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Topics of the Week.

Princes, Co-Accused in Conspiracy.

THERE is none in British India who watches the interests of the States' rulers with greater zeal and devotion than the editor of *United India and the Indian States*, and that he has come to the conclusion that the Princes must not, while British India's hostility continues, enter the federation should, we think, decide the Princes against it. "We ask," he writes in a leading article, "Where is the wisdom in building a constitution on foundations which are so insecure (as indicated by the Assembly vote and the speeches in the Commons which attribute to the Princes the status of mere pawns in a game)?" And he says: "The Constitution Bill satisfies no party in India as it now is. To be members of a federation that is not approved by British India is to become co-accused in the conspiracy with which British Indian opinion has always associated any understanding based on whatever motive between the Princes and the Government of India, of which that opinion does not approve."

THE Princes will no doubt lay themselves open to this charge, if they join a federation condemned by British India. But there is a further reason given by *United India's* editor. He says: "While it is true that the Constitution Act will be passed by Parliament, it requires the whole of India to work it." Emphasis must be laid on the words "the whole of India." It will not do if only the Princes work the constitution and British India either abstains from working or determines to wreck it. The point was well put by Mr. Morgan Jones in the House of Commons, in pointing out what the result would be if federation is forced upon British India:—

"Surely the right hon. Gentleman Sir Samuel Hoare does not mean that he is going to invite representatives

of the Princely States to form a Ministry—or may it be some representatives of the Princely States plus some of the Moslems. ... With a Ministry of that sort you would certainly not get an all-India federation. You would destroy even the vestiges of Indian Unity."

British statesmen tell us that federation is a necessity in India in the interests of unity. The fact is that the federal scheme now proposed does not secure unity but destroys it.

Enviably!!

43 amendments—so a reliable report has it—which are a close secret, have the Princes proposed to the India Bill as a condition precedent to their accession to federation. And Sir Samuel Hoare is to move them to his own Bill—the child of an ingenious brain—in the Parliament. Happy Princes! Unenviable, however, is Sir Samuel's position. He has indeed a harder task in accepting the one amendment British India proposes—to scrap the Bill.

Sir Tej B. Sapru's Appeal.

THE *Tribune* writes in a recent issue:—

No one can accuse Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru of lack of courage. At a time when the whole of political India, certainly the whole of the Liberal Party, of which Sir Tej Bahadur himself was until recently one of the foremost leaders, has with one voice declared the J. P. C. scheme as unacceptable, he advises his countrymen to accept the scheme for what it is worth! "At a special sitting of the Benares Hindu University Parliament," says an A. P. I. telegram, "he made a strong appeal for the promotion of good-will between India and England." "The J. P. C. Report," he said, "was placed in their hands, whether they liked it or not, and under the circumstances it was their duty to try and act in such a way that the scheme might become workable."

This is strange advice, indeed, on the part of one who during his last visit to England in connection with the third Conference in London was reported to have publicly declared that while the Liberals would accept a scheme of reforms which gave India twelve annas of genuine reforms, they would accept nothing less. In the opinion of the overwhelming majority of political-minded Indians, including practically the entire Liberal Party, the reforms offered to India, so far from being "genuine twelve annas" are in some vital respects even worse than the present constitution. Sir Tej Bahadur himself confessed that there were many things in the scheme which were really unacceptable, but he still thinks that India should accept it so that ill-will might not be produced between the two nations.

Sir Tej Bahadur's ideas must be very peculiar, indeed. If he thinks that the obligation to avoid producing ill-will between the two countries is unilateral and not reciprocal, and that while the framers of the scheme are at liberty to produce the maximum of ill-will between the two countries by putting forward proposals wholly unacceptable to India it is incumbent on India herself to

accept those proposals, lest there should be ill-will between the two countries, even though in her opinion they are opposed to her own vital interests. Pandit Malaviya gave the only possible answer to Sir Tej. Every clause in the J. P. C. Report, he said, was filled with distrust of Indians. The acceptance of such a Report would be a heavy blow to the self-respect of Indians. The rejection of the Report did not mean throwing it away. That did not lie in their power, but the nation's conscience was against it and they must make this clear in their speeches and in their action.

* * *

How Fussy!

WHEN Mr. Morgan Jones said "he was not prepared to barter away the liberties of the people of British India in return for the acquiescence of the Princes," Miss Rathbone interjected a remark:

"The hon. Member for Caerphilly has just told us that his party are not prepared to barter away the liberties of the people of British India. Are they prepared to barter away the liberties of the people of Indian India—the people of the States?"

How fussy some of these Members of Parliament can be! We in British India have taken a vow never, in these constitutional discussions, to say one word about the States' people. Cannot the Members of Parliament also keep quiet? All our nicely balanced plans will "gang agley" if such questions are raised. Is it because Members of Parliament are so irresponsible that they commit such grave indiscretions? Will not Sir Samuel Hoare, having conferred responsibility upon India, proceed to enforce it now on England?

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Safeguards for the Landlords.

THAT landlords ask for statutory assurances "that the rights and privileges and interests of persons holding land or property should be inviolable" is nothing surprising, especially when every possible interest and group clamours for safeguards, to perpetuate till eternity their present privileges, however little the justification for their continuance be.

That the effective safeguard against injustice and maladministration is to be found only in public opinion appears to be realised by the Maharaja of Darbhanga, who, presiding over the All-India Zamindars' and Talukdars' Conference, said: "Our permanent security lies in convincing all concerned by our action that there are as good hearts to serve men in palaces as in cottages". Vested interests may be sure that public opinion will not tolerate any legislation of an expropriatory nature if only they realise in practice what the Thakur Sahib of Sanand and Koth said: "If we have retained the great influence and authority to-day, in spite of the diminution of our powers, it is due in a large measure to the wise and able manner in which the members of our class have discharged their duties as to the inherent instincts of our people and the soundness of our social fabric with a place in it for all classes and which is based on principles of inclusiveness and harmony and co-ordination of interests." How far this claim is justified is another matter, but surely a better safeguard there cannot be.

Rather than fight for safeguards, the landholders will do well to ponder over what Lord Erskine, the Governor of Madras, said at Bezwada, "I hope that when these reforms do come to pass, we shall see a great many of the Zamindars and landowners taking their natural part in Indian politics... and leaving their petty squabbles behind to work for the general good of the country."

* * *

The Civic Conscience.

UTTERANCES on the need and scope for large improvement in matters municipal in places as far apart as Guntur and Lahore within the space of a fortnight invite more than a passing notice to the general level of municipal administration in India. That with certain honourable exceptions civic affairs in India are far below par is admitted both by Mr. C. Rajagopalachar and Mr. Justice Aga Haidar. Mr. Justice Aga Haidar is indeed so very caustic in his criticism as to justify even Miss Mayo's 'Mother India.' It certainly is no consolation that other countries were as low in civic standards decades back, and "City Fathers" must show a cleaner record in years to come to justify their existence on municipal boards.

* * *

Sir Andrew Skeen.

GENERAL SIR ANDREW SKEEN, whose death at the age of 62 India mourns, will be gratefully remembered and honoured as the Chairman of the Indian Sandhurst Committee of 1925, popularly known as the Skeen Committee, whose unanimous recommendations, *inter alia*, for the establishment of an Indian Sandhurst, the abolition of the unpopular Eight Units Scheme devised by Lord Rawlinson in 1923, and the Indianisation of half the superior cadre of the Army by 1952, commanded the universal approbation of all sections of Indian opinion. Progressive, far-sighted and sympathetic statesmen like Sir Andrew Skeen are rare, especially in the Army, and serve to cement Anglo-Indian amity more firmly than any amount of ingenious safeguards.

* * *

Bombay Taxation Bill.

THE deep-seated and wide-spread public resentment at the action of Government in allowing the payment of full salaries to the services from the beginning of the next official year while granting no relief to the tax-payer threatened to express itself in the rejection of the Finance Bill by the Bombay Legislative Council. True the rejection plan did not eventually materialise and the Finance Bill received its second reading without any hitch. But that the idea of throwing it out wholesale should have been seriously considered by the members even of the Bombay Legislative Council shows the extent to which public opinion is angered by this unwise decision of the Government.

* * *

FAILING rejection of the whole of the Finance Bill, popular attack was concentrated upon the Tobacco Bill which is shortly due to expire and which was sought to be given a permanent place on the statute book. It was this provision that seems to have met with stout resistance from popular representatives. And Government would have risked a rebuff at the Council's hands if they had persisted with their original plan to grant the measure unlimited life. But, realising the strength of the Opposition in time, they decided to placate it by asking for no more than four years' life to the measure. The deference thus shown to public opinion is worthy of praise.

* * *

THE complaint against this taxation measure voiced by some members was that the income derived from the tobacco duty was incommensurate with the trouble and expense involved in its collection, a complaint of which the justice should be carefully considered by Government. How we wish the conciliatory spirit shown by Government on this occasion inspires all their dealings with the public.

* * *

TAKE BRITISH INDIA'S CONSENT.

