

**THE POLITICS OF MODERATION: BRITAIN AND THE INDIAN LIBERAL
PARTY, 1917-1923**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis has three main foci. The first is an examination of the broader intentions behind the Government of India Act (1919) and the context of these reforms in the longer-term transfer of power in India. The second is the role played by the Indian Moderates within the nationalist movement leading to their defection from the Indian National Congress in 1918. Thirdly, it examines the relationship between the British rulers and the new Indian Liberal Party, both during the making of constitutional reforms and during the period of the first legislative councils elected under the reforms, 1921-23.

The working of the reforms is examined from the perspective of both central and provincial legislative politics. At the centre the main issues of controversy between the British and the Indian Liberals were: economic and constitutional matters, law and order issues connected with the Gandhian non-co-operation movement, the political reaction in British policy that took place during 1921-22, the Indianisation of the civil service and armed forces, and the treatment of Indians overseas. The experience of the provincial legislatures is studied, with special attention paid to three provinces where Indian Liberals played a key part in the new Ministries: Bengal, Bombay and the United Provinces. The failure of the Indian Liberals at the elections of 1923 is examined and reasons given for the collapse of the British-Indian Liberal relationship.

It is argued that the intentions and the results of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms were more liberal than has generally been recognised. The reforms provided the first steps in establishing parliamentary democracy in India. Though the amount of power that was transferred to Indians was limited, and confined to the provincial level, the level of influence that Indians gained over the policy-making process at both central and provincial levels was considerably greater.

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ABBREVIATIONS

1. REFERENCES TO MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

The system of abbreviating sources of original documents used by Sir A. Rumbold in his book *Watershed in India 1914-1922*, London, 1979, has been followed for the most frequently used collections, with some minor variations. Thus the following symbols are used and are followed by a number indicating the volume or file number in a collection.

- AC* Austen Chamberlain MSS, University of Birmingham Library
- AS* Edwin Montagu private papers Trinity College Library, Cambridge University.
- B* Harcourt Butler MSS, EUR. F. 116, India Office Library & Records (IOLR)
- C* Chelmsford MSS, EUR. E.264, IOLR
- F* Curzon MSS, EUR. F.111, IOLR
- GL* George Lloyd MSS, Churchill College, Cambridge
- H* Hardinge MSS, University of Cambridge Library
- JM* James Meston MSS, EUR. F.136, IOLR
- L* Lytton MSS, EUR. F.160, IOLR
- M* Edwin Montagu MSS, EUR D. 523, IOLR
- R* Reading MSS, EUR. E.238, IOLR
- R(P)* Reading private papers, EUR F.118, IOLR
- RON* Ronaldshay MSS EUR. D.609, IOLR
- S* Seton MSS, EUR. E.267, IOLR
- SAP/* Sapru MSS, IOLR microfilm of collection from National Library of India, Calcutta
- W* Willingdon MSS, EUR. F.93, IOLR

WH Hailey MSS, EUR. E.220, IOLR

N.B. All other private papers, including all Indian collections, save the Sapru collection, are referred to by their full title.

2. OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

A.I.C.C.	All India Congress Committee
B.P.A.	Bombay Presidency Association
CD	Commerce Department
C&ID	Commerce & Industry Department
FD	Finance Department
G/	Governor/Province
G/I	Government of India
G.I.P.E.	Gokhale Institute of Politics & Economics, Poona.
HD	Home Department Home Poll. Home Department (Political) Proceedings No. (with date)
IAR	Indian Annual Register
ICS	Indian Civil Service
IESHR	Indian Economic and Social History Review
ILA	Imperial Legislative Assembly
ILC	Imperial Legislative Council
INC	Indian National Congress
IOLR	India Office Library & Records
LD	Legislative Department
LG/	Lieutenant Governor/Province
MLC(A)	Member of Legislative Council (Assembly)
NAI	National Archives of India, New Delhi
N.L.F.	National Liberal Federation

NMML	Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi
pl.	private letter N.B. All correspondence in the text is in the form of private letters unless stated otherwise.
P.C.C.	Provincial Congress Committee
PSV	Viceroy's Private Secretary
ptel.	private telegram. (During Reading's Viceroyalty some telegrams were sent in U Cypher, which was entirely private to the Secretary of State, the Viceroy and their secretaries.)
RD	Reforms Department
RO	Reforms Office
Rs.	Rupees. I lakh = Rs. 100,000; I crore = Rs. 100 lakhs
S/S	Secretary of State
S.I.S.	Servants of India Society
tel.	telegram
U.P.	United Provinces of Agra & Oudh
V	Viceroy
W.I.N.L.A.	Western India National Liberal Association

INTRODUCTION

When comparing themselves with other European colonial powers, the British came to pride themselves on their flexibility and pragmatism in dealing with the growth of nationalism within their colonies. Learning the lessons of the American Revolution and of their own experience with constitutional reform at home in the nineteenth century, they believed that they had perfected a policy of the timely devolution of power and the integration of key colonial groups into the governing circles before they became dangerously alienated.¹ The Durham Report of 1839 was seen as providing a blue-print for the policy to be pursued in the white colonies, but the adoption of a policy of constitutional devolution in India was seen as a particular triumph in that India seemed unsuited by its history and social make-up for the transfer of western democratic institutions. Furthermore, in India there had developed a nationalist movement in the last quarter of the nineteenth century which threatened to undermine the Raj unless an effective policy was found to contain it within the imperial framework. A policy which combined firm government with tactical concession had proved, it was argued, to be the right policy: Indian decolonisation was gradual, and the handover of power in 1947 to a relatively sympathetic Congress government, willing to maintain the Commonwealth link and the concomitant trade, investment, defence, cultural and other links, was considered

¹ Two classic statements of this viewpoint were published during the Second World War; G. Schuster and G. Wint, *India and Democracy*, London, 1941, ch. 4, and Sir R. Coupland, *The Indian Problem 1833-1935*, London 1942. For post-Independence versions, see P.J. Griffiths, *The British in India*, London, 1946, ch. xviii, and *The British Impact on India*, London, 1951. A recent revival of this line of thought is to be found in G. Rizvi, 'Transfer of Power in India: A "Re-statement" of an Alternative Approach', in R.F. Holland and G. Rizvi (eds.), *Perspectives on Imperialism and Decolonization: Essays in Honour of A.F. Madden*, London, 1984.

almost a model of the British technique of decolonisation. The post-Independence Indians continued to use the Westminster parliamentary model, the British educational system, a British-style bureaucracy and army, whilst English remained the language of government.

Of course, the British view of their decolonisation of India is far too uncritical and coloured by hindsight. Recent historical research has questioned whether there was any long-term planning of the British transfer of power in India, let alone whether genuine constitutional devolution was given any precedence in the thinking behind the various reform schemes of the twentieth century.² However, the traditional British view still holds some important truths which should not be lost in the process of revisionism. Firstly, the maintenance of parliamentary democracy in India must be considered one of the more remarkable achievements of the twentieth century. Whilst numerous other ex-colonies, including neighbouring South Asian ones, have fallen to military dictatorship or one-party rule, India remains the world's largest democracy, and there is little doubt that the length of British preparation of India in the democratic process has been an important, though not the only, basis of modern Indian democracy. Secondly, although the British were prepared to use force to repress the Indian nationalist movement, especially in 1933 and 1942, there was nothing on the scale of the colonial repression meted out, for instance, by the French in Vietnam in the interwar years.³ After the Amritsar Massacre of 1919, the army was held very much in reserve and the task of dealing with non-co-operation was left

² This view is put most concisely by Anita Inder Singh, who argues that even after the Second World War the British Government still hankered after holding on to India and its defences. See A.I. Singh, 'Prospects of Agreement and the Partition of India, 1939-1947', in N.J. Allen et al. (eds.), *Oxford University Papers on India*, vol. 1, part 2, Delhi, 1987.

³ See D. Marr, Vietnam: Harnessing the Whirlwind' in R. Jeffrey (ed.), *Asia- The Winning of Independence*, London, 1981, pp. 163-5.

in the hands of the civil forces.⁴ It is pretty clear that the British in India had, during this period, to answer to metropolitan and international opinion in a way that the French, the Portuguese, Belgians and Dutch did not. This set important restraints on their treatment of the nationalist movement. Furthermore, the British were involved in a novel political process in India after the First World War: in establishing the basis of a parliamentary democratic system they had to keep in mind the point of view of the Indian legislatures and of influential centrist opinion.

It is well-known that the British had not always adopted these more liberal approaches to the devolution of power in India. Before the First World War they set their face against encouraging parliamentary institutions in India, they honoured the idea of encouraging Indians into the services much more in the breach than in the practice, they kept the educated elites at arm's length and concentrated on fostering loyalists such as the landlords, princes and Muslims. They had little but disdain for the legislatures which they had set up to keep them more informed of influential Indian opinion: they were disappointed at the fact that the professional classes had come to dominate these institutions, not the native aristocracy as they had intended. The British were obsessed with the opponents of their rule, many of whom they wrongly classed as seditionists. Acts of liberal reform such as the Morley-Minto reforms were matched by acts of repression such as the Press Act of 1910- the 'mailed fist in the velvet glove'.

The transition to a more realistic, more 'political' role by the British took place in the period 1917 to 1923. It was during this period that they first established

⁴ For the development of more sophisticated Government policies for dealing with political agitation see P. Robb, 'The Government of India and Annie Besant, *Modern Asian Studies*, 10, 1, 1976, pp. 107-30; D.A. Low, 'The Government of India and the First Non-Co-operation Movement 1920-1922', in R. Kumar (ed.) *Essays on Gandhian Politics: The Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919*, Oxford, 1971, pp. 298-323 [hereafter 'First Non-Co-operation Movement'- all page references are to this version of the article, which was also previously published in the *Journal of Asian Studies*, xxv, 2 (1966)].

the goal of ultimate self-government on the dominion model, via the development of parliamentary institutions and the opening up of the services to Indians in much greater numbers. It was then that they established directly elected Indian majority legislatures with Indian ministers in charge of nation-building departments. They developed a much more sophisticated means of handling the nationalist leadership; the range of permissible opinion and acceptable political activity was greatly widened and a whole range of repressive measures was done away with. India gained fiscal autonomy under a convention that when the Government of India and the imperial legislature were agreed on such matters, the metropolitan government would not interfere. In international affairs India gained separate representation in key organisations such as the League of Nations and the imperial conferences. Indian representatives were able to put the Indian case over issues such as the equal treatment of British imperial citizens throughout the empire.

