

All Parties Conference 1928

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Fourth Sessions - Lucknow

August 28th to 31st, 1928

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The fourth sessions of the All Parties Conference were held in the Kaiserbagh Baradari in Lucknow from August 28th to 31st, 1928. Among the organisations represented, apart from the Congress Working Committee, were :

- All India Liberal Federation
- All India Muslim League
- Hindu Maha Sabha
- Central Khilafat Committee
- Central Sikh League
- Home Rule League
- All India Conference of Indian Christians
- Jamiat-ul-Ulema
- All India States Peoples Conference
- Congress Party in the Assembly
- Nationalist Party in the Assembly
- British Indian Association of Oudh
- Indian Association of Calcutta
- Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce
- Sind National League
- Deccan Sabha
- Swadhin Bharat Sangh and
- The Provincial Congress Committees of Ajmer, Andhra, Behar, Bengal, Burma, Central Provinces (Hindustani), Central Provinces (Marathi), Delhi, Gujrat, Karnatak, Kerala, Punjab, Sind, United Provinces, and Utkal.

A number of messages were received from delegates who were unable to be present expressing their regret at their inability to attend and sending their good wishes to the Conference. A very large number of telegrams and letters were also received from all parts of the country wishing success to the Conference.

The proceedings began soon after midday on the 28th August with the president of the Conference, Dr. M. A. Ansari, in the chair.

The Maharaja of Mahmudabad welcomed the delegates. He reminded them of the Lucknow pact of 1916 and trusted that the same spirit

would prevail in the deliberations of the Conference. He hoped that all parties would give unqualified support to the Nehru Committee's report.

The president then addressed the House. He congratulated the Nehru Committee and testified to the noble and single-minded devotion with which the chairman and members of that committee had applied themselves to this epoch-making work. Emphasising the tremendous implications attaching to the report, he said :

“ India has gone through many and varied phases of the struggle for liberty, but never in the chequered history of this country's fight for freedom had representatives of all schools of political thought assembled together to draw up a definite scheme of our constitution. That has now been done by the committee. It is in itself a historic event, and when we see the background of the dark events of the last few years, resulting in spasmodic and ineffective attempts to introduce some light into the darkness of wilderness, of confused aims and objects in which we had lost ourselves, and of complacent challenges that were being thrown at us both from within the country and beyond the seven seas, I need hardly tell you that this report becomes a doubly historic event. Members of this Conference, the consequences of what we do today will not die tomorrow or the day after. They will endure. It is in our hands to make or mar our future. Let there be no mistake about the consequences that will arise out of our actions today”.

Proceeding, the president said that the Nehru scheme was the last hope of 300 millions of human beings suffering intolerably under the double misery of foreign domination and internal dissensions, but he did not claim infallibility for it.

He concluded with this appeal :—“ If the representatives assembled here today have got the key to India's happiness, they have also got the key to her continued misery that will become doubly acute now. The terrible responsibility lies on you of choosing between the two, which will decide India's destiny. I earnestly hope you will choose well”.

The president then called upon Pandit Motilal Nehru to submit the Committee's report and Mr. Nehru formally placed the report before the Conference.

Lala Lajpat Rai then moved the following resolution :

1. “ This Conference places on record its grateful appreciation of the work done by Pandit Motilal Nehru, the chairman, and his colleagues, Sir Ali Imam, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr Aney, Sardar Mangal Singh, Mr. Shuaib Qureshi, Mr. Subhas Bose and Mr. G. Pradhan, members of the Committee appointed by this Conference to determine the principles of a constitution for India”.

This was seconded by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Speeches in favour of the resolution were delivered by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Dr. Annie Besant, Mr. J. M. Sen—Gupta, Moulvi Mohammad Yakub, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Mr. C. Vijjara-

ghavachariar, Gyani Sher Singh, Raja Sir Rampal Singh, Maulana Ahmad Said, Mr. C. Y. Chintamani, Mr. M. Chagla, Choudhri Beharilal and Mr. Tufail Ahmad.

One member of the Conference, Mr. Hasrat Mohani however opposed the resolution. The resolution was passed with only one dissentient.

Pandit Motilal Nehru and Sir Ali Imam thanked the Conference on behalf of the Committee.