"WE have set our hands to the plough; we must plough the furrow to the end, even if the course is folly and even if the end is disastrous." In these apt words Mr. Churchill described the attitude of mind which the British Government are bringing to their self-appointed task of steam-rolling the Reforms Bill through Parliament. The Government pause just a little to consider what the die-hards say; they take no notice at all of the criticism of the British Labour and Liberal Parties: and they put aside the objections of Indians as if from this quarter nothing else could proceed and as if the objections were tactical and not genuine. Even Mr. Baldwin, whose sincerity of purpose is acknowledged on all hands, hinted as much. He said: "I am not dismayed at these reports that have come from India about people who say they will not collaborate. All the official advices that we get are that the Bill will be worked in India. I will observe this. In time of conflict, such as has been going on about this Bill, and will until the Bill becomes law, there is uncertainty in men's minds". If he thinks that after the Bill is passed into law Indians will accept this measure and will quietly settle down to its working, he is very much mistaken. Indians will accept the constitution in the same spirit in which the lady referred to by Mr. Churchill in his speech began her work on metaphysics with the words: "I accept the universe". They will inevitably have to direct all their future efforts to this constitution, but they will so direct them as to reduce it to a nullity if they can possibly do so. They may not succeed in this, but the chance of their succeeding is slightly better than the above-mentioned lady had in nullifying the universe. Anyhow, as Mr. Grenfell warned the Government, there will be a mutinous crew in the ship of state that is being rigged up by Sir Samuel Hoare.

Several amendments were moved in Committee in the House of Commons bringing the Bill into accord with the Assembly's resolution which turned down the federal scheme. One such amendment at any rate should have been cordially accepted by the Government, viz., that put forward by Sir Henry Page-Croft which provided that the establishment of federation should be conditional not only on an address by both the Houses of Parliament, but on an address by a majority of elected representatives in each chamber of the Indian legislature. Sir Samuel Hoare opposed the amendment on the ground that it would in effect convert the central legislature into a constituent assembly. But this criticism is wide of the mark. It does not place upon the legislature the responsibility of drafting a constitution, and it does not compel the British Government to accept the constitution so drafted. All that it does is to put British India on a par with the States. As the consent of the States is required for the constitution to come into operation, so will the consent of British India be required. In the event of the States not acceding, the constitution will remain unused. The

amendment of Sir H. Page-Croft, if accepted, will only give the same power of veto to British India if its consent is not obtained, then too the constitution will remain unused. To give such power to the British Indian legislature is a very much simpler thing than to raise it to the position of a constituent assembly.

It may be that India's formal consent was never taken before when constitutional changes were made. But this constitution differs from all those that were enacted in the past. It is a result of successive Round Table Conferences whose sole object was to frame a constitution that was acceptable to all the parties concerned, viz., the people in British India, the rulers of Indian States and the British Government. The Conferences met with an ignominious failure in evolving an agreed scheme. The British Government could not accept the demands unanimously put forward by the representatives of the British Indian people, and the British Indian people could not accept the proposals of the British Government nor the terms of the Princes. When such an irreconcilable divergence of view emerged, the only reasonable plan would be to admit the failure of the enterprise and to drop the whole business of constitution-making. Sir Henry Page-Croft only proposed in his amendment that, since the attempt to hammer out an agreed solution had not succeeded, the British Government should not go on with legislation as if an agreed solution had resulted but to call a halt immediately and to take time for a further consideration of the whole question on a new basis. This is an eminently reasonable proposal, and in fact one from which there is no escape. The Attorney-General no doubt claimed that the constitution outlined in the Bill was a "freely negotiated and agreed" constitution; but it is a fantastic claim for which not a shred of evidence could be produced. The unanimity of protest in India gives the lie to it. If it were a really agreed constitution, then there could be no harm in submitting it to the judgment of the Assembly. It is clear, however, as Lord Wolmer said, that the Government do not accept the modest amendment of Sir H. Page-Croft because they are sure that "the constitution would be rejected."

Moreover, this is not a type of constitution that can at any time be forced upon a people against their wishes. The worst feature of the constitution is not its inadequacy; if it were merely inadequate, it could be accepted—not indeed, as the final destination, but as a halting stage on the road. The deficiencies could later be supplied. The worst feature of the constitution is, as Col. Wedgwood put it, its finality. It is incapable of undergoing any radical alterations afterwards. As Mr. Morgan Jones observed in the House of Commons: "Once this constitution is passed, you cannot change it by one jot or tittle. It will be like the laws of the Medes and Persians." Mr. Jones said this, be it remembered, to the House of Commons. Even the British Parlia-

ment will have no right to change our constitution. The consent of the Princes will have to be taken—600 or 700 of them. This requirement makes the proposed constitution as immutable as anything made by man can be. But this is not all. The constitution cannot be altered and it cannot be destroyed either—by constitutional means. A federation is supposed to live for ever, and though all other maxims of constitutional morality have been thrown to the winds in framing this constitution, British India is to be made to adhere strictly to this one principle. The Indian States may withdraw from the constitu-

tion in certain circumstances, but British India will be held prisoner within its walls for all time. Never can it say: "The experiment has not proved successful: let us bring it to an end and start afresh." Obviously wholehearted consent is essential where the constitution in question is not only meagre, but, what is very much worse, unamendable and unrepealable. Those who will force such a constitution on British India will only be inviting it to adopt revolutionary means for the termination of the federation.

DOMINION STATUS :

THE TYPE OF DOMINIONHOOD ATTAINABLE IN INDIA.

THE result of our leaders laying so much stress, when the constitution itself is of an extremely retrograde character, upon the absence of a specific mention in the constitution of the goal of constitutional progress, viz., dominion status, has not been what the leaders had expected. Such insistence on their part has only given rise to an impression in England, which, however mistaken, is very unfortunate—the impression, namely, that what Indians are hankering after is not so much increased constitutional power, which Britishers can understand, but something in the nature of the peculiarly Oriental concept of *izzat*, dignity or position, something of a metaphysical character born of the inferiority complex on the part of the Indian politicians. "Concede to them theoretical equality," Britishers say to themselves, "and Indians will not worry very much how limited the extent of their actual constitutional power is." So enlightened and liberal-minded a politician as Mr. Isaac Foot came to think that the furious protest against the reforms scheme from such diverse platforms in India as the Liberal Federation, the Muslim League and the Legislative Assembly "has been to a large extent a protest against the absence of the words 'dominion status'." Lord Eustace Percy went even further and suggested that these parties had not much serious complaint to make against the scheme and therefore they gladly fastened upon the omission of these words from the Preamble. "Apparently no vocal section of political opinion in India was prepared (after the publication of the J. P. C. Report)," said he, to criticise the constitution, but "they ran off, trying to argue about dominion status." This impression, as we have said above, is wholly erroneous, but there is no doubt that it has been created, and it will take long to dispel it. Do let us say, in the plainest possible terms, that there is nothing metaphysical about Indians' idea of constitutional advance, that what they want is solid power, and that they are so keen on a formal recognition of India's right to dominionhood only because they believe that it will accelerate their advance to full political freedom.

In what position then are we left in regard to dominion status in the new regime? The words will

not be incorporated in a statute. The objections urged against this course are by no means convincing, as Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyar has so clearly shown in the *Hindu*, and to this extent our demand is unfulfilled. But it must be acknowledged that the declaration made by the British Ministers on the point certainly constitutes an advance on the position as it existed before the commencement of the Second Reading Debate in the House of Commons. As Mr. Churchill said, the omission of a reference to "dominion status" in the Simon Commission Report, in the White Paper and in the J. P. C. Report, was not accidental, but deliberate. It indicated a clear backsliding on the part of the British statesmen. This charge can no longer be brought against them, for the Secretary of State and the Attorney-General have reaffirmed in their speeches the acceptance of dominion status as the goal of British policy in India, and they have done so on behalf of His Majesty's Government. The words will not be incorporated in the Preamble to the Reforms Act, but it has been stated that the Secretary of State's declaration will be as fully binding as the Preamble. The Attorney-General said: "A declaration of a Minister, with the assent of the Government behind it, is just as valid, just as strong, just as effective as anything you can put in a Preamble." Short of inserting these words in the Act, therefore, the Government's action must be regarded as satisfactory. But the specific provisions of the Bill in regard to the operative parts of the constitution remain as unsatisfactory as before, and it is entirely wrong of the Britishers to think that Indians will relent in their opposition to the Bill because the Government has gone some way in removing the doubt that had arisen in their minds concerning the ultimate objective of British policy.