All the above changes were extremely important for the longer-term process of the devolution of power, but the most important change of all was that the old idea of the permanence of British rule in India had been undermined and replaced with a recognition that the existing form of British domination could not continue, and that some form of imperial partnership had to be developed if India was to move towards self-government within the empire.⁵ It was during these years that key British officials looked into the not too distant future and planned for the major changes that would be necessary to move towards a self-governing India. The importance of this change of vision cannot be overestimated, even if the optimism of the vision was short-lived and was soon to be replaced with a more pessimistic view that India's religious and social divisions, the widening gulf between British and princely India and the lack of a defence capability would mean that the prospect of self-government

⁵ For an examination of the idea of the permanence of the Raj, see F.G. Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India*, Princeton, 1967.

was still long distant. However, the old imperial confidence, indeed arrogance, could not return once the idea of permanence was brought into question. The constitutional process was inexorably leading to greater and greater Indian constitutional demands, and the awareness of the enhanced status and powers of the white dominions only fuelled these demands. Much as Liberal reformers like Edwin Montagu had expected and intended, the 1919 reforms proved to have a dynamic of their own, even if much of the impetus they gave to Indian politicians was provided by a sense of their unworkability and the need for true provincial autonomy to be granted if the goals of the development of political responsibility were to be achieved. However much die-hards of the interwar years wished that the clock might be put back, it was not possible to do so.

1. Aims

The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms and the formation of the Indian Moderate, which was to be a bulwark of those reforms, were two key events in the establishment of the processes described above and they were nearly synchronous. The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms were announced at the beginning of July 1918 and the Moderate Party was formed in the previous month, specifically in order to give free public expression to the support of leading Congressmen for the reforms scheme.

The Congress majority was far more critical of the reforms than the Moderate secessionists, although until 1920 most Congressmen were prepared to work the reforms and enter the enlarged Councils established under the new system. Two issues unconnected with the reforms, the Punjab and Khilafat grievances, and the failure of the British Government to deal adequately with these issues, led the Congress in September 1920, under Gandhi's leadership, to determine to boycott the legislative councils and all other offices under the Raj, as part of a national movement of non-co-operation. This boycott left the Indian Liberal Party as the one national party fighting

the elections, and as a result of the elections Liberal Ministers were represented in most of the new provincial governments, the exceptions being those of Madras, Bihar and the Punjab. In November 1923, after the Gandhian non-co-operation movement had collapsed, the Swarajist wing of the Congress decided to stand for the second set of Council elections and achieved notable successes. The Liberals lost the majority of their seats and were swept out of office. The period 1917 to 1923, therefore, forms a coherent time-span in which the Montford reforms were devised and put into operation, and in which the new Liberal Party was formed to support the reforms and had its heyday during the first councils.

The relationship between British policy-makers and the Indian Liberal Party forms a case-study which is intended to reveal the nature of British attitudes and policies towards India's constitutional future. It also highlights changing British attitudes towards the educated elite in India, who formed the core of the Indian nationalist movement.

There are three main foci for this study. The primary interest is in examining the broader intentions behind the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, and the context of these reforms in the longer-term transfer of power in India. The Indian Liberals staked their political futures on the belief that the reforms offered genuine opportunities to move towards self-government along a constitutional path similar to that taken by the white dominions in the past. Were the Liberals duped by the British in an attempt to win over moderate collaborators to their side at a crucial phase in the development of the empire? Recent studies have tended to play down the liberalism of these reforms and treat them largely as a measure of administrative devolution or as a means of finding new supports for a beleaguered Raj.⁶ In this respect the

⁶ See for example, J. Gallagher, 'The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire' in *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire. The Ford Lectures and Other Essays*, edited by A. Seal, Cambridge, 1982, p. 101; B.R. Tomlinson, *The Indian National Congress and the Raj, 1929-*

reforms are seen as one of a series of constitutional measures designed not to devolve power to Indians, but rather to strengthen the British grip on the most important elements of government. Fairly typical are the arguments of Anita Inder Singh who writes that 'The constitutional reforms of 1919 and 1935 were aimed at preserving, not terminating empire.'⁷ At one level this statement is indisputable, none of the British policy-makers responsible for the 1919 reforms sought to take India out of the empire, but it is the argument of this thesis that the tendency to treat the 1919 and 1935 reforms as if they had the same conservative aims is entirely misleading. Whereas the 1935 reforms manipulated the Indian communities and the political process in order to cancel out the various Indian elements, the 1919 reforms had a much more dynamic and educative intention; they aimed at introducing and developing western parliamentary institutions into India, something which had previously been publicly disallowed as a goal by the British. One must be careful not to assume that political cynicism, divide and rule, and strengthening of collaborationist elements were the key concepts behind the reforms. Whilst accepting that there were elements of such conservative considerations in the making of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, it is the argument of this thesis that they were very much inspired by a transformation of outlook amongst the British rulers which took place during and immediately after the First World War. This changed perspective resulted partly from India's invaluable contribution to the war effort, but also partly from an acceptance of the idealistic

⁶ (...continued)

1942: *The Penultimate Phase*, London, 1976, p. 10; A.I. Singh, *The Origins of the Partition of India, 1936-1947*, Delhi, 1987, p. 244; C. Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire. The British Conservative Party and the 1935 Constitution*, London, 1986, pp. 1-9; R.J. Moore, *Endgames of Empire. Studies of Britain's Indian Problem*, Delhi, 1988, pp. 1, 9-10.

It is a pity that the cogent and convincing arguments of Peter Robb that the reforms had a strong ideological basis have not apparently convinced all scholars and now need further development. See P. Robb, *The Government of India and Reform: Policies Towards Politics and the Constitution 1916-1921*, Oxford, 1976, ch. 9, especially p. 272.

⁷ *The Origins of the Partition of India*, p. 244.

notions associated with the movement towards national self-determination in Europe.⁸ The reforms were, of necessity, compromise measures, but they marked a revolution in British approaches to India in two particular ways. Firstly, they formed part of a policy of progressive moves towards a publicly stated goal, self-government within the Empire. In effect, taken together with India's recognised status within the Imperial War Cabinet and bodies like the League of Nations, this meant an implicit recognition that India should follow the constitutional path of the white dominions in the future. Secondly, they marked a clear belief, denied by the makers of the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909, that India's constitution would be developed along the lines of British parliamentary democracy.⁹ The implications of these two assumptions were very far-reaching both for British rule in India and for the eventual form of Indian independence. There could be no going back on these two policies, but the exigencies of the British political system (in which Conservative imperialists dominated a Liberal-led coalition Government) meant that they were not made as explicit as they might have been during the passing of the Government of India Act through Parliament. Furthermore, the waning of war-time idealism and the reaction in Britain, caused partly by the Gandhian non-co-operation movement (1920-1922) and partly by the mounting pressure of nationalist movements across the Empire, meant that there was a distinct reaction against the liberal elements of the Montford reforms during the 1920s and 1930s. There was, in other words, no linear progress towards granting India independence, but it is the contention of this thesis that all the essential steps towards that goal had been raised for consideration by the rulers of the Raj in the years immediately after the end of the First World War.

⁸ For the background to the Allied acceptance of a new approach to the issue of national self-determination see A.J. Mayer, *Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 1917-1918*, Yale, 1959.

⁹ See Morley's speech in the House of Lords, 17 Dec. 1908, cited in J. Morley, *Indian Speeches*, London, 1909, p. 91. The Government of India continued to oppose the development of the councils into quasi-parliaments even as late as November 1916. See the Government of India Despatch of 24 Nov. 1916, cited in S.R. Mehrotra, *India and the Commonwealth 1885-1929*, London, 1965, p. 74.

Implicit in this argument is the view that, contrary to certain recent writings on the history of British decolonisation, the undermining of the attitudes and beliefs which underpinned the belief of the governing classes in the rightness and permanence of the imperial system was a crucial element in the process of decolonisation.¹⁰ Nationalist pressures, the decline of economic strength and the relative loss of international dominance were vital components of decolonisation, but one should be careful not to treat imperial policy-makers as if they were accountants carefully weighing imperial costs and benefits, or far-seeing politicians skilfully playing off colonial groups in order to extend their rule indefinitely. Policy-makers were strongly imbued with a set of values which explained and justified the basic artificiality of their situation in despotically governing hundreds of millions of Africans and Asians. In India the dominant set of governing values can be summarised in the somewhat old-fashioned term, imperial trusteeship. Essentially the concept of trusteeship based British rule in India in terms of a God-given right of dominance for the purposes of improving the country.¹¹ Britons had differing views as to whether improvement meant transferring western ideas and institutions to India or working through India's traditional institutions and concentrating on importing western material improvement, but in either case they had imbibed through their education and domestic culture the idea that trusteeship was at the basis of British rule in India. The idea of trusteeship was a great bulwark of the British position in India, but it was also its Achilles' heel because it was a doctrine predicated upon the ultimate temporariness of British rule. In the period of high imperialism, epitomised by Lord Curzon's viceroyalty at the turn of the century, but in fact typical of most of the period from the Mutiny to the Great

¹⁰ See particularly J. Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: the Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World*, London, 1988.

¹¹ The term 'God-given' is used advisedly. The buttressing of British rule by Christian beliefs has been rather underestimated, at least as far as the twentieth century is concerned. However, see G. Studdert-Kennedy, *British Christians, Indian Nationalists and the Raj*, Oxford, 1990.

