINION STATUS.

Whilst Mr. Andrews at the end of his broadcast last week expressed the view that young India, there was reason to fear, might already have gone beyond the phrase "Dominion Status," it is interesting to note the following paragraph in an article on the India Bill by Sir Samuel Hoare in this week's issue of the *News-Letter* :—

"Attention has been called to the absence of any Preamble stating the aims and policy in regard to India. I shall confine myself at present to saying that there is

no intention whatever in the mind of the present Cabinet of repudiating or modifying the intentions which have been already expressed. The Government bases itself in this matter upon the view of the Joint Committee that the ultimate aims of British rule in India have been set out finally and definitely in the Preamble to the Act of 1919, and that subsequent statements of policy have added nothing to the substance of this declaration. Comment has been expressed in two antithetical senses. It will be found, when this subject comes to be dealt more fully at the proper time, that there is no basis either for the suspicion that we do not intend to abide fully by our pledges, or for the fear that we contemplate an extension of our existing commitments."

Major Graham Pole's recent letter to the *Times*, pointing out the effect on Indian opinion of the omission of reference to the phrase "Dominion Status" from the Report and now from the Bill, following upon the *Times* recommendation that assurance should be given to India thereon, is all to the good. It may be mentioned that before the *Times* had become convinced of the urgency of some such assurance it is known to the present writer that at least two letters in the sense of Major Graham Pole's letter had already been rejected by that paper. However, let us be thankful for small mercies, and be glad at the repentance of the Thunderer, however tardy.

MR. ANDREWS ON REPRESSION.

Mr. Andrews has in this week's *New Statesman* a letter of protest against the policy of repression amounting to a veiled form of martial law now operative in Bengal. He appears to feel conscience-stricken, as he has felt before and energetically protested against the Bengal policy. He quotes a letter from a Bengalee correspondent who has a relative in one of the detention camps, which is of considerable interest. "With the grant of reforms, under which they (the detainees) could honourably undertake to give up subversive activities, a huge majority would come out. You can—I am letting you know on good authority—yourself offer such assurances." Upon this the *New Statesman*, describing the Waverree episode as "a political stunt" by the Churchillites, comments as follows: "Meanwhile the tragedy of India itself develops; while English politics are enlivened by our squabbles about what is good for India and whether we are 'giving India too much or too little,' the poverty of the Indian villages is untouched, and, as the letter from Mr. C. F. Andrews in our columns this week shows, the repression of the Indian Government is so sustained and so ruthless that we may well wonder if this country will have a friend left there by the time the new Constitution is ready." If evidence of the growing unfriendliness in India were needed, it could have been found in the return by huge majorities, composed of non-Congressmen and Congressmen alike, of Congress candidates to the Assembly in the recent elections.

MR. JOSHI ON THE J. P. C. REPORT.

Mr. N. M. Joshi, M. L. A., made the following speech in the Legislative Assembly on the 6th inst. in the debate on the Joint Parliamentary Committee Report :—

SIR, during the short time at my disposal, I propose to examine the proposals of the Joint Parliamentary Committee from the point of view of the masses and the working classes of this country. While examining the proposals I shall first see what powers of self-government are transferred from British to Indian hands. Secondly, I shall examine

how the powers of self-government transferred to Indian hands are distributed among the various sections of the people of this country. The working classes of this country are interested in self-government, but they do not want a mere change of masters. They are interested in seeing that they get their due share of the powers that may be transferred from British to Indian hands. Thirdly, I shall examine the scheme from the point of view of the future prospect of its being developed into a scheme for full-fledged self-government. The outlines of the scheme proposed by Joint Parliamentary Committee consist,

in the first place, of a kind of provincial responsible government with special powers reserved to the Governor. The Hon'ble the Leader of the House the other day said that we need not imagine that all the Governors will be unreasonable men. Sir, I do not imagine that all the Governors will be unreasonable men, but, Sir, it will be equally admitted that all the Governors will not be angels. May I ask, Sir, as there is provision in the Bill for checking the unreasonableness of the legislatures by the special powers of the Governors, what safeguard has been provided in the constitution to protect the people against the unreasonableness of the Governors? Some of the special powers provided for the Governors in the new constitution are not given to them even under the present constitution in the transferred sphere. Moreover, Sir, large portions of some of the provinces are excluded from the powers of the legislature; they are called "totally excluded or partially excluded areas". I am one of those people who feel, and feel very strongly, that every measure of protection should be given to the people of these excluded and partially excluded areas as they are the most backward sections of the community. But what the Report provides is that these excluded areas shall be governed autocratically by officers belonging to the civil services. I feel, Sir, that if the Joint Parliamentary Committee wanted really to protect the backward communities of these excluded and partially excluded areas, they should have provided adequate representation in the legislatures to the people of these areas. I would have even suggested that they should have given a large amount of weightage to the people of these areas. I would have even suggested that the Government should have passed laws protecting the lands of these people and protecting these people against the extortion of usurers in these areas, but it is not the right kind of protection that these people should be denied the protection of the legislature that may be established in these Provinces.