But what is the dominion status that will become attainable in the best of circumstances in India under federation? Secession must be entirely ruled out. Sir Thomas Inskip no doubt argued as if, even without the States being associated in a federation, secession would be impossible for India as for other dominions. But this question must be considered in relation to various other statements of men like

Mr. Bonar Law who have admitted in the most explicit manner that it is for the dominions to choose whether they remain within the British Empire or go out. The dominions can claim a right to secession on the basis of these statements, but India under federation cannot do so. Sir Thomas Inskip indicated this in one brief, but very important, sentence, which has a much wider application than would appear at first sight. "There are undoubtedly," he said, "peculiar features and special obligations affecting the relations which exist between this country and India." To what extent these "peculiar features" and "special obligations" may be relied upon to detract from the full rights of a dominion no one can say, but that they do imply some detraction cannot be in dispute. At any rate the right of secession has to be waived by a Federal India, as the States are bound to the Crown in perpetuity by means of treaties which cannot be abrogated by the States by unilateral action. As Mr. Berriedale Keith says in the *Manchester Guardian*, the right of secession "would be wholly incompatible with the position of the Indian States, whose accession is essential for the formation of the proposed federation." British Indian politicians have certainly so far included the right to secede among the rights to which India, like other dominions, can lay claim in the fulness of time. Mr. Emmott, for instance, quoted the following passage from Mr. Sastri's address before the East India Association in 1930 —

"However much the meaning of dominion status may be changing, one aspect of it has for some years been accepted, not only as essential, but as forming the very bond and cement of the Commonwealth; that is the right of secession. . . . It is no use saying to us in India: 'Well, that would have one meaning to Canada and Australia and Ireland, but may have another meaning with regard to you.' Now I wish to ask those who speak of the right of secession as being doubtfully included in the expression 'dominion status' whether they will care to have this doubt spoken in the hearing of people of the Irish Free State or in the hearing of General Hertzog of South Africa? What is the use of speaking in one voice to them and in another to us?"

We are afraid that the British Government will hereafter justify its speaking in a different voice to us on the ground of our being associated with the Princes in a federal union.

It may be said, as in fact it was said by Sir Thomas Inskip in the House of Commons, that this is an academic question and not a matter of practical politics. In India, however, it is not entirely academic. There is a political party in this country—the biggest and the most influential—which rejects dominion status as its goal, but insists upon complete national independence. Those who are content with dominion status could go till now to the Congress and say: "After all, you are not for immediate separation. You only want that it should be possible for you to separate when you choose to do so. All this is fully secured by dominion status; for dominionhood conveys the constitutional right of secession. You need not therefore, create a split in our ranks and hoist a flag of your own to which other parties cannot give their allegiance. Time for a split will arise when you will actually want to effect

a separation. Why then cause a division amongst us unnecessarily at the present time? We ourselves are as keen as you are on having the liberty to secede. Such liberty we get under dominion status. Then why quarrel?" It is exactly on the basis of such an argument that the Nationalist and South African Parties have now become so friendly to each other that they have formed a coalition government in South Africa. The Nationalist Party in the Union, like the Congress in India, has always stood for independence; but it has been found possible for other parties to co-operate with it by pointing to the right of secession, which dominion status carries with it and which almost makes dominion status and independence interchangeable terms. The Status of the Union Act defines the status of South Africa to be that of a sovereign independent State and General Smuts could declare, in supporting this measure, that although the Union was now a part of the British Commonwealth "we may leave it in the ripeness of time", and on this ground could persuade General Hertzog to make common cause with him.

The Liberal Party in India cannot make the same appeal to the Congress now; for there would be constitutional impediments in the way of India exercising, even after she reaches the full height of political freedom open to her in a federation, an option in favour of separation as other dominions can. The Liberal Party may preach, if it wants, on the evils of separation, but all its preachments, it is perfectly certain, will go unheeded. Anyhow, the present gulf between the different parties as to their respective goals will be very much widened, even if those who aspired to dominion status with the right of secession resign themselves to dominion status without that right.

THE RAILWAY BUDGET.

THE Railway Budget presented to the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State last week contained no features which were unexpected. The Railway Member and Sir Guthrie Russell both introduced the budgets in speeches of remarkably short length confined mostly to a summary of the financial position. The financial working of the railways during the current year has been fairly satisfactory and the Railway Member was able to assure the Assembly that the anticipations of traffic receipts by the Railway authorities have been more than fulfilled. The Railway authorities have presumed that the small increments in traffic earnings which have now been taking place for over a year are indicative of a definite movement of trade recovery and have consequently allowed for a further increment during the coming year. It is very difficult to say to what extent trade recovery may be said to have definitely set in. But the moderate increments allowed for in the railway budget for the ensuing year seem to be fairly justified. It is to be noticed that the increase in traffic receipts is the result entirely of increased income on account of goods traffic. The number of passengers carried has not increased enough to compensate for the small

diminution in the rates of fares made on some systems. The increase in goods traffic has been most marked in the two classes of coal and metallic ores. The fact that the increase in traffic is most marked in the case of basic commodities may be interpreted as distinctly indicating the first stages of the upward curve of the trade cycle. Even with these increased receipts the budget presented is not a balanced one. The most that the Railway Member hoped for was that with this year began a period of balanced budgets for the commercial lines. The Railways are still far from being able to bear the deficit on the strategic lines and pay any contribution to general revenues and for the purposes of balancing the budget the practice established for the last few years of taking a loan from the depreciation fund will again be resorted to.

While the railway finances are still not on a secure footing, no large capital or other expenditures can be contemplated, and it is lucky that the damage due to the earthquake last year especially—to the Hardinge Bridge—has turned out to be less serious than was initially estimated. Apart from these necessary restoration works an important bridge for establishing continuous railway communications between Bengal and Assam and a branch line project in the Madras Presidency are the only two important capital items contemplated for the ensuing year. In connection with the latter project the Railway Member announced that he had initiated the practice of consulting Provincial Advisory Committees. This is no doubt a welcome change on the part of the Government of India. It has to be remembered, however, that this change has not come about voluntarily but is the result of the emergence of the road transport problem, in the solution of which the Imperial Government is seeking the help and co-operation of the provinces. The road transport problem was not emphasised in either of the speeches and it is obvious that motor competition has not yet taken such a character in India as to affect the earnings of the railway system as a whole. It is mostly through, long distance traffic that the railways handle and for which they have been developed. And if early steps are taken, as they are being taken in certain directions, for co-ordinating the two agencies and for properly planning rail and road building, there seems no reason why the problem should ever take an acute form in this country. While the Railway Board has rightly decided not to undertake any important capital expenditure except such as on wagons required for increased traffic handling, it is

surprising to find a proposal to make the Central Standards Office permanent. The need for standardisation and its possible benefits may readily be admitted, but it may be doubted whether the economies secured by its continued permanent existence on an enlarged scale will be such as to warrant this expenditure. At least the usual Indian experience in connection with the central offices of Imperial exports makes us doubtful of either the necessity or the advisability of this step.

While the railway budget itself did not present any difficult problems or points of controversy this year, Government was defeated in the Assembly on two occasions during the course of the debate on the budget. On the first occasion the vote may be said to have been taken—though the particular point was ruled during the course of the debate out of order by the President—on the constitution of the Statutory Railway Authority. We have already expressed our opinion, on a former occasion, on the constitution of this body. While agreeing with the general proposition that the day-to-day administration of the national railways ought to be rendered independent of political influence we feel that the Assembly was right in expressing its emphatic disapproval of the irresponsible character of the Statutory Board that is now sought to be set up. The other occasion of governmental defeat was the debate raised by Mr. Joshi on the question of the grievances of third class passengers. The grievances are of very old standing and their ventilation in the Assembly takes place annually at this time. Now that such a majority of members seem to sympathise genuinely with the third class passenger we feel it was time an enquiry into the basis of the fares structure of the Indian railways was pressed for. As we have often indicated, the expenditure on capital account in providing amenities and other expenditure by way of providing special trains, etc., for the higher class passengers incurred by Indian railways is entirely disproportionate to the revenues yielded by this class of passengers. The practice of providing such extravagantly good service for a small class of persons may be the result of historical causes. But on a proper economic basis it is not justified to-day. So rather than press the claims of the third class passenger on humanitarian grounds we would base them on grounds of strict economic justice. And with enough pressure Government ought to be persuaded to guarantee at least this, that the higher classes are not subsidised at the expense of the third class passenger.

SPARKS FROM THE COMMONS' ANVIL.

"AN AMAZING CONTRADICTION."

LIKE Mr. Attlee and Mr. Morgan Jones, Mr. Lansbury drew attention to what he called "an amazing contradiction" that, whereas Princes were being humoured into federation, British India was being forced into it. He said:

No Prince is going to be forced into this federation. They are coming in of their own free will, with all their rights and privileges safeguarded. The only people who are not to be consulted and who are not to be asked to agree to the Bill are the masses in British India. It is an amazing contradiction to me. . . . You have not put the Bill to them as you have to the Princes. You say

to British Indians. 'Take it or leave it.' That is all wrong, and it is another reason why we oppose the Bill.

TWO-FOLD NECESSITY OF FEDERATION.

It is not merely that an all-India federation is an indispensable condition, in the eyes of the British Government, of the grant of central responsibility; it is an indispensable condition of the introduction of provincial autonomy too. Replying to Mr. Churchill's appeal to divide the Bill into two parts and to omit the all-India federation part of it, according to the Assembly's demand, Mr. Baldwin said:

It cannot be done, and for this reason. The Bill stands as a whole, comprehensive, single scheme which cannot be divided, and federation is an essential part. Speaking for myself, and, I know, for many of my colleagues, the views to which we have come in approaching this subject are such that we should be extremely apprehensive about the measure of provincial autonomy that is provided for if it were not for what we believe to be the security in federation for India.

The Princes are a safeguard of British interests not only in the federal government, but also in the Provinces. We entirely agree. Their influence is all-pervasive. And yet people speak as if the mere juxtaposition of Indian States' representatives with British Indian representatives will make the former democratic. What is more likely is that the latter will become so inured to autocracy as not to worry too much about democracy.

WHITES AND BROWNS.