War, the sense of temporariness of British rule was forgotten in all the emphasis on the necessity of colonial material improvement in the face of Indian backwardness. However, the First World War and its aftermath resulted in what can only be described as a crisis of confidence in the permanence of British rule, which was seen most concretely in the difficulties in recruiting good quality candidates to the Indian Civil Service.¹²

It is the argument of this thesis that this imperial crisis of confidence, though short-lived, was very significant in that it involved those governing India in having to consider increasingly the Indian rather than the purely British imperial perspective on issues, and in thinking through the practical implications of a future transfer of power to Indians.

The second focus of this study is on the role played by the Indian Moderates within the nationalist movement at a crucial time in the development of that movement.¹³ What were the distinguishing characteristics of the Moderates who dominated Congress until the end of 1917, and who broke away to form their own organisation in 1918? Did they differ from the Extremists in ideology or were their disagreements basically factional disputes, the petty squabbles of the followers of particular nationalist leaders? There were a number of Britons at the time, especially on the die-hard wing, who believed that the whole Moderate/Extremist division was false and that both elements were essentially extremist in that they wanted to be rid of

¹² See below, chapter V, section 2, on the ICS.

¹³ Throughout the words 'Moderate' and 'Extremist' in capitalised form have been used to indicate two rival groups within the Indian National Congress. Indian politicians understood and used these nomenclatures, although, of course, there was no fixity or precision in their usage. The term 'Moderate' becomes more closely defined after the Surat split of 1907, and even more so after the Congress Split of 1918. With the formation of the Moderate Party in 1918, the capitalised form of the word is used to refer to members of this party, which in 1919 became known as the Indian Liberal Party. The British did not use these terms with any precision, and conservative Britons often used the term 'moderates' when they referred not to the Liberals but to loyalist or conservative Indians. I have used the uncapitalised form for this latter, broader, usage. I have tried to follow the original form used in direct quotations. For a fuller discussion of the difficulties in using this term see pp. 95-100 below.

the British, the only difference being that the Moderates covered their ambitions more skilfully.¹⁴ Judith Brown has argued forcefully that the Moderate/Extremist dichotomy is misleading and that these names 'pointed to no fundamental distinctions of ideology or method'.¹⁵ Cambridge historians have tended to play down the ideological and national basis of Indian politics in this period and have emphasised the role of faction, local interests and patron-client linkages.¹⁶ In contradiction to this approach, this thesis argues that the Moderate/Extremist split had a distinct ideological basis, firmly rooted in very different outlooks on Indian society and the imperial connection. Far from there being evidence of large numbers of Indian politicians shifting their allegiances to suit their political convenience, there is in this period evidence of remarkable loyalty to 'party'¹⁷ affiliations and a preparedness to make self-sacrifice in the national cause.¹⁸ To what degree did the Moderates represent an important and continuing strand of constitutionalism and Anglophilism within the

¹⁴ See, for example, the pamphlet published by the Indo-British Association, *The Political Situation in India- The Defection of The Moderates*, London, 1919.

¹⁵ Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power. Indian Politics 1915-1922*, Cambridge, 1972, p. 130.

¹⁶ The main Cambridge publications which are relevant to this study are: A. Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, Cambridge, 1968; C. Baker, G. Johnson and A. Seal (eds.), *Locality, Province and Nation. Essays on Indian Politics 1870-1940*, Cambridge, 1973; D.A. Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics. The Madras Presidency 1870-1920*, Cambridge, 1976; B.R. Tomlinson, *The Political Economy of the Raj 1914-1947. The Economics of Decolonization in India*, London, 1979; J. Gallagher, G. Johnson, and A. Seal (eds.), *Power, Profit and Politics: Essays on Imperialism, Nationalism and Change in Twentieth Century India*, Cambridge, 1981.

¹⁷ One must be careful not to think of 'party' in western terms. There was in India none of the organisational machinery, manifestos, tight discipline, ideological identification, etc. that one associates with the modern British party system. However, Indian political loyalties were broader than just ties of personal affiliation, caste, community or faction. Western-educated Indian politicians were in a sort of half-way house; inevitably, the bases of their loyalties were traditional Indian ones, but they had imbibed the history and values of the British political system very thoroughly and modelled their political activities on the latter. The result was a peculiar hybrid. Moderates modelled their activities on parliamentary practice in Britain and extra-parliamentary campaign groups such as the Anti-Corn Law League. Extremists tended to prefer the models provided by the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activities of the Irish nationalists. On the latter, see H.V. Brasted, 'Irish Models and the Indian National Congress 1870-1922', *South Asia*, n.s., viii, 1/2, June/Dec. 1985, pp. 24-45.

¹⁸ Examples of the Cambridge emphasis on the minutiae of local political affiliations can be found in the Madras studies of D.A. Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics. The Madras Presidency 1870-1920*, Cambridge, 1976, and C.J. Baker, *The Politics of South India 1920-1937*, Cambridge, 1976.

nationalist movement? Indeed, were the Liberals true nationalists or did their western dress, patterns of thinking and loyalties preclude this title? Did the Liberals operate as a proper party organisation or were they merely a disparate group of patrician leaders, held together by a desperate urge to hold on to the national political leadership which they had assumed was their natural right, but which was now being challenged by the Extremist revival? Why did they break away from Congress just at a point when an unprecedented degree of nationalist unity had been achieved and when the maintenance of that unity was considered vital to squeezing the maximum in the way of post-war concessions from the British? Was the split intended to be permanent or did events determine that it should become so? Did the Liberals commit political suicide in breaking away from Congress?¹⁹

Thirdly, there is an examination of the relationship between the British rulers and the Liberal Party. Too many studies in the past have focused on one or other end of the colonial ruler/nationalist movement confrontation without properly examining the interplay between ruler and ruled. There is a particular importance to the interrelationship in this case. Firstly, because the Montford reforms mark a new approach in the policies of India's rulers: instead of standing aloof from Indian politics British administrators determined to enter the Indian political arena directly. This was partly the result of the new political system created by the reforms in which the British had to try and create workable groups of supporters in elected majority legislatures, and partly the result of the unprecedented threat posed by the Gandhian non-co-operation movement which forced the British to look to new measures of counter-propaganda. The other side of the coin was that the Indian Liberals, having

¹⁹ There have been a number of studies of the Liberal Party, of which by far the most satisfactory is that by Dr. R.T. Smith, 'The Liberals in the Indian Nationalist Movement, 1918-1947. Their Role as Intermediaries', University of California, Berkeley, unpub. Ph.D., 1964. See also R.T. Smith 'The Role of India's "Liberals" in the Nationalist Movement, 1915-1947', *Asian Survey*, viii, 7, July 1968, pp. 607-24; B.D. Shukla, *History of the Indian Liberal Party*, Allahabad, 1960; V.N. Naik, *Indian Liberalism*, Bombay, 1945. However, none of the studies entirely answers the above questions.

isolated themselves within Indian politics, were remarkably dependent on the British administration to provide the conditions under which their chosen constitutional path could prove successful to a wider audience. The relationship between the British and the Liberals is interesting on a number of levels. At a specific level, one would wish to know whether the British were responsible for the Congress split of 1918, whether they were determined to break up the unprecedented coalition of Moderates, Extremists and the Muslim League which had been cemented at Lucknow in 1916, and whether this was another example of the policy of divide and rule? More broadly, it is very revealing of racial and imperial attitudes to see how the British treated these men who epitomised the so-called 'babus', the westernised professional classes whom British policies had helped to create, and yet who represented the most likely group to inherit British India. At the level of policy-making one needs to know to what extent the British understood the complexities of Indian politics and therefore could successfully 'rotate' collaborative groups?²⁰ Those who governed India often talked of separating moderates from extremists and of 'rallying' the former group, but we know little of what they really understood by these terms and to what extent they reflected the reality of the Indian situation.

2. Structure

The thesis is divided into two main parts. The first part, which covers the period up to the end of 1920, is arranged chronologically so as to portray the complex series of events which were involved in drawing up the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms

²⁰ For a discussion of the concept of collaborative groups and their significance in imperial history see the seminal article by R. Robinson, 'Non-European foundations of European imperialism: sketch for a theory of collaboration', E.R.J. Owen & R.B. Sutcliffe, (eds.) *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*, London, 1972, pp. 117-42. One needs to ask whether the term 'collaborative group' is helpful for studying the Liberals or should the loyalist groups, such as the landowners, be distinguished from nationalists who worked the British-dominated political system in order to alter it?

and which led to the secession of the Moderates from the Indian National Congress. The second part covers the working of the reforms in the period of the first legislatures during the period 1921 to the end of 1923. This section is organised thematically so that the development of the major issues of contention between the British and the Indian Liberals can be examined.

Part One

The first chapter sets the context of the interplay of British policy and nationalist response in India. Particular emphasis is placed on the contradictions, both ideological and structural, within the system of British rule which meant that a progressive and coherent British policy of reform was often difficult to achieve. There was a fundamental contradiction between liberal and conservative approaches to India, and these were epitomised in different attitudes towards the introduction of western institutions, especially parliamentary democracy, into India. On this issue the British clashed with Moderate Indian nationalists who demanded a programme of political reform along western lines. The clash between the British and this western-educated elite, who formed the backbone of the nationalist movement, was at the heart of many of the contradictions within British rule in India. The British did much to create this group but found by the last quarter of the nineteenth century that the demands of the educated elite threatened the ideological and material basis of their rule. More progressive Britons argued that the imperial rulers had to work in some sort of partnership with the western-educated elite if British rule was to survive. The majority, however, argued that British interests were more properly linked to the requirements of the rural masses and their traditional leaders. The new elite was unrepresentative and should not be allowed to achieve political hegemony. This chapter examines the nature of the Indian Nationalist Congress in the years from its

foundation in 1885 to the middle of the First World War, particularly concentrating on the problem of differentiating Moderates and Extremists within the nationalist movement. The Moderate nationalists dominated Congress in the years before the First World War, but by 1917 their supremacy was under severe challenge as a result of the recent re-entry of Tilak and his followers into Congress, and the radicalisation of politics which took place as a result of the First World War and of British responses to the perceived nationalist threat.