Sir, when we examine the powers transferred to Indian hands in the Central Government, we find that a federation is to be established here, with some dyarchical form of responsibility, and with certain Departments reserved. The Army Department is to be reserved, the Foreign and Political Department is to be reserved, and so on. May I ask, if India is a member of the League of Nations—and we are always told that the Indian delegation is free from the influences of the British delegation—why should Indians be denied the right to manage its own foreign affairs? Then, Sir, the Ecclesiastical Department is to be reserved. May I ask what is the need of an Ecclesiastical Department for India? In every city, in every town, almost everywhere there is a church where the officers of Government can go and pray. I would therefore suggest that the Ecclesiastical Department should be abolished immediately. Then, Sir, the scheme proposes several safeguards and special powers. If there is any community in this country which requires safeguards, it is, I say, the working classes and the masses. May I ask what are the safeguards provided for the masses and the working classes of this country (Hear, hear)? I am not suggesting, Mr. President, that in order to safeguard the interests of the working classes and the masses, special powers should be given to the Governors and the Governor-General. No, Sir, that is not my demand. If the Government of India and the British Parliament wanted to protect the interests of and to provide safeguards for the working classes of this country, they should have given them adequate representation in these legislatures, but, Sir, the representation provided to the working classes is utter-

ly inadequate. I shall speak about that later on but, Sir, instead of providing safeguards to protect the interests of the masses and the working classes, the Joint Parliamentary Committee provides safeguards to protect the interests of the British community, most of the safeguards are intended to protect whatever the British have in this country, to protect the rights of the British commercial community, and to protect the rights of the British investors in this country. In order to protect these British interests in this country, they have provided safeguards intended to prevent commercial discrimination. Safeguards are provided by way of a Statutory Railway Board to protect the interests of British services and safeguards are provided in order that the currency and exchange policy of this country should not be against the interests of Great Britain. Sir, with all these safeguards, with all these special powers, and the reservations, the rights which have been transferred to India are merely illusory. I feel, Sir, that the scheme, as a measure of self-government, is utterly inadequate. The proposals made by the Labour members of the Joint Parliamentary Committee and put forward by Major Attlee to my mind are a great improvement upon what the Joint Parliamentary Committee has proposed and, speaking personally, I feel that if the proposals of the Labour members had been accepted by the Joint Parliamentary Committee, these proposals might have been accepted as a compromise by India, but, Sir, the proposals of the majority of the Joint Parliamentary Committee are proposals which are based upon the distrust of the people of this country.

My Hon'ble friend, Sir Leslie Hudson, the other day said that these safeguards were necessary on account of certain statements made by certain classes of politicians in this country. Sir, I have ceased to belong to the Indian National Congress, but, Sir, it is not true to say that the special powers and safeguards have been included in the scheme to prevent the mischief which may be caused by the Indian National Congress or any other classes of politicians. The safeguards are provided in this constitution because the British people distrust the Indian people as a whole, including the Indian Princes and including the commercial and landed magnates in this country. If the Joint Parliamentary Committee had the least confidence in the Indian Princes and the landed magnates of this country, where was the need for any reservations, for any special powers, for any safeguards, when one-third members in the lower House and when forty per cent. of the members of the Council of State are to be the representatives of the Indian Princes, with the representation of the Europeans added to them? Sir, the Indian National Congress or any other single political party in this country has not the least chance of securing a majority in the future Council of State as it is proposed to be constituted; and if that is so, and if special powers and reservations are provided for, they are provided for simply because the British people have no confidence even in the Indian Princes and even in the landed and commercial magnates of this country. Sir, I am prepared to admit that as between the Indians themselves, the Britishers have more confidence in the Indian Princes than in the landed and commercial magnates of this country; and as between the people of British India itself, I am prepared to admit that the J. P. C. had more confidence in the landed and the commercial magnates than in the common people of this country. Sir, these different degrees of distrust among the different sections of the Indian population are clearly indicated by the proposals which the J. P. C. has made for setting up the machinery of the Central Government.