A POPULAR legislature and an irresponsible executive do not go together. The two have somehow to be reconciled, and they can be reconciled only by making the executive responsible to the legislature, whatever be the risk that may be involved in the process. Such was the argument advanced by Sir Samuel Hoare in commending the India Bill to the House, and Sir Samuel, in doing so, referred to Lord Durham's great work in Canada. Sir A. Boyd-Carpenter, however, refused to see any analogy between Canada and India. Referring to this, Mr. Morgan Jones said:

Controverting the argument of the Secretary of State, he (Sir A. Boyd-Carpenter) said that the Secretary of State was not entitled to regard the trouble between ourselves and Canada, and the final settlement, as affording any parallel to this Indian question at all. I know he developed a further argument, but this is the important sentence: He said, "There is no analogy. After all, the people of Canada and America were of our own stock." Yes, but what does that mean? Does it imply that there is some special quality belonging to white people that does not belong to other people?

Mr. Wise: Yes.

Mr. Jones: Does the hon. Member who says "Yes" imply that it requires some special kind of clay to make an hon. Member for Smethwick and another kind to make an hon. Member for Calcutta?

Mr. Wise: Yes.

Mr. Jones: I am glad to have had it so pertinently said that Providence requires to put forth a special effort to make the hon. Gentleman opposite different from an hon. Member who sits in an Indian Parliament. I decline to believe it. There is great offensiveness in

a declaration of that sort, which ought not to be offered to these people in far-off India.

BELOW THE SALT.

Mr. Jones Continued:—

In the old baronial halls of this country those of inferior quality sat below the salt. Are we to understand that in the Imperial hall, where members of the British family of nations are to sit, the Indian people are always to sit below the salt while we gorge in splendid magnificence at the high table? Is that the hon. Gentleman's point of view? If so, if I were an Imperialist I would speedily repudiate such philosophy, for that point of view is divisive and destructive in an Empire like ours. I protest with all the force at my command against this racial snobbery. Let us begin to measure men according to the quality of their heads and their hearts, and not according to the colour of their skins. Speaking from experience, after having seen white men and other men from India sitting side by side for many months in the Joint Select Committee, I say that the Indian people need not be ashamed of any comparison or contrast which may be set up.

LABOUR'S MISGIVINGS.

THE Labour Party has been rather weak in opposing the unreasonable and anti-democratic demands of the Princes. They too easily persuaded themselves that federation was a necessity and must somehow be brought about. But on this point they seem to be very unhappy. The apologetic tone in which they speak about their initial support of the federal scheme will be best indicated by what Mr. Morgan Jones said on the subject in this debate:—

Let me now turn to the main question at issue. Speaking as a Socialist and member of the Labour party, I admit that I have some difficulties about this business of Federation. I do not deny it. I say frankly that if the territory of the States were all contiguous geographically in India I could conceive—I do not admit the case is wholly on that side—a case in favour of federating British India alone and leaving the States to come in later if they choose. But the situation is not like that. States are dotted here and there all over India. There are territorial problems, problems relating to railways, postal and telegraph services, and all sorts of problems involved, and the consequence is that we are bound to consider whether the States should be brought into some Federation or other.

It is one thing to consider a federal scheme and quite another thing to consent to an undemocratic federal scheme under the belief that without federation no advance in constitution will be possible in India. The Labour Party was within an ace of being taken in by this essentially wrong idea, and though much mischief has already been wrought it is well to see that the Labour members are hastily drawing away from that idea. The Assembly's vote will very much fortify them in opposing the vicious federal scheme placed before the country.

AFTER putting forth this half-hearted defence Mr. Morgan Jones hastened to say:

But, having conceded that point, I must complain bitterly of the difference in approach made by the Government first to the Princes and then to British India. What do the Government say to British India? The Legislative Assembly has turned down the proposals of the Bill

There is scarcely a friend in the whole of India or in British India for these proposals. But the Government say to British India, "Here are our proposals. Take them or leave them." But when it comes to the Princes the Government say, "Gentlemen—your Highnesses—what would you have us do? What shall we do to please you? What conditions would you like to advance and what price shall we pay?"

BRITISH INDIA IN THE STOKE-HOLD.

MR. JONES continued :

I ask the right hon. Gentleman, Is the price to be found in the Second Schedule? Under the operation of the Second Schedule no sort of change whatever can take place in the future federated India, no change can take place in British India in the future without entitling each Prince to say, "That is an adequate reason for me to withdraw." Any such change absolves a Prince from his accession. He is free to retire, according to the Second Schedule. What this Schedule means is that in the Indian ship of state in the future, British India is to be in the stokehold, clamped down carefully, while the Princes walk gaily in the sunshine on the upper deck, splendidly protected from the glare by the great umbrella of safeguards, and if the temperature becomes a little too torrid the Governor-General and the Governor will be there to do the necessary fanning. That is the simple situation as it is now left by this Schedule.

What does this mean? Once this Bill is through, once this Constitution is passed, you cannot change it by one jot or tittle. It will be like the laws of the Medes and Persians. It cannot be altered—except of course later on with the assent of this House, and, may I add, with the assent of every Prince. In other words, His Majesty's Governor-General in India is reduced to the level of a petty policeman acting on behalf of the Princes of India to guarantee that the people of British India will behave themselves properly."

QUENCHING THE FIRES OF FREEDOM.

REFERRING to the Maharaja of Patiala's notorious "Nessus shirt" speech, Mr Jones said :

"I want it to be understood that, as far as we are concerned, we are not going to be parties to tramping down the freedom of the people of British India. I ask again, therefore, whether because these Princes regard democracy as a discredited theory our Governor-General is to be there, always available to rake out the fires from the furnaces of freedom and progress in India? It looks like it... I am prepared to vote for a federation, but I am not prepared to barter away the liberties of the people of British India in return for the acquiescence of the Princes.

SECESSION FROM FEDERATION.

It is not to be supposed that the Princes will not have the right to secede from federation in any circumstances, as will be the case with British Indian Provinces—and with Burma if it had remained part of India. Under the Second Schedule the acceding States obtain the right of withdrawal whenever any changes are made in the matters mentioned in the Schedule. The Secretary of State for a moment disputed this proposition of Mr. Morgan Jones. He said: "But surely the hon. Member knows that the Princes cannot secede so long as the conditions continue to obtain under which they enter the Federation? That seems to be perfectly reasonable." But Mr. Morgan Jones had no difficulty in showing how the right of secession arises in the case

of the States. "The point simply is this: if this schedule remains as it stands, no change can take place in British India constitutionally without giving the Princes the right to withdraw if they or any of them think fit to do so."

"PRE" TO WHAT?

IT is said that the Government of India Act, 1919, will be repealed, but the Preamble to it will be kept alive. Mr. Jones, like everyone else who thinks about it, found it very perplexing. He said :

The Act has gone, and we are left with the Preamble. A Preamble to what will it be? What is the meaning of a Preamble that is hanging in mid-air? What is the meaning of a Preamble that is not 'pre' to anything? ... I understand that if you have a Preamble of this sort suspended, as it were, in mid-air and attached to nothing at all, it means nothing. ... It is like taking away a man's shirt and leaving him with a button. A button is useful very often, but here it helps nobody, and it has no meaning whatever.

CITADEL OF FREEDOM.

MR. MORGAN JONES thus gave a declaration of faith for himself and the Labour Party in general. There spoke a truly noble Englishman.

The right hon. Gentleman the Chancellor of the Duchy (Mr. Davidson) on Friday invited the House to allow him to state a declaration of his faith. May I venture to state mine too, very humbly? I believe that it is written on the tablets of destiny, by the very finger of God, that mankind shall be free. I know that some are more ready for freedom than others, but it should become their common lot. Freedom, to me, is a great citadel set upon a hill. We have all got to climb towards it. Some will have to approach it along winding roads, others perhaps will have to blast their way through rocks, but they must all climb. There will be occasions, I have no doubt, when the very difficulty of the journey will bruise and break the feet of many, but inevitably they must climb. They will rise and fall, at times they may even slip back, but in spite of the rising and falling, in spite of the striving and the struggling, in the long run the people of the world must climb to the summit, and when they have reached that summit, they must possess the citadel of freedom.

It seems now certain that, since England will go on with this Bill, not recking what India feels about it, India will have to blast her way through rocks to freedom. It is unquestionably, a hard task, but, God willing, it will be performed.

DEMOCRACY FOR INDIA!

MR. CHURCHILL exposed the pretensions of the Liberal Opposition that England was establishing a democracy in India in these words :

"Are the second chambers in this Bill democracy? Is it democracy to have indirect election—four or five men in a room, we were told, choosing the delegates of a great Province? The hon. Member (Mr. Bernays) takes us to task as to whether we believe in it. I ask him the kind of democracy he is voting for. Is it democracy to spatchcock into the midst of your central elected chamber one-third of the representation of the stewards and bailiffs of the hereditary Princes, who are autocrats?"

GOVERNMENT BY CONSENT.