One response of the colonial power to the rising threat posed by a more activist form of Indian nationalism during the First World War was to try to strengthen Moderate elements by constitutional concessions, and to direct Indian politics along the road of constitutional and gradualist politics. Indeed it has been widely assumed by historians that this was the primary motivation behind the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of 1919. Chapter Two examines the motives behind the formulation of the reforms in the years 1916 to 1918. The reforms began as a very conservative package of concessions which intended to build on the fundamentally undemocratic Morley-Minto reforms of 1909. It was the events of the war years, both in India and internationally, that led to a much more dynamic and liberal policy to be pursued by the British Government with the concurrence of the Government of India. The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, outlined in July 1918, had at their heart the deliberate attempt to start India on the process of parliamentary democracy leading to ultimate self-government within the empire.

In personal talks with Moderate Indian leaders, Montagu and Chelmsford weaned them away from the Congress-League scheme of 1916 and convinced them that, unlike the new reforms, their scheme did not lead inevitably to British-style parliamentary democracy, which was their goal. In August 1918 the Congress split over the issue of the constitutional reforms and there is a full examination in this chapter of whether this was the result of a deliberate policy of divide and rule.

Chapter Three focuses on the relations between the British and the Moderate nationalists under strain from three directions. Firstly, from the process of finalising the reforms and the fears that the Moderates had that the reforms would be whittled down either in the parliamentary process or when it came to drawing up the rules for their operation. Secondly, from the tension arising from the British decision to implement repressive measures to deal with political terrorism at the same time as the new reforms. Thirdly, from the hardening divisions within the Indian nationalist movement particularly as the policy of non-co-operation was taken up by the Congress.

Part Two

Chapters Four and Five examine the main issues in British-Indian Liberal relations at a national level. Chapter Four deals with very sensitive issue of the British treatment of the leadership of the first non-co-operation movement. From the British point of view non-co-operation confronted them with the most serious threat to their rule since the Mutiny of 1857. Just when they had inaugurated the experiment in parliamentary democracy in India, the whole basis of the legitimacy of their rule was brought into question by a mass nationalist movement which won support from both Hindus and Muslims, and from rural Indians as well as townspeople. Blatant repression was out of the question in the circumstances, and a policy of attempting to reach agreement with the nationalist leadership on the limits within which political activity would be allowed was followed by Lord Reading's administration. A key consideration for the British was the need to keep the support of those politicians who had contested the elections in 1920, amongst whom the Indian Liberals were the most important national grouping. The Liberals acted as a weathercock of informed Indian opinion, by which the Government increasingly judged the acceptability of its policies. In addition, Liberal leaders, such as Tej Bahadur Sapru, played a crucial role as

intermediaries in trying to reach an accommodation between the Government and Congress leaders. Ultimately Moderate efforts to mediate failed, but Government attempts to involve them served the purpose of strengthening their commitment to the reforms and thus helped the Government through a very difficult time. On the other hand Reading's failure to carry out the instructions of the Home Government to arrest Gandhi immediately caused serious unease in Whitehall and led to the resignation of the Secretary of State, Edwin Montagu. Montagu's resignation, which was regarded by Indian Liberals as a turning point in British relations with them, is examined closely to determine the roots of the reaction that was taking place in Britain. Whilst giving attention to the centre ground in Indian politics paid dividends within India, it exacerbated the growing reaction against any extension of the Montford reforms that was taking place in Britain.

Chapter Five continues to depict the way in which the Government of India took Indian Liberal opinion into account on the key issues of the day. This chapter on national politics is organised around the following themes. Firstly, the economic problems faced after the war and their constitutional impact. Secondly, the issue of the Indianisation of the Indian services, which was opened up by the reforms but left unresolved. This issue is seen as a litmus test for Britain's sincerity in leading India towards self-government. The speech of the Prime Minister Lloyd George in August 1922 and the subsequent establishment of a Royal Commission on the Public Services are both seen by Liberals as attempts to prop up the European element in the services. The third issue is that of legislation to repeal the so-called repressive legislation, including various restrictions on the Press in India, and to diminish the racial distinctions maintained in the judicial process in India. These sets of measures began their life in the more liberal period at the end of Lord Chelmsford's regime and the beginning of Lord Reading's. However, by the last year of the first councils' lives it was felt by many Indians that the home government was obstructing the more liberal

aspects of this legislation. The final issue concerned the status of Indians overseas, especially in East Africa. It is argued that Liberal politicians placed particular emphasis on this issue as indicative of their belief in a multi-racial empire or commonwealth rather than a white-dominated empire. The Kenya White Paper of July 1923 marked the final disillusionment of the hopes of Liberal leaders like Srinivasa Sastri and others.

In all the above issues the tensions and contradictions in British policy-making are emphasised. It is noted that increasingly the Viceroy is seen as the bulwark of Indian interests in conflict with the Secretary of State and the home government.

Chapter Six focuses on the working of the reforms at the provincial level. Three provincial ministries are examined in each of which the Liberals played the leading role: Bengal, Bombay, and the United Provinces. The intention is not to study the working of the dyarchical system *per se* but rather to study the relations between Ministers in the provinces and the British establishment during the first councils. Comparisons are made between the experience in the three provinces and with the working of some of the other provincial ministries.

Chapter Seven is an examination of the reasons for the collapse of the Liberal Party as a force in Indian national politics at the 1923 elections and after. Liberal organisation is studied and found to be gravely defective, especially in forming links with the widened electorate under the Montford reforms. This organisational failure is weighed against the British contribution in undermining the Liberals by a series of decisions made in 1923, most especially the decision to certify a doubling of the salt tax after the Assembly had voted it down. A brief examination is made of the Liberal contribution to Indian politics after 1923.

Chapter Eight is a concluding chapter which summarises the findings of the thesis and sets the role of the Moderates in a broader context by examining the longer-term significance of the relationship between Britain and the Indian Liberals.

Comparisons are also made with the role of moderate nationalists in other parts of the British Empire at this crucial early phase of decolonisation.

3. Sources

The sources for this thesis have been found in almost equal quantities in Britain and in India. In both countries the quantity of sources, particularly official Government sources, is too voluminous to be studied exhaustively for a work of this scope. Because the main focus of this thesis is on political attitudes, greater reliance has been placed on private papers, which have the advantage of being rather more revealing than official government sources. Quite extensive quotations from the private papers have been used deliberately to try and convey the quality of contemporary attitudes. Inevitably, this thesis cannot cover all issues comprehensively. Relevance to the main theme has been the prime consideration for selection but, apart from the close examination of the crucial period of the making of the Montford reforms, I have tried to avoid going over ground that has been fully and satisfactorily covered by previous scholars. I hope in doing so that I have acknowledged my debt to them adequately.

CHAPTER I : THE CONTEXT

India provided unique challenges for British imperial rule. The size of the country and the diversity of its population were quite unlike any other territory within the Empire. During the nineteenth century India became Britain's most valuable economic possession and strategically its most important. Yet in India the British invested more than just capital: India became almost a testing-ground for ideas about the governance of overseas territory. Ideas of trusteeship, guardianship, education, and amelioration were more closely woven into the fabric of British rule in India than in any other of its non-white colonies. Utilitarian programmes of reform were imposed in a more undiluted way than was possible even in Britain. Yet there was a fundamental conflict between some of these grandiose reforming ambitions and the fundamental lack of manpower which Britain had available in India. The Mutiny exposed the fragility of these pretensions and reinstated a more conservative approach to ruling India. Henceforth there was a much stronger emphasis on governing with the grain of established Indian society, of attempting to work with the traditional leaders of Indian society, such as the large landowners, religious leaders, princes and notables. The British tended to treat Indian society as if it were static, disaggregated and determinedly traditional in its cultural values. In doing so, they failed to come to terms with a significant element of change within Indian society, one indeed which they themselves had encouraged in the period of liberal reform, the growth of a western-educated elite. This failure was one of the factors that gave British policy a fundamentally ambivalent appearance: there was a cavernous gap between their liberal professions and their authoritarian practice. The British were prepared to involve more Indians in their administration and army, to democratise local government and to

begin to establish representative institutions, but they were not prepared to do so whilst the educated elite was going to take a disproportionate share of the benefits of such reforms.

The threat posed by the western-educated elite stemmed particularly from its dominance of the nationalist movement. It was this numerically small group that provided the organising basis for the political associations that developed in India from the middle of the century onwards. These associations provided a bridge between the political activities of India's local leaders, landowners and merchants, for instance, and the development of nationalist politics. It was the western-educated, professional classes who had the motivation and the ability to break the regional barriers that divided India politically and to combine together on a national basis. The formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 was, in retrospect, the culmination of such activity. The Congress began as an avowedly loyalist organisation and was dominated by Moderate nationalists until the First World War. However, Moderate domination was not unquestioned and came under threat from a more activist wing of the Congress, led by B.G. Tilak in Maharashtra, Aurobindo Ghosh in Bengal and Lajpat Rai in the Punjab. The most serious clash between the Moderates and Extremists came at the time of the agitation over the partition of Bengal and resulted in a split at the Surat Congress of 1907. It was the Moderates who emerged as victors from this clash, but it was something of a pyrrhic victory as the British were able to take action against the Extremist leaders and the rump of the Congress became progressively more moribund without its more activist element. It was not until 1916 that the Extremists were re-admitted to Congress and the British were faced with an unprecedented but fragile unity within the nationalist movement.