The J. P. C. proposes that the machinery of the future government will consist of a Federation with two Chambers, the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State. In the Federation the Princes are to have weightage. May I ask why has this weightage been provided for the Princes? Moreover, the J. P. C. did not recognise the existence of the people of the Indian States. All the representation given not only in the Council of State but even in the lower chamber is the representation given to the Indian Princes and not to the people of the States. If weightage had been given to the people of the Indian States, I for one would not have objected to it so much. Mr. President, the legislative machinery of the Federation is to consist of two Chambers of the Legislature, the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State. Both these Chambers are to be formed by the method of indirect election. May I ask whether there is any country in the world where the lower chamber is elected by the indirect method of election? If that is not so, why should India be selected for that honour? Sir, this method of indirect election by local legislatures was followed some years in the United States of America, not for electing the Lower House but for electing the Upper Chamber. The result was that corruption became rampant and the Upper Chamber of the United States became a millionaires' club. Sir, in India the Legislative Assembly which is to be elected by the indirect method of election will also become a millionaires' club and our Council of State will become a multi-millionaires' club. I must admit that the J. P. C. has provided special reserved representation for Indian Labour in the Legislative Assembly. They have provided 10 seats for Labour. But, Sir, the National Federation of Trades Unions in India had asked for 10 per cent. of the seats. It was a very modest demand and the J. P. C. has given only 3 or 4 per cent. of the seats. Moreover, the J. P. C., fearing that labour members might combine with the members of the depressed classes and may somehow persuade the Lower Chamber to pass some kind of Labour legislation protecting the interests of the masses, have provided for a Council of State without any Labour representation. I shall only mention one fact. The province of Bombay is going to send 16 members to the future Council of State and the first election of 16 members from Bombay to the Council of State is to be made by 30 members who will form the Council of State in Bombay. Sir, have you ever heard of 30 men selecting 16 persons to be the members of a legislature? This is the kind of election that has been provided for the future Council of State! My feeling is that the J. P. C. has constituted these legislatures on the lines proposed in their report in order that the will of the common people should

always be frustrated. Sir, with a legislature of this kind, is there the least chance with even the provision of 10 seats in the Legislative Assembly for Labour of any Labour legislation being passed? Sir, the provincial legislatures are to be elected by the direct method of election. I admit that the scheme of the J. P. C. has extended the electorate from 3 per cent. to 14 per cent. But here, too, the J. P. C. was afraid that some kind of progressive legislation may pass through the Provincial Legislatures. Therefore, they have provided for second chambers even in the provinces. (The Hon'ble Member was warned by the chair that his time was up.)

Sir, I shall say only a word about the future changes which could be made in our constitution. The J. P. C. has provided that the legislatures should pass resolutions recommending the extension of the franchise, but is it natural to expect legislatures elected on a restricted franchise to pass resolutions recommending extension of the franchise? The J. P. C. has also recommended that the future Federal Legislature elected on an indirect system should pass resolutions that the future method of election should be a direct method. Sir, is it very likely that a legislature elected by the indirect method of election will pass a resolution asking that the direct method should be brought into force? One word more about the future constitution which will show clearly that there is absolutely no hope for the future under the new constitution. The Princes are to be admitted to the Federation by means of Treaties, and the Treaties will be based upon the constitution which will be passed now. If the British Parliament decides to confer further rights of self-government upon India, the Treaties will have to be changed or the Princes will have to leave the Federation. If the Princes do not agree to the changes, which even the British Parliament may agree to make, the changes cannot be made. Under these circumstances I ask Members of the Assembly to tell me whether there is the least prospect of further rights of self-government being conceded to India? And, if that is so, is it not clear that the scheme of self-government which the J. P. C. proposes for us is not only inadequate as a scheme of self-government but that it is undemocratic in its character and, it offers no hope even for the future. It is on account of these considerations that men who have been noted in this country for their sobriety and moderation and members of the Society to which I have the honour to belong, namely, the Servants of India Society, have passed resolutions preferring to remain under the present constitution, unsatisfactory though it is, instead of agreeing to hopelessly mortgage their future. Sir, I have done. (Loud Cheers.)

MR. LASKI EXAMINES THE BILL.

WHAT a constitutional expert thinks of the Government of India Bill was stated in plain terms this afternoon (London, Jan. 30) when Professor Harold J. Laski pulled it to pieces before a meeting organised by the India League. Stated tersely, Mr. Laski considers that the Bill is so impossible from the Indian and the Labour Party standpoint, as to merit nothing but summary rejection. In his own language it is "hopeless to amend an unamendable measure."

Professor Laski said he would not go into the detail of the Bill but would submit its main principles to a few simple tests designed to answer three or four plain questions from the outlook of India and the Labour Party itself. To begin with, it did not

realise the policy of the Labour Party which was committed by the Hastings Conference to moving forward directly to Dominion Status. Everything in the Bill stood in the way of that realisation and of the development of that condition for India. The Bill actually made the revision of India's constitutional position more difficult than it ever was. It left no hope of creating the right kind of partnership for India in the British Empire. He confessed that he was no enthusiast for Federation under any conditions, but this Bill created a special problem by the very basis on which it proposed to establish Federation in India. It was going to hand over about two-thirds of the Federal power to the Princes who, to him, were an appalling body of men. Only the rulers of Baroda, Travancore and Mysore ap-

proximated to representative men with advanced systems of government, and to put so much power into the hands of the others was to make the cause of democracy hopeless. The trouble was, too, that as they would accede by treaty they must be upheld in their autocracy and unrepresentative authority, and there could consequently be no change at the instance of their own people as might be the case without this scheme which permanently entrenched them and must back them with the British Army.