MR. CHURCHILL apparently agrees with Mr. Jinnah's estimate that the Bill is 98 p. c. safeguards and 2 p. c. responsibility. He said in this Debate :

The Government proclaim their trust in the Indian political classes, but they show their distrust by the multitude of safeguards they have introduced. Take the question of the provisions with regard to the handing over of the police. We hear all this talk about the educative value of responsibility, and it is beautifully expressed, but what is the responsibility that will really be given to the Indian Minister of a Province in regard to this? It seems to me that it is very seriously inroaded upon. He must not interfere with the internal government of the police; he cannot appoint or dismiss the chief of the police; and he is not to know the information on which the police act, although he will have to bear the responsibility of action which may involve bloodshed. It is no good saying that one should not tell them these things, for they must be well known to Indian lawyers and others who have studied the matter. Here, again, you have made the great mistake of using all kinds of language not fully justified by the act and facts for which you are responsible. The Government are floundering in the old bog of government by consent with consent not forthcoming.

FISCAL SOVEREIGNTY I

MR. CHURCHILL unerringly laid his finger on the weak spot in the so-called fiscal autonomy of India, by which the Indian legislature is supposed to regulate Indian tariffs when it is in agreement with the Indian Government, the British Government not being allowed to interfere in such cases. But the Indian Government has no independent opinion; it expresses its own opinion after ascertaining the British Government's and generally the two opinions are found to coincide! Mr. Churchill put it very effectively when he said:

"The Fiscal Convention of 1919... does not confer fiscal autonomy upon India or upon the Government of India. It does not transfer British sovereignty to an independent external body. The Government of India is not an independent body. It is a projection, to a very large extent, of the Government of Great Britain. It is open to the Secretary of State to address and, if necessary, to instruct the Viceroy, and through him the Government of India. The closest consultation in practice—the weekly letter—prevails, or ought to prevail. Many representations in my own recollection have been made by Secretaries of State to Viceroys in regard to tariffs affecting different branches of British trade. The Crown appoints the Viceroy, the Crown appoints the Finance Member of the Viceroy's Council, the Crown appoints the important functionaries who compose the Government of India, and in the ultimate issue these functionaries can be recalled by the authority of the Crown and others appointed in their stead whose views are in harmony with those of Parliament. Of course, it might not be right or expedient to do that. That would entirely depend on the circumstances of the case and the time, but that we have transferred fiscal sovereignty, that India has complete fiscal autonomy, is not warranted either by the letter or by the spirit of the so-called fiscal convention.

A RAW DEAL.

LORD EUSTACE PERCY was very much incensed with Mr. Churchill for having shown up the hollowness of the Fiscal Autonomy Convention to Indians. He said of Mr. Churchill:

He says that when the Secretary of State does not agree with the Legislature he will tell the Viceroy not to agree with the Legislature, and all will be well. If there is no objection to Americanisms, it is a little bit

like a raw deal. If that is the sort of phrasing that the right hon. Gentleman is prepared to offer to India as a sign of his honesty, his strictness and the honour of this country, then I do not wonder that he says that the Indian is beginning to doubt the honour of this country because all that is done is to reduce the fiscal convention to a pure fraud, and that it never was.

That is precisely what it is: "a pure fraud." The Secretary of State, it is true, does not make the Government of India echo the British Government's views in all cases, but that he can and often does do so is not in doubt.

NEED OF INDIA'S FRIENDSHIP.

THERE were some Members who took part in the Second Reading Debate on the Bill who complained that India's part in the last Great war was being much exaggerated, and that although she did help the help was very small, compared to her resources. This may or may not be true, but what British statesmen have to consider is whether Britain will receive even this much help from India in future if she makes enemies of all Indians—excepting of course the Princes and some reactionary communalists. Anyhow Britain may need India's help in future. Mr. Isaac Foot said:

I suggested in the last Debate that in India they had great need of us, but that also we had need of India. Members of the House will appreciate that that argument has been greatly enforced by what has happened since. General Smuts, when he spoke in this country on 13th November, referred to conditions in the Far East. He spoke of the possibility of notice being given for the denunciation of the Washington Treaties, and there was a cloud in the Far East that at present was no bigger than a man's hand. That cloud has begun to overspread the horizon, and every thinking Briton sees the necessity, I should imagine, of three things, specially when we consider the conditions in the Far East... (The third and no less urgent is the necessity) that we should be friends with India—that we should retain our friendship with India. It would make all the difference if we could turn some who are opposed to us there into our friends. That may indeed be the deciding element in that great struggle. It is a big business upon which we are engaged.

It is as clear as day-light that Great Britain will emerge from this Bill with the whole of political India turned against her. We don't know if Indian friendship will be of such crucial importance to her as Mr. Isaac Bill believes, but Great Britain could not have exerted more effective means of dissipating this asset, whatever its value may be, than by proceeding with the India Bill.

SELECTION OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT.

A COMPLAINT was made by Sir Edward Grigg—repeated in Committee by Lord Wolmer and others—that in the appointments of the Viceroy and Governors party politics plays too large a part. Sir Edward said:

A most important factor in the success of the Bill is the character and quality of the men we send to India, especially in the position of Viceroy and Governor. That has always been immensely important, and it is going to be more important than ever before under the new Constitution. I regret, and I have always regretted,

that in the appointment of Indian Governors there has been a tradition of party patronage which, curiously enough, does not apply to any other great administrative appointments throughout the Empire, so far as I know. It is a curious anomaly that always there has been a strong tradition of party patronage in regard to the appointment of the Viceroy and Indian Governors. I think an end should be made of that tradition.

The net should be thrown as wide as possible in the selection of men for the position of Governor, and above all, there should be no political bias whatever in the choice that is made. I understand that under the Act of 1919 it was laid down that the Viceroy was entitled to advise on the choice of

Provincial Governors. I am sorry that in that respect the Act of 1919 will no longer have statutory effect, and I hope it will be laid down again that the Viceroy is entitled to be consulted in the future on the choice of Provincial Governors. But, most important of all, of course, will be the choice of the Viceroy himself. He is the lynch-pin of the Constitution. This is a delicate subject to mention, but, if I may put my hope in what, I trust, is dutiful and loyal language, I would venture to express the hope that His Majesty may take occasion in the future to declare that, in his choice among his subjects of men to fill this position, he will never allow his Prerogative to be affected in any way by a partisan or a narrowly political recommendation.

“CONSIDER INDIA’S OBJECTIONS”.

COL. WEDGWOOD’S SPEECH IN THE COMMONS.

Following is the full text of the speech which Colonel Josiah C. Wedgwood delivered in the House of Commons on 11th February in the Second Reading Debate on the India Bill.

THE Noble Lord who has just spoken (Lord Eustace Percy), like other speakers in the Debate, has spent his time not in defending the Bill, nor in answering the arguments of this side, but in attacking the right hon. Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill). If the Noble Lord found it no easy task to attack the right hon. Member of Epping—his attack was a little laboured—he has found how much more difficult it is, how impossible it is, to meet the arguments against the Bill which are brought forward by the people who have to suffer from it. There has been no attempt made to answer the objections of the Indian people. It is time that those objections were stated and clearly understood. It is the Indian people who have to work the Bill and who will suffer if what we do goes wrong.

What are the objections to the Bill? The first objection to the Bill is that it is putting the Indian people, not merely the poor but the whole of the Indian people, under the control of non-representative Princes of India. Our landlords in this country are well educated by democracy, and with all their failings are, after all, men very much like ourselves. But in India you are putting the whole of the 340,000,000 people into the hands of an aristocracy which has stood still since the 16th century, and you are doing it in spite of the fact the Indians themselves do not want it. You are not merely condemning for all time 70,000,000 inhabitants of the Indian States to remain without rights and without liberty, but you are condemning all the rest of India to the same permanent injury. If you look at the list of proposed members of the Legislative Assembly, and still more at the list of members of the Council of State, you will see that by no possible manner of means can Congress or the Hindus ever have a majority, ever have any absolute control over that Assembly. So that the first fear of the Indians is that we are definitely removing our own hand and substituting a dead hand than ours in the control of the destinies of India.

Their next objection is one which relates to the words “Dominion Status” in the Preamble. I my-

self attach no importance whatever to the words “Dominion Status”, but I do attach the greatest importance, as do the Indian people, to the question of the finality of this scheme. If this Bill becomes an Act any words about Dominion Status in the Preamble will be meaningless nonsense, for we have to realise that this Bill, when we pass it, is the Act. It may have been all right in the Preamble to the Bill of 1919 to state that that Measure was the first of a series of stages in the intended development of Home Rule for India, but what would be the point of attaching a statement to this Bill suggesting further steps forward when, by the very fact of passing this Bill, we make any further step forward impossible? Even my hon. Friend the member for Caerphilly (Mr. Morgan Jones) when dealing with this point did not realise how absolutely impossible it is to change this Bill.

Suppose we were the Government in six years’ time, and suppose that we genuinely wanted to take a forward step. We should be faced with the difficulty of not only repealing an Act of Parliament, not only repealing a Constitution, but of breaking a treaty with some 600 native rulers—and that is a thing which you cannot do. The Indians realise perfectly well that this Bill when it becomes an Act and is brought into operation in India will be the end. This is a treaty between one sovereign nation and a large number of sovereign Princes which cannot be altered without the consent of every one of those sovereign Princes. It is not merely a question of the new Indian Assembly reforming itself. I think that would be extremely unlikely, seeing that the directly elected element is so small. It is not a question of the Legislative Assembly sending resolutions to us urging that this measure should be altered. It will be noticed that in these discussions emphasis has been laid on the fact that the only thing that can be altered by Parliament here is not this Measure, but the Instrument of Instructions.