The second resolution was proposed by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. It was as follows :—

2. Without restricting the liberty of action of those political parties whose goal is complete independence this Conference declares :

Dominion Status

- (1) that the form of government to be established in India should be responsible, that is to say, a government in which the executive should be responsible to a popularly elected legislature possessing full and plenary powers ;
- (2) that such form of government shall in no event be lower than that of any self-governing dominion.

Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer seconded the resolution and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru supported it. The discussion on this resolution was not concluded when the Conference was adjourned to the next day.

Second Day—29th August

The discussion on Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya's resolution on Dominion Status was continued.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru opposed Dominion Status and said that independence should be the goal. On behalf of those who stood for independence he read the following statement :—

“ We, the signatories of this statement, are of opinion that the constitution of India should only be based on full independence. We feel that the resolution that has been placed before the All Parties' Conference definitely commits those who support it to a constitution based on what is termed Dominion Status. We are not prepared to accept this, and we, therefore, cannot accept or support this resolution. We recognise that the preamble to the resolution gives us the right to carry on our activity in favour of independence, but this preamble does not in any way lessen the commitment contained in the second part of the resolution.

We have decided, however, not to obstruct or hamper the work of this Conference, but we desire to record our considered opinion on this question and to dissociate ourselves from this particular resolution in so far as it commits us to the acceptance of Dominion Status. We shall not take any part in this resolution by moving amendments or by voting on it. We propose to carry

on such activity as we consider proper and necessary in favour of complete independence”.

Maulana Kifayatullah, Moulvi Mohammad Shafi, Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose, Pandit Hriday Nath Kunzru, Dr. Kitchlew, Dr. Mohammad Alam, Mr. T. Viswanatham and Sardar Sardul Singh also took part in the discussion.

Mr. Hasrat Mohani moved an amendment to delete the second clause of the resolution. The amendment fell for want of a seconder.

After Pandit Malaviya had replied the original resolution was put to the vote and carried *nem con* with acclamation.

The Conference then adjourned till the next day.

Third Day—30th August

The third resolution of the Conference was moved by Mr. Manilal Kothari. It related to the Indian States and ran as follows :—

3. This Conference approves the recommendations of
Indian States the Committee in regard to the Indian States.

This was seconded by Mr. Pathik. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya also spoke on the resolution, which was adopted unanimously.

At this stage the president announced that an agreement had been arrived at on the Sind question. This announcement was greeted with great applause. The president placed this agreement in the form of a resolution from the chair. It ran as follows :—

4. Simultaneously with the establishment of Government in accordance with the Nehru Committee's report Sind shall be separated from Bombay and constituted into a separate province.

Provided

(1) after an enquiry it is found

(a) that Sind is financially self-supporting,

(b) in the event of its being found that it is not financially self-supporting, on the scheme of separation being laid before the people of Sind with its financial and administrative aspects, the majority of the inhabitants favour the scheme and express their readiness to bear the financial responsibility of the new arrangement;

(2) that the form of Government in Sind shall be the same as in the other provinces under the constitution;

(3) that the non-Muslim minority in Sind shall be given the same privileges in the matter of representation in the Provincial and Central Legislatures as the Muslim minorities are given under the Nehru Committee's report in areas where they are in a minority.

The resolution was adopted unanimously with acclamation.

The fifth resolution of the Conference dealt with the redistribution of provinces and was moved by Pandit Dwarka Prasad Mishra. Moulvi Abdul Majid seconded.

Various amendments had been tabled but eventually an agreed resolution embodying some of the amendments was placed before the Conference. This ran as follows :—

5. This Conference having taken into consideration the
Redistribution of Pro- recommendations contained in the report
vinces about the redistribution and the status of
provinces, accords its approval to them,
as an integral part of the agreed constitution.

And recommends that the Commission provided for in clause 72 of the draft constitution shall in conformity with the principles of the said recommendations, and with the assistance of such committee or committees as it may consider desirable to appoint,

- (a) take all necessary steps to constitute Karnataka and Andhra into separate provinces;
- (b) take steps to amalgamate the Oriya speaking tracts in the different provinces and constitute this amalgamated area into a separate province if the people of that area are able or are prepared to bear the financial burden which is incidental to separation;
- (c) report on the cases of C. P. Hindustani, Kerala and any other linguistic areas which may desire to be constituted into separate provinces;
- (d) resettle the boundaries of Assam and Bengal, Behar and Orissa and C. P. Hindustani, Kerala and Karnataka in accordance with the principles recommended by the Committee.

The president put this from the chair and it was carried unanimously.