1. British Rule in India: Some Inner Contradictions

British rule in India contained within itself fundamental contradictions and the pull of opposing forces. The most basic contradiction is encapsulated in the fact that the British were a 'free though conquering people'.¹ How could a parliamentary democracy deny the liberties which it had won to overseas territories like India? What might be considered an abstract problem in the early stages of British rule became by the second half of the nineteenth century a very practical one as the British had to respond to the demands of western-educated Indians for the transfer of British ideas and institutions to their country. The British found themselves ill-equipped to respond; they had established liberal ideals in governing India but had patently failed to follow them in practice. Furthermore, the cumbersome bureaucracy the British had established in India and the power of vested interests within the decision-making process, meant that it was difficult to develop and maintain a clear direction in policy-making. The result was that British policy was prone to appear Janus-faced as periods of reform were followed by periods of reaction and paternalism and liberalism became almost inextricably intertwined.

One of the main issues the British faced once they had established their supremacy was whether Indian society and culture should be respected and maintained intact or whether the imperial power had a duty to facilitate the transfer of western institutions and values to India.² The problems revolving around the issues of conservation or reform raised key issues of empire. In a situation where the colonised vastly outnumbered the colonisers it made sense to restrict interference in traditional customs to a minimum lest resistance be provoked. India was recognised as one of the

¹ This phrase is taken from Peter Marshall's inaugural lecture of the same title, King's College, London, 1981.

² See P.J. Marshall, *Problems of Empire. Britain and India 1757-1813*, London, 1968.

world's great historic civilisations and some of the early Company men tried to encourage the maintenance and revival of traditional Sanskrit scholarship. The British had to recognise that the only way that they could establish themselves in India was through existing channels of power and influence. Yet, however much a policy of minimal interference was established in theory, in practice the British inevitably interpreted traditional India through their own perspective and therefore, even if inadvertently, transformed Indian institutions, such as land tenure systems. A more consciously reforming phase of British rule operated in the period from the 1820s onwards and reached a peak in the 1830s. Clearly this marked a confidence in the establishment of British rule in India, but much more it reflected the influence of predominant ideologies at home. Evangelical fervour and utilitarian love of efficiency together combined to make for a remarkable period of anglicisation, in which 'barbaric' institutions such as *sati* and *thagi* were attacked and new systems of land tenure imposed.³ This period of confident westernisation was epitomised by Macaulay's Education Minute of 1835, which talked of creating an Indian intermediary elite who would act as purveyors of western culture to the rest of Indian society. In practical terms, the results of this policy were disappointing in that the spread of western education remained limited to a generally high-caste Indian elite, residing in the seaboard provinces where the British had first established themselves, Bengal, Bombay and Madras. There was neither the will nor the wherewithal for a more ambitious educational policy, especially after the Mutiny had brought into question the whole basis of the policies of anglicisation and reform.

After 1857, conservative arguments regained the upperhand and anglicising reformers such as Ripon stood out as exceptions to the rule. Reasons of safety, economy and imperial self-confidence all reinforced the need to avoid any unnecessary

³ For the utilitarian influence see E. Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*, Oxford, 1959.

interference with India's traditional customs and ruling elites. The British relied on an alliance with the princes and the landlords. 'Scientific' ideas of evolution were used to lend support to arguments of the permanence of imperial supremacy in India. Liberals had always been divided about whether liberal principles and institutions could transfer successfully into a different environment. Men like Macaulay believed they could, provided there was a suitable period of education and training, but the majority Liberal view came to be held by men such as John Stuart Mill and John Morley who argued that such ideas of the transferability of western institutions to an oriental situation were 'moonshine'.⁴ Despite the lone radical voices of Congress supporters like Hume and Wedderburn, it would have been difficult at the turn of the century to find a member of the British ruling elite who would have felt that British democratic institutions could be transferred to India successfully.⁵

The imperial ethos was at its height in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and, of course, India was seen as the linchpin of the British Empire, providing Britain with one-fifth of its overseas trade and investment, and balancing its world trade. India, the 'English barrack in the Oriental Seas,' was crucial to Britain's global strategic needs. Imperial self-interest was therefore a major factor in the dominant view that British rule in India was a permanent necessity. Britons, however, still preferred to couch their imperial interests in terms of altruism and duty. They emphasised the continuing function of their trust to improve India materially and morally, and indeed, under Viceroys like Curzon, there was strong emphasis placed

⁴ S. Koss, *John Morley at the India Office, 1905-1910*, New Haven, 1969, p. 188.

⁵ This theme is developed in A.T. Embree, 'Pledged to India: the Liberal Experiment, 1885-1909', in J.M.W. Bean (ed.), *The Political Culture of Modern Britain: Studies in Memory of Stephen Koss*, London, 1987, pp. 32-55.

on improving the economic well-being of ordinary Indians. Good government became an end in itself and few thought of the liberal goal of developing self-government.⁶

Educational policy came to be seen as a failure in that it had focused on higher education rather than basic education, literary skills rather than technical ones, and had seemed to create an unemployable elite who formed the core of the nationalist critics of British rule in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. There was a tendency to dismiss the educated elite as 'babus', mimics of British cultural values rather than as Macaulay's ideal, intermediaries in cultural transmission. By their actions, either deliberate or unwitting, the British had helped to create this elite but their attitude to the patently loyalist activities of the nascent Congress epitomises one of their major failings, and the source of the main contradictions in the political ambitions of the Raj. From a policy of benevolent neutrality towards the new-born Congress in 1885, the British quickly moved to a position of suspicion and then outright hostility. Whereas the British were able to manipulate most of the other key groups in Indian society through 'collaborative' arrangements, reaching a *modus vivendi* with the princes, the landlords and the Muslims, for example, the educated elite was kept at arm's length until well into the twentieth century. Why did the British fail to establish a satisfactory relationship with the educated elites?

Firstly, the British saw the educated elites as an artificial and unrepresentative group, Dufferin's 'microscopic minority'. The British emphasised the fact that the Congress leadership was predominantly high caste, Hindu and drawn from the urban-based professional classes, particularly from lawyers and journalists. These groups represented only a tiny proportion of India's population and it was the British contention that if this group should achieve a share in power it would use it to further

⁶ The fundamental contradiction in British liberalism in relation to India, i.e. that in order to impart western liberal institutions in India it was deemed necessary to extend imperial rule, is superbly summarised by R.J. Moore, *Liberalism and Indian Politics 1872-1922*, London, 1966, pp. 14-15.

its own interests rather than the wider interests of the Indian population. The new educated elite, the British argued, was displacing the traditional elites whom they, the British, had hoped would come forward to represent the 'real' India. The British had fallen into the trap of seeing India as part of the stereotyped 'unchanging East'. The British cultivated the image that they were maintaining ruling traditions through their princely durbars and did all that they could to protect the rural world from the forces of change that they had themselves unleashed.⁷ Their image of India countered advanced arguments that India was developing a national identity. Rather, India was seen by the British as a land divided by caste, race, and religion and unified only by the 'Pax Britannica'.

Secondly, the educated elite was not like other interest groups which could be accommodated by concessions which did not fundamentally weaken the Raj. The early demands of the Congress focused on the Indianisation of the services and the grant of representative institutions to India. Concessions which would satisfy Congress on either of these demands would not only threaten key British interests but would inevitably lead to larger demands.

The truth was that the educated elite posed a challenge to the ideological basis of British rule in India: the fact that they based their demands upon British Liberal principles and policies only alienated the British further. The title of Dadabhai Naoroji's telling critique of British economic exploitation of India, *The Poverty of Un-British Rule in India*, is typical of the way in which Congressmen contrasted British ideals and practices in India. To counter the success of the educated elite in competitive examinations, the British manipulated the conduct of the entry into the

⁷ For the British use of the durbars see B. Cohn, 'Representing Authority in British India' in E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, 1983. The British separation of rural India from outside influences is argued in P. Robb, 'Some Aspects of British Policy Towards Indian Nationalism. 1885-1920', in M. Shepperdson & C. Simmons (eds.), *The Indian National Congress and the Political Economy of India 1885-1985*, Aldershot, 1988, pp. 61-97.

Indian Covenanted Service so as to make it very difficult for Indians to succeed. It was difficult to deny that Indians on an academic basis could have successfully filled many of the posts that were reserved to Britons, so the British fell back on arguments that Indians lacked the necessary 'character' for these posts, by which they seem to have meant that they lacked the attributes of probity, impartiality, decisiveness and steadfastness which the typical British public school recruits were thought to possess.

Finally, although the demands of the educated elite, as expressed through the Congress, were moderate, the British mistrusted it and felt that moderation only hid its real aims, which were to replace the British from power. Some Britons, such as the highly influential Sir Alfred Lyall, believed that Brahminic Hinduism, the culture of many of the Congress leaders, was fundamentally opposed to social and political modernisation, and that it was the mix of reactionary religion and modern political ideas that was at the root of Indian unrest.⁸ The Brahmins of Bengal and Maharashtra were particularly singled out by Lyall and by Valentine Chirol as sources of unrest; amongst many of the latter, according to Chirol, 'hatred of the British is the dominant passion'.⁹ Curzon talked of the dream of Bengali Babus 'of a future when the English will have been turned out', and Hardinge suspected that Gokhale really wanted to take over power from the British in twenty years time.¹⁰

The failure of the British to incorporate the western-educated elites into their rule was of crucial historical importance. It led to a situation where it was the Indian Moderates who were confident that the future for India lay in the borrowing of western education, ideas and institutions, whilst the British rulers pessimistically

⁸ Sir A.C. Lyall, Introduction to V. Chirol, *Indian Unrest*, London, 1910, pp. vii-xvi.