This Measure therefore is sacrosanct, and in order to realise the desperate opposition to it in India, one must realise that by its passing, all future hope of constitutional advance is destroyed *in toto*. That

is the real reason why the Government stand out against a meaningless Preamble to the Bill about Dominion status. If this is not Dominion Status, then nothing else can be done. The first objection then is to federation with the Indian States which puts India under the control of the Indian States and the Princes of those States. The second objection is that the Bill is absolutely final, and that there is no hope of the best-intentioned Labour Government in the future ever doing anything more. The next serious objection—which has not been once mentioned not even from these benches—is the rooted objection of the whole Hindu population to communal representation. That is an objection, the force of which must be felt by every one who understands our own institutions in this country.

So far as the Princes are concerned, they only rule at the Centre. So far as finality is concerned, it only affects the Centre. But this communal objection affects every one of the Provinces as well as the Centre. We had in this country last week an admirable example of the value of democracy, in the explosion which took place in connection with the unemployment scales of pay. It was reflected immediately in this House and immediately produced an unexampled *volte face* on the part of the Government. That was a triumph of democracy. If it had been a case of a number of Labour Members on these benches complaining about those scales, their views would have been discounted and nothing would have been done. Had the Liberals complained they would have been told that they were making it into a party squabble. It was because the complaints came from the Tory benches that they produced such an effect.

Suppose that we had been living under the system which we propose for India. Suppose that the Members on these benches were elected by the trade unions, and the Liberals by the chambers of commerce and the Conservatives by some other section. Suppose that you had the Moslems sitting here and the Sikhs over there and the Hindus somewhere else, each body representing select communities. A dozen Members of the Labour party or a dozen Members representing depressed classes would feel bound to get up and say something when the interests of their people were attacked. But the rest of the House walk out. Their remarks would be treated with contempt and derision because it would be known that they would never be in a majority. The other Members would also know that they themselves had not one single constituent affected by the difficulty whatever it might be. But that is the sort of system which we are proposing to establish in India.

I notice a tendency even on these benches to consider it a matter of importance whether a minority has eight members or 10 members on a council. It does not matter a rap. Two men could express the Labour point of view on a council where there was a large anti-Labour majority, but from the point of view of power 10 men would be just as helpless as one. The number of the minority is known and can be discounted and their views can be taken as read. On the

other hand, if working men have votes in the constituencies and if all the members are dependent on those votes then the working men can get their views expressed as the views of the unemployed were expressed the other day in this House—by their Tory representatives. The vice of the system which we are about to import into India is inconceivable and its effects will be widespread. It means that at election time the only views which candidates will express will be views of bitter hostility to other creeds, classes and interests. It means that all politics will be directed towards hating somebody else, instead of trying to co-operate with the other people concerned.

In this country we are moderate in our views. The Conservatives are moderate. Labour is most moderate. The Conservatives know that there are some Labour people who will vote for them. We on these benches know that there are probably a good many nominal Conservatives who may vote for us. If I were elected by the Protestant Alliance or the Co-operative Union exclusively, my speeches would be directed towards the errors of the Catholic faith, or the vices of uncontrolled competition as the case might be. As it is, we represent all sections and therefore we are more moderate, more careful and more willing to co-operate with others. We propose to bring this vice of communal representation into this new Constitution, but we know that there is not a man in this country who would tolerate it here. Yet there has not been one word from the Government in defence of it although in India it is the one issue with 240,000,000 Hindus. It is all they are thinking of in connection with this Bill and it affects every one of them.

In four Provinces, Bengal, the Punjab, the North-West Frontier, and Sind there is a statutory Mahomedan majority for all time. No matter what these people do, the Hindus will always be out of office and in a minority. No single Hindu will be allowed to vote for a Mahomedan or to choose between one Mahomedan candidate and another. He will have no vote for the ruling class, no vote for the Government, no right to vote against the Government, and no power to vote for the Government, and, above all, the Mahomedan need never demean himself by asking for a vote from a Hindu. That is a nice way of bringing people together.

The Noble Lord the Member for Horsham (Earl Winterton) said the other day how advantageous it was to have a Constitution wherein there was some chance of the person who went in for real politics getting into office, that, after all, the desire to control and rule was a legitimate desire for anyone in public life. In all the Provinces in India, under this Bill you are making it impossible for the minority ever to hold office. The swing of the pendulum cannot take place. In Madras no Mahomedan has a vote for a Hindu and he has only a small minority of the seats. The Hindu Government in Madras Province need not regard him. The Hindus, however, are a mild, gentle race—they are not accustomed to bullying minorities—but when you get up into the Punjab and, worse still, into Sind and into the North-West

Frontier Province, what sort of treatment will be meted out to the statutory minorities there, the people who have no votes for their masters, the people who are 20 per cent. of the population in the North-West Frontier Province and in Sind, but very nearly 50 per cent. in the Punjab? They can never have a vote for the people who are ruling them or against the people who are ruling them.

What use the vote is supposed to be for them in these circumstances I cannot conceive. They can go on returning a body of Brahmans, but never will they have the opportunity to take office or the right of expressing effectively their detestation of the way in which the government of the Province is conducted. The Provincial Government, it should be remembered, controls education, police, public works, and water, and the whole life of the minority can be made intolerable by the hostile government of people who not only do not inter-marry with them, but who despise them, and treat them, and view them as Jews now, and who will treat them and view them as Hitler does, once they have permanent power over these unfortunate people. That is why you get these votes against this Bill in the Indian Assembly.

Turn to Bengal, where up till now 60 per cent. of the seats on the Bengal Council are Hindu seats and 40 per cent. Mahommedan seats. Under this Bill, for which the Government is responsible, communal representation is perpetuated in Bengal, against the wishes of the majority of the population, and instead of the 60 per cent. being Hindus and 40 per cent. Mahommedans, you are arranging for 80 of the seats to be Hindu seats at the outset and 119 Mahommedan, and not only at this next election, but for all time, you have a majority for the Mahommedans on that Legislative Council, so that they can never be unseated in Bengal. What do you think the teeming 48,000,000 of people in Bengal, the majority of whom are Hindus, and those Hindus perhaps on the whole better educated than the Mahommedans—what do you think their attitude is likely to be towards a Bill which deprives them of some control of their affairs and, with a gesture of benevolence to these people, hands them over to the Mahommedans and Princes? We have just managed to block the idea of giving responsible representative government to Palestine. Why? Because the minority of Jews objected. We have managed to stop the same thing in Cyprus because the minority of Mahommedans objected.

In India you have the wishes of this vast majority of the people, 240,000,000 out of 350,000,000 disregarded in a Constitution which no one in this House can defend, which enshrines for all time injustice, intolerance, and bullying, in a country which up to now has enjoyed British rule, and which is at any rate free from that sort of thing. Did hon. Members notice that in the Assembly the other day, by an extraordinary miracle—I do not know how it happened—the Mahommedans joined with the Hindus in passing a resolution to the effect that this Bill was fundamentally bad and utterly unacceptable?

The majority that carried that was telegraphed to us here as about 74 to 58, but of those 58, nearly 50 were not elected members, elected, that is, by the Anglo-Indians or by the Chambers of Commerce. The overwhelming majority of the elected members of that Assembly voted that this Bill was fundamentally bad and utterly unacceptable, and the only effect of that in this country is to say: "Silly fools, they are only saying that in order to get more." If you go on thinking that the Indian objections to this Bill are put-up objections, simply raised in order to bluff the Government into giving more, or into taking away some of the safeguards, or something of that sort, you are in for an ugly awakening.

The impression conveyed to India to-day by the refusal to meet these objections from the Indian people, by the refusal to look at them, by the sneering way that they are always spoken of as bluffs, is that you are determined to put this Bill on the Statute Book and into operation in India against the wishes of the Indian people and even though the Indian people are diametrically opposed to it and may refuse to work it. But to refuse to work this Bill is impossible. No party in India will be fools enough not to go on to the councils and take what chance they can under the Bill. They will cut their own throats if they do not, but when they are on, then how are they going to operate the Bill? Aroused to fury by the fact that it has been imposed upon them against their wishes, with all this slobber about amity and unity and friendship thrown in to make it more bitter, they are then going to use what opportunities they have under the Bill of getting a bit of their own back on us. Why go on with this? Why persist in making enemies, doing what we do not want and doing what they do not want? What is the reason for persisting? Could we not at least put everything right even now if only we got a statement from the Government that when this Bill is passed it will be at the option of India whether it is imposed or not?

When we got out a new constitution for Ceylon, a small island rather more backward than India, with a population of 5,000,000, we got out what I think was a good Constitution and what the Ceylon people did not. It was not good enough for them, and they bluffed, or tried to, in order to get more. They really objected to the franchise. We did not force it on Ceylon, though it would have been perfectly easy to force her. We gave her the opportunity of voting upon it, and told her frankly, "If you want it, there it is, accept it." She boggled about it for pretty nearly a year, and she accepted it by a majority vote at last. It may not have worked well since, but, at any rate, the passing of the Measure and the institution of the new Constitution was not done against the wishes of the people of Ceylon. Why cannot we have a statement from the Prime Minister before this Debate closes that if the people of India really prefer the *status quo* to this Bill they should at least be permitted to say so? That would prevent the Bill being put into operation against their wishes.