A third glaring fault of the Bill, said Prof. Laski, was that it was a pretence at granting self-government. Actually the essence of State power remained indefinitely in British hands. Nothing was proposed as a time limit for the Indianisation of the army, and those who controlled the armed forces of a country—he instanced Herr Hitler in Germany—became its real masters. He could not see any approach to Dominion Status while this condition remained. If they meant really serious business about Indianisation, they could take steps even in this Bill to set a period to British control, but so long as committees predominantly composed of English officers were called on to decide or discuss the question there would never be anything but reports exaggerating the difficulties of the problem. In less than two years Trotsky could organise an army capable of defending Soviet Russia and defeating all armed intervention. Surely India could do it in ten or fifteen years.

After criticising other main features and defects in the Bill Prof. Laski said the issue for the Labour Party was this: Could they amend it within the compass of reasonable standards of self-government and democracy? Unhesitatingly he said "No". The changes required right down to the fundamentals were so immense that even if Labour could make them the speaker would be bound to order the re-committal of the Bill on the grounds that it was an entirely new measure. It was hopeless to expect to amend an unamendable measure. Therefore they had to decide their course of action and policy. As a Socialist he believed with Burke that the consent of the people must be obtained and that there were ways of getting India as a willing partner in the British Empire. They could get her consent but they could not coerce her. This Bill contained none of the elements of consent and much of coercion. It was to be imposed upon India, and it revealed to a degree how the technique of Imperialism was being practised against her. She was to be given a kind of government that Japan, a century hence, might impose on Manchukuo. It was not a Bill for an honest advance in partnership but one clearly establishing the English economic control of India.

The issue was whether Labour was to be a party to a measure, not based on consent, but of the character he had indicated, when everybody who was vocal in India had repudiated it. He was afraid of the situation developing in the Labour Party when it again became the Government and was asked by India to look into that country's political system, especially if any countenance had been given to this Bill. He foresaw the answer to be, "Our hands are full with our domestic problems. We cannot re-open the question when a Bill was passed only a year or so ago." If they countenanced this Bill they would have to uphold its operation when they became a Government. In that event they would have a number of Meeruts on their hands, and no Labour member would be able to stand up to any audience that tackled him about his responsibilities. The real

answer to the problem was, therefore, to reject the Bill and decline to attempt to amend.

In the subsequent discussion Major Attlee, M. P., said the Bill entirely put the power in the hands of vested interests and in that direction alone was against the recommendations of the Statutory Commission. He declared it was the intention of the Parliamentary Party to put down a reasoned amendment to the second reading motion for the rejection of the Bill.

Answering a question Prof. Laski said that the course he would recommend for a future Labour Government, provided that the Party refused to have anything to do with the present Bill, was to send out a small representative committee charged to negotiate with India for framing her own constitution by means of a constituent assembly. He agreed with Major Graham Pole that India herself must frame her own constitution, and it would then be for the Labour Government to give effect to it through a simple legislative enactment.—*The Hindu*.

Correspondence.

THE REAL REASON FOR THE BILL.

Col. Josiah C. Wedgwood, M. P., has contributed the following letter to the Labour Official Monthly, published on 1st February:—

Sir,—Of course, Dominion Status is not immediately practicable for India. In the Dominions there are no British officials and no British army, and no control by Parliament. I do not know what Sapru, Polak and Graham Pole mean by Dominion Status, but I am quite sure Hindus, and all minorities in India except possibly the Moslems, would be terrified if we cleared out of India before we have made democracy there possible, stable and safe.

Pious nonsense about Dominion Status in the preamble will only annoy India more, as showing that we are still wilfully blind to their real objections to the Bill—still treating them as silly children to be humoured by words.

Let me state their objections once more. They object to being handed over to Rajahs, landlords and millionaires. They object to communal representation, because (1) they are afraid of Moslem-Nazism in the four provinces, (2) it finally divides India for ever, (3) they see that the worst Anglo-Indian bureaucracy will shelter well behind Princes and Moslems, and (4) they know it to be fatal to democracy.

Let me state clearly too what is the reason for this Bill—the real reason. It is to protect things as they are in India from the working classes, whom they have deliberately refused to educate.—yours, etc.

JOSIAH C. WEDGWOOD.

Stone, Staffs.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

- A BRIEF HISTORY OF OUR OWN TIMES. By RAMSAY MUIR. (George Philip.) 1934. 22cm. 396p. 5/-.
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