⁹ Chirol, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

¹⁰ Curzon to Brodrick, 17 Feb. 1904, Curzon MSS, F.111/163, vol. 8, cited in S. Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1903-1908*, New Delhi, 1973, pp. 19-20; Hardinge to Clarke, 16/19 April 1912, Hardinge MSS, University of Cambridge, cited in B.R. Nanda, *Gokhale: The Indian Moderates and the British Raj*, Delhi, 1977, p. 403.

foresaw that such a transfer would lead to the disintegration not only of traditional Indian society, but also potentially of the Raj itself.¹¹

The ambivalence in British policies created by their mistrust of the western-educated elites can be seen in the policies, or rather the lack of clear policies, of Indianisation of the army and civil service in the nineteenth century. The British were prepared to open up these professions to greater native participation, but not if it meant that the wrong sort of Indian benefited. What they meant by this was that any system of competitive examinations for entry would almost certainly lead to the educated elites taking up the posts at the expense of other groups. Hence, all sorts of ploys were used to avoid the educated elites benefiting; e.g. Lytton's creation of a 'statutory' civil service which was to be recruited on the basis of social status.¹² Offers from the educated classes to establish their own volunteer regiments were turned down and a myth created that the martial races of the North were the only suitable recruits for the army was established.¹³

British equivocation regarding the demands of the Indian educated elite can be seen even more clearly in relation to the demand for representative institutions to be granted to India. The British introduced legislative councils and widened their membership and powers in the reforms of 1861, 1892 and 1909, but found themselves always having to contradict any democratic tendencies in these reforms in order to counteract the over-representation of the educated classes in the legislatures. The same applied to local self-government, which was considered a safe outlet for a democratic experiment, but which was subverted by the British as they realised that the desired involvement of the traditional leaders of Indian society was not being achieved, but

¹¹ This contrast is well brought out in D. Rothermund, 'Emancipation or Re-Integration. The Politics of Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Herbert Hope Risley', in D.A. Low (ed.), *Soundings in Modern South Asian History*, London, 1968, pp. 131-58.

¹² A. Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, Cambridge, 1971 edn., pp. 136-42.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 171-5.

that it was the educated classes which were taking up the opportunities offered. Originally the British saw these councils essentially as a means by which they could be kept better informed of Indian opinion, by which they meant, the views of dominant elites in the countryside. There was an attempt to try to educate Indian opinion through the opening up of the relatively harmless sphere of local self-government under Ripon in the 1880s, but, in practice, British officials thwarted this attempt by maintaining their functions as chairmen of district boards. There was a tendency to lose sight of the educative function of politics, and instead the emphasis was placed on administrative and fiscal devolution. Thus there was no system of elections for the legislatures but rather a reliance on nomination and, after 1909, indirect election through recognised institutions. The British eschewed the territorial electorate in their Whiggish emphasis on representation of key Indian interests. They were disappointed that rural elites held back from the new local bodies and that it was the urban professional classes who came forward. From the British perspective, political institutions were a tool of government; electorates, where they existed, were to be used to balance interests and thus perpetuate British rule. The provision of separate electorates for the Muslims under the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909 was indicative of this attitude. It seemed to underline the fact that, early in the twentieth century, both sides of the House regarded India as unsuited to western political institutions, particularly parliamentary democracy based on territorial electorates. Lord Balfour, Leader of the Opposition, expressed this feeling most clearly in 1909 when he told the Commons that the British form of government was only suitable

...when you are dealing with a population in the main homogenous, in the main equal in every substantial and essential sense, in a community where the minority are prepared to accept the decisions of the majority, where they are all alike in the traditions in which they are brought up,

in their general outlook upon the world and in their broad view of national aspirations.¹⁴

The implication was that the pattern of political transition which had been applied in the white colonies, such as Canada or New Zealand, the movement from representative to responsible government, was not to be followed in India, which was too divided a country for such a system to work.

It was not just the concession of separate electorates for the Muslims that signalled the fact that British policy-makers did not see India's political future following the Westminster model. The 1909 reforms extended Indian representation in the provincial legislatures but only in Bengal were elected representatives allowed a majority, and even there a preponderance of votes could still be assured to the government. The power of the elected Indians to initiate or influence legislation was still highly restricted and the progenitors of the reforms, Morley and Minto, went out of their way to deny that the reforms were intended as a step in the direction of parliamentary institutions.¹⁵

Before 1914 Indian politicians were depressed by the lack of progress towards their political goals. Their cherished aims of emulating British political development seemed to be thwarted. The Morley-Minto reforms failed to meet Indian aspirations and, indeed, led only to the possibility of constitutional deadlock as Indian legislators could criticise but not control. In 1911 a Government of India despatch seemed to outline the gradual extension of a 'larger measure of self-government' to the provinces as the way forward, but the Secretary of State was equivocal about the implications of this statement when questioned.¹⁶ What Indians most desired was that the British should stop relying on constitutional expedients and begin to give a clear indication of

¹⁴ Coupland, *The Indian Problem, 1833-1945*, p. 26.

¹⁵ See p. 18, n.9 above.

¹⁶ See Mehrotra, *India and the Commonwealth*, pp. 60-4.

the direction in which they intended to take India. In the view of Indian Moderates there could be only one goal, responsible government as in Britain and her dominions, and only one path to this goal, via the development of parliamentary institutions.

In addition to the British ambivalence towards introducing western institutions to India, there was a fundamental structural tension within British rule. The nature of the system of government in India was not conducive to progressive decision-making. There was a strong tension between the two predominant figures in the administration of India, the Viceroy in Council, based in Calcutta until 1912 and Delhi thereafter, and the Secretary of State, in Whitehall. This tension had two important effects. Firstly, it meant that policy-making was cumbersome and time-consuming, with each party keen to assert itself and to present itself to the outside world as the dynamic force in policy-making. Secondly, policy was inevitably the result of compromise rather than of any clear-sighted view of the overall direction of policy. The fact that the Viceroy and Secretary State could be the appointment of two different political regimes and from opposite sides of the political spectrum, as were Morley (radical Liberal) and Minto (Whig Unionist) also made for uneasy partnerships. Neither, despite the constitutional precedence of Parliament and its representative, the Secretary of State, over the crown's appointee, the Viceroy, was it clear where power lay. To some extent it depended upon the strength of personality of individual incumbents, but the tyranny of imperial distance always gave the 'man on the spot' a crucial advantage. The position of Secretary of State was seen, more often than not, as a stepping stone to higher office or as a position awarded as part of the party power-game. Indian Secretaries were often 'passing through' and lacked the length of stay in office to be able to press their ideas through to fruition, especially if opposed in India. Everyone has heard of the Viceroys Ripon and Curzon, but who has heard of their London counterparts, Kimberley and Hamilton? John Morley's appointment in December 1905 was an exception to this rule; it was not a stepping stone but a

tombstone marking the end of his political career. Morley's relationship with Lord Minto epitomises the tensions of the imperial system in India and has been thoroughly documented. Considering Morley's radical reputation and the overwhelming Liberal majority in Parliament, Indian nationalists seemed justified in expecting that a programme of major liberal reforms would be enacted. However, the reforms that were finally passed in 1909 were a grave disappointment even to moderate Congressmen. Not only were the reforms very limited in their impact (they were largely an extension of the thinking of the 1892 Councils Act) but they were accompanied by a programme of new repressive legislation and a crackdown on Indian extremist politicians. The system of governing India resulted in reform proposals that were inevitably a compromise between Secretary of State and Viceroy, but a compromise in which the Viceroy, his council, the provincial governors, and the Indian Civil Service, set the effective limits. Morley himself accepted that the details of the reforms' regulations should be left to the Government of India as the people with detailed knowledge of the situation, but these regulations were used by Minto to further push the reforms in his own direction.

Both Secretary of State and Viceroy knew that a further set of constraints operated upon them. In Britain, Conservative domination of the House of Lords, and the power of ex-India men in that body, acted as a powerful constraint on change. In India, the influence of the bureaucracy and the European community should not be underestimated. The power of the European community to constrain a reforming government can be seen in the concessions that were forced from Ripon in the Ilbert Bill controversy in 1882-3. Whilst the Government of India was centred in Calcutta it was very open to the influence of this European community. The bureaucracy wielded power well beyond its numbers. It was not just the influence of the I.C.S. on the ground but also the fact that many of the top posts in India were in effect reserved to I.C.S. men. Only the very top posts, the Viceroyalty and the Governorships of the

Presidencies, were appointments from outside India. All the other posts were traditionally I.C.S. preserves, and even on retirement I.C.S. men could wield their conservative influence for they formed the bulk of membership of the Secretary of State's India Council.

Indian nationalists perceived these tensions within the imperial machine but often misread their dynamics. They placed too much faith in the basic willingness of Parliament to listen to their demands and in the fundamental liberalism of the British approach to India. They failed to understand fully the clash between British imperial interests and liberal ideology. Their view did not encompass the hardening in liberal attitudes which had taken place in the era of the New Imperialism and the impact of social Darwinism.

2. Indian Nationalist Politics Before 1914

The Indian Nationalist Congress, founded in 1885, was an avowedly loyalist and constitutionalist organisation, which was dominated for the first thirty years of its existence by Moderate nationalists. It represented the frustrations and ambitions of the English-educated middle class, drawn predominantly from the three Presidencies.¹⁷ Congress gathered once a year in the Christmas vacation in a large tent, festooned with loyal slogans. Having met and passed resolutions on matters of general concern to the professional elite, such as the demand for fairer access for Indians to the Services, Congress remained generally moribund throughout the rest of the year. Agitation on individual issues was left to the local organisations which

¹⁷ A. Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, 1971. McLane says that the nucleus of Indian leadership in the early Congress was drawn from a group of nine men from Bombay and Calcutta who had formed inter-regional friendships while in London studying for the bar and the I.C.S.. J.R. McLane, *Indian Nationalism and the Early Congress*, Princeton, 1977, p. 52.

formed the basis of the Congress organisation in the provinces. There was no proper constitution until 1899 and the administration of the Congress was left in the hands of one or two men who were Britons, more often than not, during the first twenty years of the Congress. The looseness of the organisation allowed Congress to be dominated by a handful of Moderates, of whom Pheroza Shah Mehta, a Parsi lawyer from Bombay, was the predominant figure. The Moderate dominance was reflected in the issues which Congress took up, but also, significantly, in the issues which they avoided. As an inter-regional alliance of political leaders, there was an inevitable tendency for Congress to move towards the lowest common denominator of acceptability and to eschew regional or controversial issues. This tendency was underlined by the need to avoid falling foul of their rulers and their patrons. Thus, as McLane has argued, Congress avoided issues such as social reform (a separate social reform conference was held annually after the Congress session) which would have opened up a potential rift between the different religions represented in Congress.¹⁸ Issues of agrarian reform were generally avoided so as not to alienate Congress patrons, such as wealthy landowners. By avoiding issues such as religious revival and agrarian reform, Congress effectively ensured that its appeal outside the confines of the urban, western-educated elite would be limited. The presumption by Congress leaders that the fragility of the nationalist movement required playing down any sub-national loyalties, such as those to region, language, religion, caste etc., was a severe handicap to popular mobilisation in India where these loyalties were still the most meaningful ones to the majority of the population. Congressmen were influenced by the perspective of their rulers. Educated in the new universities established by the British in the late 1850s onwards, the Moderate nationalists were strongly imbued with the liberal values of Victorian Britain. Their emphasis on the benefits of the

¹⁸ *Indian Nationalism*, pp. 5-6.