MR. HOLFORD KNIGHT: Fifteen years ago my right hon. Friend and I were together with Mr. Gandhi when the first claim for Dominion status was made. I want to ask my right hon. Friend whether this scheme does not provide a larger measure of self-government than was then contemplated?

COLONEL WEDGWOOD: It is not comparable in the least. What I am saying is that, even if we believe this to be a good scheme, we have no right to force it on people who do not want it. I say that so far as the federal part is concerned, it should depend upon a vote of the elected members—Mahommedans, Hindus and Sikhs—in the Assembly at Delhi; and as to the Provinces, it should be left to each present Province

to decide whether to set up this new Constitution or remain as it is. I think that in all the Provinces except four the new Constitution would come into force, but I am confident that Bengal, Punjab, North-West Frontier and Sind would reject it, and go on rejecting it. It will always be in the power of India to take a step forward once the Hindus and the Mahommedans can come together on a sound democratic basis without this communal system of election. I am tired of putting this point of view to the Government, but really it has never been put in this Debate at all. It is a question for the Indians, and not for the English; to decide whether this Constitution should become law.

BILL'S WORST FEATURE: IMMUTABILITY.

BY H. N. BRAILSFORD.

SIMULTANEOUSLY, this week, the House of Commons and the Legislative Assembly at Delhi have debated the new Indian Constitution. In these days, anything said in Delhi is audible at Westminster, provided only that one chooses to listen. The House of Commons did not so choose.

It is certain that it will, by a great majority, approve the Government's bill while, with an approach to unanimity, the elected members of the Indian Assembly have already recorded their disapproval.

Here surely is a remarkable fact. It is intelligible enough that Englishmen should dismiss the opinions of Indians as unworthy of notice. That attitude has prevailed through a hundred and fifty years.

But to offer these same Indians an instrument with which to govern themselves, and yet to dismiss their view of it as negligible—this is difficult to understand.

For if Indians are unfit to judge a Constitution, they are also unfit to work it. If they have the brains and character to govern themselves, then their view of the sort of government they want deserves attention.

In fact, Parliament is not really as inconsistent as it seems. It has no intention of permitting Indians to govern themselves. This Bill that promises self-government is a sham.

It is well, nonetheless, that Indian opinion should be recorded. The motion before the Assembly is for the total rejection of the Constitution. This is proposed by the Congress Party, much the largest in the House. To the Left of it is an extreme Hindu group, the Nationalists.

It, too, is for rejection and it differs from Congress only in wishing to make a special protest against Mr. MacDonald's communal award, which was, it thinks, unduly partial to the Moslems.

Together these two Parties constitute a substantial majority of the elected Indian members. The view of the Moslem minority is recorded in a detailed resolution.

They think it necessary to say that they approve the communal award. They ask for wide amendments of the highly undemocratic proposals for provincial autonomy.

Finally, they say in the plainest and simplest words they could have chosen that the plan of Federation is "bad", that they would prefer to start with

responsible self-government at the centre in British India only, and that the Princes should accordingly be omitted from the scheme.

It will be seen, then, that about all the larger matters the elected Indian members are unanimous.

They all condemn the federal scheme, and they all are dissatisfied with the flagrantly undemocratic character of the provincial scheme.

Parliament, then, is about to impose on Indians a Constitution that their elected representatives have already rejected.

The conquest of this Peninsula is never finished. Whether we fight or whether we legislate, whether we beat or whether we imprison, we repeat the original act of violence in all we do.

The Labour Party is well aware of the undemocratic character of the schemes under which these vast provinces are to be governed. The mass of the poorer peasants and rural labourers will have no votes at all.

The urban workers will have some representation, but it will be neutralised many times over by the additional representation given to the great landlords and the Chambers of Commerce.

The five chief provinces will have Upper Houses elected by a picked handful of the rich.

India, in short, will be governed by her usurers, her landlords, her capitalists, and the lawyers who serve them.

This is "bad", to use the simple language of the Indian Moslems, but it is not the worst thing in this Constitution.

The franchise can be widened and the Upper Houses abolished after a delay of ten years, if Parliament then chooses to amend its work.

The worst thing in this Bill cannot be altered. Once it comes into force, neither Parliament nor the people of India will have the power to change it. I refer to the terms on which the Princes are to enter the federation.

They come in as sovereigns and as parties to a treaty. It cannot be changed save with the consent of all of them.

The population of the Princes' States is not quite a quarter of the whole Peninsula. But they are given a third of the voting power in the Lower House, and 40 per cent. in the Upper.

They are, as everyone knows, autocrats, and they will nominate their representatives as they see fit.

With the exception of three or four unusual men, they have the opinions common to despots.

They are, that is to say, reactionaries in all social and religious questions, and stand for the stiffest reading of the rights of property and the claims of wealth.

The federation starts, then, with an irreducible conservative block. If only 11 per cent. of the Upper House drawn from the provinces is conservative, then no legislation, even of the mildest liberal type, can ever be enacted.

This Constitution hands India over not merely to property, but to property that thinks with the mind of the Dark Ages.

This has been done deliberately. These Princes are the puppets of the Viceroy. He can, and occasionally does, depose them. Some of them hold their thrones only because British troops overawe their rebellious subjects.

That is the case of the notorious "Mr. A", the ruler of Cashmere. The Princes were brought in for the cynical purpose of checking Hindu democracy.

They are, in fact, merely the lackeys of the

British Viceroy, but they have brown skins: they look like Indians.

Pretending to give Home Rule to India, we have made the gift at once ineffectual and safe by packing the legislature of the Federation with Princes who are our tenants at will.

The Labour Party understands perfectly what an undemocratic franchise means. It fights it. But it has not grasped this much subtler Oriental dodge.

So it allows by far the worst thing in this Constitution to slip through in silence. I know, of course, what can be said. Some day, one by one the weaker of these Princes, or the best among them, will be compelled to grant constitutions to their subjects.

It may be so. But we have no right to gamble with this chance, when the destinies of India's millions of peasants and workers are at stake.

Let the Princes come into the federation when they have granted civil and political rights to their subjects, but not before.

To admit them as despots is to destroy any hope that India can emerge, save by a revolutionary struggle, from the slum existence that is her lot today.—The *Reynolds Illustrated News*.

A FATAL FEDERATION.

THE House of Commons opened its discussion of the India Bill this week in presence of the fact that Indian opinion, with an unexpected approach to unanimity, has already rejected it. It is not yet known how the vote in the All-India Legislative Assembly will go. Probably it will not be dramatic, and it may even at this historic moment reflect the wretched communal jealousies that divide Indians. The facts, however, are these. The Congress party stands for the unqualified rejection of the entire scheme. So does the extreme Hindu left wing, which insists on emphasising its special dislike of the communal award. Together these two, with a few Sikhs and Moslems of 'Congress' colour, constitute a majority of the elected Indian members. The Moslem view, as voiced in the resolution of Mr. Jinnah's party, is rather subtler. It likes the communal award and no wonder. It wants some vital amendments (which it is not likely to get) in the scheme of provincial autonomy. But it roundly condemns as 'bad' the whole federal plan, and wishes to begin with responsible central government in British India, leaving the Princes outside. These cross-currents of opinion may save the Government from a spectacular defeat, if it calls the official and nominated members to its aid. The fact remains that the whole mass of the elected members has recorded its hostility to the entire architectural plan of this Federation. Hindus and Moslems are agreed in rejecting its central strategical conception—the idea of calling in the Princes to neutralise Hindu democracy. They are also agreed in condemning the more reactionary features of the provincial constitutions. Where they differ, it is according to plan. We will not say that the communal award was consciously designed to divide them; enough that it was well calculated to have that effect.

The National Government is in a position to

treat this record of Indian opinion as a negligible and meaningless fact and, with its eyes open, impose a constitution upon India. It is possible and even probable that Indians can be found among the Princes, the plutocrats and the wealthier lawyers to work this constitution with the aid of the communal dissensions that it aggravates. But no good will come of it. India will not be reconciled, nor can any Indian Government emerge from it capable of grappling creatively with the desperate social and economic problems of a sub-continent that is little better than a vast rural slum. Sooner or later the banked-up fires of rebellion will break out again, and then, it may be, even Tories will regret that they imposed a constitution that contains in itself no provisions for amendment.

Against this view, among Liberals and even in the Labour Party, a more tolerant view of this constitution has come to prevail. This opinion is the natural consequence of the magnificent fuss that Mr. Churchill has made. "Surely", the average Liberal reflects, "if this constitution is so distasteful to the die-hards, it must represent a really valuable instalment of Indian freedom. Perhaps the safeguards are excessive, but after all, though a Viceroy may have these very favourable 'special powers,' one need not suppose that he will often exercise them; they will gradually lapse. Responsible government, however illusory it may be at the centre, is genuine enough in the provinces. Finally, though no Liberal can admire a propertied franchise or communal electorates, or those arrangements which give double representation to landed property and industrial capital, or the really shocking Upper Chambers of rich men armed with a veto that will hamper the legislative work of the five chief provinces, even these blemishes may be removed by Parliament after the lapse of ten years. We regret that the promise

of Dominion status is not embodied in the preamble, but after all this Bill does take a long step in the evolution of the Indian Dominion that must eventually come."