Lala Lajpat Rai then moved a resolution adopting in principle the constitution outlined in the Nehru Committee's report. This was seconded by Mr. A. Rangaswami Iyengar and supported by Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal. Mr. Chagla moved an amendment relating to the amendment of the constitution. Mr. Chagla's amendment was subsequently altered and was adopted by the Conference as a substantive resolution on the 31st August. It is given in the proceedings of that day.

The Conference adjourned to the 31st August.

Fourth Day—31st August

The discussion on Lala Lajpat Rai's resolution was continued. Mr. Vijjaraghavachariar moved an amendment suggesting that instead of adopting in principle the report, it should be considered clause by

clause. This was seconded by Mr. Viswanatham and opposed by Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal.

At this stage further discussion on Lala Lajpat Rai's resolution was adjourned as news was received that the Punjab delegates had come to an agreement on the Punjab question. Lala Lajpat Rai's resolution was taken up in an amended form, at a later stage of the proceedings.

The announcement by the president about the Punjab agreement was received by the Conference with prolonged applause. The agreement was signed by Dr. S. D. Kitchlew, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Dr. Mohammad Alam, Mr. Abdur Rahman Ghazi, M. Daud Ghaznavi, Mr. Afzal Haq, Mr. Siraj Din Piracha, Mr. Abdul Qader, Mr. S. Husamud Din, Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Lala Lajpat Rai, Lala Duni Chand, Pandit Hara Datta Sharma, Dr. Satyapal, and Lala Girdhari Lal.

Master Tara Singh and Gyani Sher Singh added a statement to the agreement.

The president placed this agreement and statement before the Conference for its approval. The following is the text of the agreement and the statement :

6. The Punjab Muslims directly with the introduction of the scheme recommended by the Nehru Committee report accept its recommendations on communal representation including joint electorates without reservation of seats for any community in the Punjab, provided that the franchise is based on adult suffrage.

Provided further that the question of communal representation will be open for reconsideration, if so desired by any community after working the recommended system for ten years in the province.

Statement of Master Tara Singh and Gyani Sher Singh :

1. We the undersigned Sikhs agree to support the Nehru Committee report provided that the method of election in the Punjab is by proportional representation.
2. We agree that adult suffrage is the most democratic principle but we feel that it is not practicable under the present circumstances, and is premature.
3. If however it is decided to introduce adult suffrage immediately our expression of opinion as stated above may be noted.

We desire however to make it clear that we shall not make it a grievance if adult suffrage is introduced as we recognise that adult suffrage is based on a most democratic principle. We presume that the introduction of adult suffrage does not carry with it the recognition of any principle of communal representation directly or indirectly to which we are strongly opposed".

Maulana Shaukat Ali made a statement that the Central Khilafat

Committee had not so far altered its original resolution on the matters dealt with in the Punjab agreement. This resolution supported the Delhi Muslim proposals and the Committee still stood by it. Dr. Mohammad Alam and Mr. Abdul Qader however disagreed with Maulana Shaukat Ali and stated that the Central Khilafat Committee had not authorised him to make the statement he had made. They stated that the Committee had left the Punjab question to the delegates from the Punjab for decision and these delegates having decided and come to an agreement, their decision must be taken to be the decision of the Khilafat Committee.

The Conference then expressed its approval of the Punjab agreement and adopted it with acclamation.

Dr. Annie Besant and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu then addressed the house and congratulated all parties and the country on this happy termination of an old dispute. Dr. Besant said that Indian unity and Indian freedom had triumphed over communalism and sectarianism.

Mr. Akram Khan and Mr. J. M. Sen-Gupta formally accepted on behalf of Bengal Muslims and Hindus the clauses of the report relating to Bengal.

There was some discussion on Mr. Ghagla's proposal about the amendment of the constitution. Ultimately the following resolution was unanimously adopted :

7. This Conference recommends that the Nehru Committee be authorised to reconsider clause 87 of their recommendations and to amend it so as to safeguard the interests and rights of the various minorities in the Central Legislature with regard to the amendment of the constitution.

The Conference then passed the following resolution unanimously:—

8. That every citizen of an Indian State who ordinarily carries on business or resides in the territories of the Commonwealth shall have the rights of a citizen of the Commonwealth.

Moulvi Shafi Daudi then moved that the language of the Commonwealth of India should be Hindustani written in Hindi or Urdu script.

There was some discussion on this and various amendments were suggested. Ultimately the following resolution was unanimously adopted.