British connection, of the supremacy of the British democratic tradition, of the politics of gradualism and of constitutionalism, owed very much to their reliance on British culture and institutions. As Surendranath Banerjea, a Bengali Moderate nationalist, expressed this loyalty in 1895:

To England we look for inspiration and guidance. To England we look for sympathy in the struggle. From England must come the crowning mandate which will enfranchise our people. England is our political guide and moral preceptor in the exalted sphere of political duty. English history has taught us those principles of freedom which we cherish with our life blood. We have been fed upon the strong food of English constitutional freedom.¹⁹

Congress loyalism won respect neither from the majority of British administrators, who mistrusted these statements of loyalty, nor from the increasingly large number of Indians who were looking for some means of restoring their national self-respect. The elitism of Congress under Moderate domination had been criticised even by Allan Octavian Hume, one of the founders of the movement, but it was not until the 1890s that an effective opposition grew up within the movement.²⁰ The opposition of the New Party, as they later came to call themselves, was led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak of Maharashtra. Tilak was, like G.K. Gokhale the Moderate leader, a member of the Deccan Education Society (founded 1884), which had as its aims the bringing of western education to groups such as poor Brahmins and middle-class Marathis who would not normally receive it.²¹ Whereas Gokhale lectured at the Society's Fergusson College, Tilak edited the Society's newspapers, *Kesari* and *Mahratta*. Tilak and Gokhale, though coming from very similar backgrounds, came

¹⁹ S. Banerjea, *The Gospel of Surendranath*, edited by Jnan Chandra Rai, Calcutta, 1912, pp. 119-20, cited in H. Banerjee, *Political Activity of the Liberal Party in India, 1919-1937*, Calcutta, 1987, p. 1.

²⁰ Hume tried to widen the appeal of the Congress to encompass Muslims and peasants but to no avail. See McLane, *Indian Nationalism*, ch. 3.

²¹ See J. Masselos, *Nationalism on the Indian Subcontinent*, Melbourne, 1972, p. 75.

to lead an Extremist and a Moderate grouping, respectively, within Poona.²² Tilak left the Deccan Education Society in 1890 and campaigned in the following year against the Age of Consent Bill, which raised the age of consent from ten to twelve years of age, and which the Government was introducing with the support of Indian social reformers, including Western Indian Moderates, such as Ranade, Agarkar and Gokhale. At one level this issue might be thought to reflect only the personal rivalry between the Moderate and Extremist leaders, in that Tilak, whose personal beliefs on social matters seemed to be quite liberal, took up the issue to put himself at the head of a movement of conservative religious opposition to the Moderate social reformers.²³ However, the issue revealed deep-seated differences of outlook between Tilak and the Moderates, which revolved around different views of the importance of indigenous as against western culture. The Moderates accepted some of the western criticisms of the retrograde nature of certain Hindu social customs: they valued India's attachment to the world's greatest reforming nation and believed that in co-operation with the British, the damaging accretions of Hindu culture could be swept away and a truer Hinduism could be revived. Tilak, on the other hand, argued that if reform was needed it should come from within Hindu society and not be imposed by an outside power. His emphasis on Indian self-reliance and on the revival of traditional Hinduism was very much in tune with the need that many Indians felt for affirming their identity which was under threat from the impact of foreign rule.

Linked with Tilak's apparent championing of traditional religious values was his belief that the nationalist movement needed to be a more agitational body, and that it needed to reach out to the concerns of a wider section of Indian society. Through his use of the Ganapati festivals, and the secular Shivaji celebrations, Tilak began to

²² See the comparative biographical study, S.R. Wolpert, *Tilak and Gokhale*, Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1962.

²³ C.H. Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindi Social Reform*, Princeton, 1964, ch. vii.

mobilise popular support in a way that the existing public associations had not done.²⁴ He had none of the qualms of the Moderates about going outside the normal constitutional methods of protest. In 1896-7 he took up a no-rent campaign in Maharashtra in protest at the Government's failure to reduce revenue demands in time of famine. Tilak was willing to risk confronting and offending the authorities in a way that the Moderates were not. He paid the price in a jail sentence and in Government ostracisation of his organisation, the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, but his stance appealed to a much wider Indian following.

Curzon's partition of Bengal, combined with the Russian defeat by the Japanese in 1905, radicalised Indian politics and led to the linking of Tilak with Extremist leaders in other parts of India, such as Aurobindo Ghose in Bengal and Lajpat Rai in the Punjab. The new Extremist assertiveness can be seen in the challenge that they mounted to the Bombay Moderates at the Calcutta Congress in December 1906. Pherozeshah Mehta and other conservative Bombay leaders regarded the partition of Bengal as a local Bengali grievance and one that Congress as a national body should not concern itself with. Other Moderates, such as Gokhale, supported a programme of *swadeshi* (encouragement of indigenous products) but disapproved of a boycott campaign which they regarded as directly confronting their rulers in a way that was likely to be self-destructive. Bengal Moderates, who naturally felt the partition issue very keenly, joined with the Extremists and secured Congress' acceptance of the goal of *swaraj* and a programme of *swadeshi*, boycott and national education. It was the determination of the Bombay Moderates to overturn this programme in the following year and the concern of the Extremists that the 1906 programme should be adhered to that led to the famous Congress split at Surat in

²⁴ R. Cashman, *The Myth of the Lokamanya*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975.

December 1907.²⁵ Despite the growth of popular support for the Extremists, the Moderate leaders were able to use their control of the Congress machinery to exclude the Extremists until the First World War. They were aided by their rulers in that a wave of British repression led to Tilak being sent to jail in 1908 for six years for sedition, Aurobindo Ghose fleeing to Pondicherry, and Bipan Chandra leaving for London. The Moderates took control of Congress, but, without the dynamism and appeal of the Extremists, Congress atrophied, until it was very nearly moribund when the war broke out in 1914.

The Moderate-Extremist categories in Indian nationalist politics were therefore established in the last decade of the nineteenth century and in the first decade of the twentieth. They were categories that were used by the British and Indians alike, but did they mark distinct and definable categories or did they merely reflect standpoints on particular issues at particular times? Were the differences based upon differences of class or age or other material factors? Were they fundamentally ideological or did they mark factional and personal loyalties? These are all questions over which historians have disagreed. Earlier historical studies which contrasted the lives and thought of opposing Indian leaders tended to exaggerate the cohesiveness of the followings of those leaders and also the conflict of coherent opposing sets of views. Daniel Argov, for instance, argued that the Moderate Congressmen were not true nationalists in that they did not aim to break the connection with Britain, and that the Congress only became truly nationalist when it was taken over by the

²⁵ For details of the split see R.K. Ray, 'Moderates, Extremists and Revolutionaries: Bengal, 1900-1908', in R. Sisson & S. Wolpert (eds.), *Congress and Indian Nationalism*, California, 1988, pp. 74-80. See also B. Prasad, 'The Congress Split at Surat', in B.R. Nanda & V.C. Joshi (eds.), *Studies in Modern Indian History*, no. 1, Delhi, 1972, pp. 144-76. Dr. Prasad insists that the Moderate intransigence at Surat resulted from their desire not to antagonise the Liberal Secretary of State for India, John Morley, from whom they had high expectations of being granted constitutional reforms, *idem*, p. 173. This suggests some interesting parallels between the Congress splits of 1907 and 1918.

Extremists.²⁶ Indeed, it may seem difficult to accept as nationalists men who so admired the culture of the power that ruled them that they conducted their campaigns in emulation of British political movements and ideas, used English as their common tongue, and were prepared to rely on a Briton to organise their affairs in their early years. More recent studies have reinstated the Moderates in the nationalist pantheon (albeit with a much more critical eye on their 'mendicancy'), and have tended to paint a much more subtle picture of Moderate/Extremist differences.²⁷ The Moderates pioneered the economic critique of British rule, and, in this respect, developed a powerful and coherent nationalist standpoint.²⁸ There is now widespread agreement that Moderates and Extremists, or rather their respective leaderships, were drawn from the same class, that is the professional middle class of lawyers, teachers and journalists. It may be that the Moderates tended to appeal to the older, more respectable and more well-to-do within this class.²⁹ Extremist-Moderate differences are now considered to be more important with regard to their methods rather than their overall aims. The majority of both Moderates and Extremists talked of their goal as being *swaraj* or self-government, but within the British Empire. Broadly speaking, the Moderates confined themselves to constitutional means and eschewed passive resistance and direct action. However, in the early stages of the agitation over the partition of Bengal, Bengali Moderates, such as Surendranath Banerjea, were not to be outdone in their calls for strong measures against the

²⁶ D. Argov, *Moderates and Extremists in the Indian Nationalist Movement*, London, 1967, pp. x-xii.

²⁷ E.g., R. Ray, *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal 1875-1927*, Delhi, 1984, pp. 134-5. Also B. Chandra, 'Elements of Continuity and Change in the Early Nationalist Activity' in B. Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, New Delhi, 1979, pp. 123-43.