It would be possible to answer this cheerful view of the Bill point by point. The mischief of excessive safeguards, some of them designed to preserve the control of the City over Indian finance, is not so much that they will often be used, but that they poison the atmosphere and create revolt by suggesting distrust. A provincial Governor will rarely have to use his 'special powers,' because his Cabinet (over which he is to preside) will never be allowed to forget that he holds them always in reserve. We believe that the necessary 'safeguards' could have been secured in a much less objectionable way, if the Federal Court had been made the custodian of the positive rights of minorities, British residents and others, as defined in the constitution. Again, the provinces are not, in fact, as autonomous as they look, since they must depend on the Centre for any considerable expansion of the revenues required for the social services. Again, though the ultra-conservative provincial constitutions can be reviewed in ten years, in the interval we are handing India over to be ruled by its propertied class, and nowhere on this earth are usurers, small industrialists and wholly parasitic landlords a less enlightened crew. Finally, the failure to fix any date for the Indianisation of the army renders the hope of an early or rapid evolution towards Dominion Status extremely precarious.

There is, however, a consideration that in our view dwarfs every other, and forbids us to regard this Bill as an instalment of reform that one grudgingly accepts for lack of something better. The calling in of the Princes to neutralise the Hindu masses (who in any event are barely represented) was a clever stroke of imperialist statecraft. The Princes, with few exceptions, are old-world autocrats, ultra-conservatives on every political, social, and economic question. They are notoriously in leading-strings to Simla, and yet they have the merit of looking like Indians. With only two or three exceptions their States enjoy no civil or political rights, and their representatives in the Federal Legislature will be their personal nominees. Once there they will dominate it, for with less than a quarter of the total population they will have in the Lower House a third of the voting power, and in the Upper House forty per cent. The federation starts, therefore, with an irreducible conservative block which needs only a slight reinforcement from the over-represented propertied element of British India to dominate the peninsula for ever. Elections may be held; the provinces may send up time after time big radical contingents, but with the help of a handful of minority groups the Princes can keep property in the saddle for any period of time that need concern us.

The worst is still to come. The provisions for representation in the provinces, in our view very reactionary, can after 10 years be amended. But no one, not even the Parliament at Westminster, can touch these Princes or lessen their rights. They enter

as sovereign parties to a Treaty. It would be *ultra vires* to impose on them any charter of civil or political rights, to lessen their excessive voting strength, or to require them to carry out any species of election. This they will do, if ever, at their own good pleasure.

Few have realised this aspect of the constitution. In our view it buys a spurious unity for the peninsula at the cost of permanent enslavement to the ugliest form of reaction. Some answers are possible. It may be said that the Princes are merely the drilled bodyguard of the Viceroy, which will vote as it is told. In that case the federation is an even worse sham than it looks. Or else, it may be said that one day the Princes will be driven to grant constitutions. It may be so. But some of them have fairly strong armies; all of them can count on the Paramount Power to suppress rebellion; few of them (perhaps four) face any free or organised opinion, or need fear a free press. To hand over India to these obscurantist despots, on the chance that revolutions will occur within any predictable time in hundreds of the most variously situated States, strikes us as a peculiarly irresponsible form of optimism. One has no right to gamble in this way with the destiny of the Indian masses.

For two main reasons, then, we believe that the Opposition should fight this Bill in the spirit of men who mean, when they get the chance, to deal with India on a very different footing. This settlement breaks the Prime Minister's pledge of free negotiation between equals, and it hands India over, without the possibility of amendments, to the Princes. For that reason it cannot be tolerated as a harmless, if inadequate, instalment of reform. It threatens irreparable harm. Mr. Lansbury in his moving broadcast address appealed to the Government to withdraw the Bill and throw on Indians the responsibility for framing their own constitution. The new fact at Delhi makes such a course possible. When even the Mahomedans, the prop of British rule and the models of loyalty, declare the scheme of federation 'bad' and unacceptable, is it prudent to proceed with it?

For our part we have always thought that the work should have been done by two stages. First, let the autonomous provinces be constituted (but without Upper Houses and plural representation for property). Then without delay let the self-governing provinces combine to form a federation. As for the Princes' States, let them come in on the same terms, that is to say, when they accept a common charter of civil and political rights and a common electoral system. This might have been done, and in fact nearly was done, towards the close of the Round Table Conference. The Indians, however, would have none of it, because they distrusted this Government, and feared endless delay, or worse than delay in constituting the federation.

There are ways of meeting that difficulty. It is possible to lay it down explicitly that within a year after the provinces are constituted on the new basis their popular Chambers shall elect delegations which shall form what would be in effect a Constituent

Assembly. It will have at its disposal all the volumes of evidence and all the memoranda written for the Round Table. It should be free to decide on all matters of purely Indian concern. The few vital things that concern this country, mainly the arrangements for the transitional period, must of course be subject to negotiation. The Dominion should be actually constituted, save that for some defined period of years, while the army is Indianized, certain of its rights must remain in abeyance. It should be understood that in the interim Indians are free in debate and free in association, as they are not today under a network of repressive legislation, and with the two leaders, Jawaharlal Nehru and Gaffer Khan, who rank only after Gandhi in popular affection, kept in what looks like permanent confinement. This would be our petition, even now and even to this Government. But if it hardens its heart, then we shall hope that a Labour Government may arrive in time to carry some such programme before this fatal federation is actually in being.—*New Statesman*, Feb. 9.

PRINCES' DECISION.

Following is the text of the resolution passed by a meeting of Indian States' rulers and ministers held in Bombay on the 25th inst. to consider the India Bill.

THE Princes and the representatives of the States present at this meeting have examined the Government of India Bill, and the draft Instrument of Accession and read and considered the report made by the Committee of Ministers presided over by Sir Akbar Hydari which has recently dealt with some of the important provisions of the said Bill and the draft Instrument of Accession. They have also considered the opinion of legal advisers and experts whose views have been obtained thereon. While reserving to themselves the right to offer further observations and criticisms in due course, the Princes and the representatives of States present at this meeting fully endorse the observations and criticisms contained in the report submitted by the Committee of Ministers to the extent that the Committee have been able to deal with the matters in question.

This meeting desires to emphasise that in many respects the Bill and the Instrument of Accession depart from the arrangements arrived at during the meetings of the representatives of the States with members of His Majesty's Government, and regrets to note that the Bill and the Instrument of Accession do not secure those vital interests and fundamental requisites of the States on which they have throughout laid great emphasis.

This meeting is of the definite opinion that, in their present form and without satisfactory modifications of, and alterations to, the fundamental points, the Bill and the Instrument of Accession cannot be regarded as acceptable to the Indian States.

ANTI-COMMUNAL AWARD CONFERENCE.

The second session of the All-India Anti-Communal Award Conference, which met in Delhi on 23rd and 24th February under the presidency of Mr. C. Y. Chintamani, passed the following resolutions about the Communal Award and the India Bill :—

Resolved that this second session of the All-India Anti-Communal Award Conference condemns without reservation or qualification the so-called Award, as being grossly unjust, to Hindus and Sikhs particularly, as making for increased communal discord, as being anti-national and undemocratic and as rendering it very difficult for the legislature to function on non-communal lines for the amelioration of the condition of the people as a whole as well as because it will have the effect of strengthening the British domination over India.

Resolved that this Conference is firmly of opinion that the Government of India Bill is full of provisions, including the so-called Communal Award, injurious to the Indian interests and obnoxious to Indian opinion and should, therefore, be withdrawn.

Correspondence.

"THE FEDERAL APPLE-CART UPSET."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SERVANT OF INDIA.

SIR,—I entirely agree with you when you say in your leading article "The Federal Apple-Cart Upset" that the Government of India were wrong in taking part in the voting on amendments to their resolution to consider the Joint Parliamentary Committee's report. But you are right in stating that it is just as well that the Government put forth all their strength and yet were heavily defeated.

As to the precise import of the amendments carried by the Assembly, I entirely agree with you that from the point of view of the Government of India as expressed in the Assembly, they cannot honestly say that the Indian people desire to save the reforms scheme although they talk of rejecting it. I also agree with you that, even on a narrower interpretation, the Government cannot go on with the particular scheme of federation, now embodied in the Government of India Bill.

If, on the other hand, the Government do take the resolution as one for the wholesale rejection of the scheme, the Government should withdraw the Bill and go on under the existing constitution. As you rightly point out, the Legislative Assembly elected on this specific issue turned down the federation by a large majority.

I cordially endorse your appeal to the Princes. I entirely agree with every word of what you write: "They (Indian Princes) may or may not be able to help British India to 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 they wisdom and the high heart which the occasion demands!"

I also do not agree to the doctrine that central responsibility is bound up with federation. It is perfectly possible to have British Indian responsible government, without federation. I whole-heartedly echo your sentiment when you conclude this striking article, with the following sentences:—"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 the scrap-heap."—Yours, etc.

S. SATYAMURTI.

New Delhi, 19th February.