9. The Committee of the All Parties Conference to consider and report on the following points:—

- (i) the protection of the right of the minorities to give instruction to their children in schools through the medium of their own language and in such script as may be in vogue among them ;
- (ii) the use of Hindustani as the language of the Com-

- monwealth with the right to use either Hindi or Urdu character as the ordinary scripts, the use of English being permitted ;
- (iii) the use in every province of its provincial language as the official language with liberty to use Hindustani or English.

Pandit M. M. Malaviya then proposed that the following article be added to the Declaration of Rights :

10. All titles to private and personal property, lawfully
Titles and property acquired and enjoyed at the establishment
of the Commonwealth, are hereby guaranteed.

This was opposed but after some discussion was passed by a majority.

The Conference also passed by a majority that

11. In the Declaration of Rights Article xvii after the word
Fixity of tenure "unemployment" add "and Parliament shall
also make laws to ensure fair rent and
fixity and permanence of tenure to agricultural tenants".

The Conference passed unanimously that

12. "Baluchistan" be added after "N. W. F. Province" in
Baluchistan recommendation VII p. 124 of the report.

Discussion was then resumed on Lala Lajpat Rai's resolution about the adoption in principle of the Nehru Committee's report. This resolution was added to considerably. Various amendments to it were lost. Ultimately this resolution was passed with one dissident in the following form :—

13. This Conference having taken into consideration the
Committee re-appointed report submitted to it by the Nehru Committee adopts in principle the constitution outlined and recommended by it in the report.

This Conference resolves to reappoint the Nehru Committee with power to co-opt and authorises it to select and instruct a Parliamentary draftsman to put the constitution outlined and recommended by it as accepted by this Conference with all necessary ancillary and consequential provisions, in the shape of a bill to be placed before a convention of the representatives of all political, commercial, labour and other organisations in the country present at this Conference and others of not less than two years' standing, provided that nothing will be added or altered which is inconsistent with the agreements and decisions arrived at by this Conference.

The Committee shall take all necessary steps for the holding of the said convention on such date as may be fixed by it.

In drafting the bill the Committee shall take into consideration Schedule I and Schedule II to the Report and the Committee is authorised to make such alterations in the said schedules as it may think necessary.

Master Tara Singh and Gyani Sher Singh made the following statement in regard to this resolution :—

“ We accept this resolution subject to our statement already submitted as a part of the Punjab settlement ”.

On behalf of the All India Conference of Indian Christians, Mr. E. Ahmed Shah made the following statement :—

“ The All India Conference of Indian Christians emphatically places its case before the All Parties Conference and requests that inasmuch as a special case has been made for the largest majority community (the Hindus) in the N. W. F. Province, and for the strongest minority community (the Mohamedans) in all provinces of India where they are in minority, and finally even a special provision has been made for the proportionate representation of the Sikhs in the Punjab*, we request, that in the name of fairness and justice a similar representation in the legislatures be given to the third largest community in India i.e., the Indian Christians ”.

The President put the following resolution from the chair :—

14. This Conference declares that the agreements contained in the foregoing resolutions and decision are based upon the assumption that the general scheme sketched out in the Nehru report adopted by this Conference shall be given effect to as a whole inasmuch as the various provisions thereof are interdependent upon each other, and all the parties assembled in this Conference hereby agree that every one of them will stand by it as a whole and will refuse to accept any single part of it without giving full force and effect to all other parts.

Provided that any modification of this scheme may be accepted by the consent and agreement of all the parties.

The resolution was passed with one member dissenting.

The next and last resolution was also put from the Chair and was passed. It ran as follows :—

15. This All Parties Conference requests and authorises Mrs. Sarojini Naidu to carry the greetings of the people of India to the people of the West, whom she is about to visit, and also to convey India's determination to win her freedom and thereby provide the necessary atmosphere for world peace.

Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya then proposed a vote of thanks to the President. The Maharaja of Mahmudabad seconded and the Conference carried it with acclamation. The President replied to it.

* NOTE by Secretary A. I. C. C. : This statement is not correct. No special provision has been made for the proportionate representation of the Sikhs in the Punjab.

Pt. Motilal Nehru proposed a vote of thanks to all those in Lucknow who had helped in making arrangements for the Conference, the workers and the volunteers. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu seconded. The house passed the vote with applause.

The President then declared the sessions of the Conference ended.

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