²⁸ B. Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*, New Delhi, 1966.

²⁹ Ray, 'Moderates, Extremists and Revolutionaries...', p. 69; see also the rather over-schematised arguments in S.R. Mehrotra, 'The Early Indian National Congress 1885-1918; Ideals, Objectives and Organisation', in B.R. Nanda (ed.), *Essays in Modern Indian History*, Delhi, 1980, p. 57.



Government.³⁰ Historians now prefer to talk of temperamental or psychological differences between Moderates and Extremists, rather than the hard and fast differences based on material circumstances or ideology.³¹

3. Re-unification of Congress and Moderate-Extremist Rivalry During the First World War

After the Surat Split, the Moderates tried to establish a hierarchy of district organisations and to revitalise Congress politics in the regions. The attempt was a dismal failure, despite a good start in Madras and in the United Provinces.³² It was not long before Moderate lethargy and the absence of Extremist enthusiasm led to the Congress organisations in some of the regions lapsing. Attendances at the annual Congress sessions also dwindled. [See Table 1] Gokhale was one of the Moderate leaders who was aware of the problem and who tried to allow room for the more amenable of the Extremists to return to the Congress fold. The obstacle to the return of the Extremists was their refusal to accept the rule for the nomination of delegates by Congress organisations or Congress affiliated organisations only, rather than by public bodies which had accepted the Congress creed, as had been the case in the past.³³ In the Subjects Committee of the 1911 annual Congress meeting a proposal to alter the constitution so as to readmit the Extremists was passed by over ninety votes against seven or eight. However, Bhupendranath Basu and Dinshaw Wacha

³⁰ Ray, 'Moderates, Extremists and Revolutionaries...', pp. 62-89.

³¹ See, e.g. H. Owen, 'The Leadership of the Indian National Movement, 1914-1920', unpub. Ph.D., A.N.U., 1965, p. 30; R. Ray, op. cit. (1988), pp. 69, 86; S. Wolpert, op. cit., p. 302; R.T. Smith, 'V.S. Srinivasa Sastri and the Moderate Style in Indian Politics', *South Asia*, 2, Aug. 1972, pp. 81-100; S.R. Singh, 'Moderates and Extremists: The Congress till the Surat Split', in B.N. Pande (ed.), *A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress*, vol. 1, A.I.C.C. (I)/ Vikas, Delhi, 1985, p. 158.

³² H. Owen, thesis, p. 14.

³³ See Gokhale to Besant, 21 Nov. 1914, Besant MSS.

made such a commotion about the contemplated change that Gokhale thought it better to maintain unity by dropping the proposal for that year.³⁴ By the end of 1914, Bhupendranath Basu had dropped his opposition to the readmission of the Extremists, thus leaving only the opposition of the Bombay followers of Pherozeshah Mehta.

Table 1

Number of Delegates at the Annual Session
of Congress, 1900-1919 ³⁵

Year	Number	Year	Number
1900	567	1910	636
1901	896	1911	446
1902	471	1912	207
1903	538	1913	550
1904	1010	1914	866
1905	757	1915	2259
1906	1663	1916	2301
1907	*1200/1300	1917	4967
1908	626	1918	4881
1909	243	1919	7031

* contemporary estimate

Further pressure for the reunification of Congress came from Annie Besant, the Theosophist leader, who had only recently become involved in Indian politics. Mrs. Besant, who had expressed the fear that Congress was losing touch with the younger men of India, acted as a go-between, having discussions with both Gokhale and Tilak, who had now completed his jail sentence and was making conciliatory

³⁴ Idem.

³⁵ Compiled from P.C. Ghosh, *The Development of the Indian National Congress 1892-1909*, Calcutta, 1960, p. 24; B.N. Pande (ed.), *A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress*, vol. 1, A.I.C.C. (I)/ Vikas, Delhi, 1985, pp. 447, 580.

noises.³⁶ The need for a united nationalist front had become more urgent in view of the outbreak of the war and the very real possibility that the British might make constitutional concessions to reward and maintain Indian support.

The talks broke down as a result of Tilak's statement to the Congress Secretary, Subba Rao, that he would work to widen the rules for membership once he was re-admitted to Congress so as to achieve an Extremist majority. Gokhale was alienated by the revival of the fear of an Extremist takeover of Congress such as had been threatened in 1906-07.³⁷

Following the deaths of the two Bombay Moderate leaders, Gokhale and Pheroza Shah Mehta in 1915, the resistance to the re-entry of Tilak and his followers into Congress evaporated and the Extremists were effectively offered readmission at the December 1915 session. Although this represented a triumph for Besant's efforts, she was still determined that Congress should become a campaigning organisation, lobbying for legislative changes in the short-run and for self-government in the longer term. Besant's standpoint was reminiscent of other Britons, like A.O. Hume, who had supported Indian nationalism as the best means of maintaining the ties between Britain and India. She embodied a peculiar mixture of both Moderate and Extremist ideas. Her experience of socialist politics in Britain, combined with her energy, made her impatient of the slowness of Moderate methods. She had a strong sense of the superiority of Indian spiritual and religious ideas which linked her more with the Extremists than the Moderates. But fundamentally she was a Moderate in her basic respect for law and order, her emphasis on training in democratic procedures and her loyalty to the crown.³⁸ Her Extremist reputation in 1916-17 was the result of two circumstances. Firstly, the resistance of Congress leaders to her ideas to ginger up the Congress organisation forced her to undertake her own organisation, the Home Rule League, to achieve her ends. Secondly, British administrators in India misread her position and treated her as a dangerous extremist, eventually in 1917, giving her the martyr's crown by restricting her movements within a small area of Madras province.

³⁶ Besant to B. Basu, 28 Sept. 1914, Basu MSS.

³⁷ This issue is very fully dealt with in B.R. Nanda, *Gokhale*, Delhi, 1977, ch. 40.

³⁸ P. Woods, 'Annie Besant in Indian Politics, 1914-1920', unpub. seminar paper, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 28 Nov. 1974.

The First World War saw important changes in the nature of Indian politics and in the British outlook on constitutional change in India. Though Asquith's 'changed angle of vision' may now seem hackneyed, it tells an important truth about the impact of the war on the Raj. The most direct impact of the war was in politicising a wider section of Indian society than before. As Judith Brown argues, the hand of the Raj, previously felt by a much more limited number of Indians than the rulers liked to pretend, was now felt by a much larger number of Indians.³⁹ Recruiting for the volunteer army was perhaps the most obvious, and also the most resented form of government intervention in the lives of its citizens. The impact of wartime inflation, caused by government borrowing and restrictions on trade, was a more insidious but more widespread impact. Certain categories of citizens felt particular resentment at government policies during the war. The Muslim community felt threatened by the fact that the British were now at war with the Ottoman Empire, the territorial base of their spiritual homeland. For young Muslims, in particular, the British sponsorship of an alternative Hashimite caliphate was particularly threatening and they increasingly rejected the loyalist policies of their elders and called for unity with Hindu nationalists in response to these threats.

The war served to quicken the political ambitions of Indian nationalists and to foster an unprecedented degree of Hindu-Muslim unity. British talk of the rights of small nations and their broader sponsorship of national self-determination as a means of undermining their enemies was taken by Indian political leaders to be a green light to their own aspirations. It was argued that India's enormous contribution to the war effort should be rewarded by constitutional concessions. Both rulers and ruled shared the assumption that India's sacrifice of men, money and materials would indeed be rewarded. From the nationalist perspective, the war offered a golden opportunity to put forward a united claim for a substantial devolution of power. Congress and Muslim League leaders agreed at the end of 1916 on a common platform of political demands, the Congress-League Scheme, and on a division of electoral seats between the Hindu and Muslim communities. The Lucknow Pact, as the latter agreement was known, incorporated Congress acceptance of separate electorates, something which

³⁹ J. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics 1915-22*, Cambridge, 1972, p. 123.

Congressmen had opposed in principle until then, and a system of weighted representation for Muslim minority provinces with compensatory weighted Hindu representation in Muslim majority provinces.⁴⁰

From the point of view of the Moderate Congress leadership, the problem was how to maximise pressure on the British for constitutional concessions whilst avoiding the Extremists taking control of the movement. Annie Besant shared these objectives and was anxious for Congress to establish an agitational organisation, the Home Rule League, so that Indian youth could be absorbed within the official Congress organisation and not turn to direct action against British rule. It was a serious error on the part of the Moderate Congress leadership to fail to take up Besant's idea: the result was that Tilak and Besant set up their own Leagues in April and September 1916 respectively.⁴¹ The Home Rule Leagues not only set new standards for mobilising popular support but they also reached geographical areas where the Congress had not traditionally been much involved.⁴² The membership of the Besant League rose dramatically as a result of the Madras Government's decision in June 1917 to intern Mrs Besant and two of her supporters. It was an inept decision which created a martyr of Mrs Besant and united Moderates and Extremists in condemnation of Government repression.⁴³ Passive resistance against the internment was actively considered by Indian politicians, including M.K. Gandhi.

The summer of 1917 marked, therefore, the high point of nationalist unity and agitation for political reform. Muslims were apparently united with Hindus, and Moderates apparently united with Extremists. From the British point of view these

⁴⁰ See H.F. Owen, 'Negotiating the Lucknow Pact', *Journal of Asian Studies*, xxxi, 3, May 1972, pp. 561-87.

⁴¹ This was certainly the view of Jawaharlal Nehru's joint secretary of the Allahabad Home Rule League when he wrote a letter of resignation from his post. He argued that the formation of the Home Rule Leagues led to a revival of political activity and a swamping of the old Congress organisations by Home Rulers. Manzhar Ali Sokhta to Jawaharlal Nehru, 24 Jan. 1919, J. Nehru MSS, vol. 45.

⁴² See H.F. Owen, 'Towards Nation-wide Agitation and Organisation: The Home Rule Leagues, 1915-18', in D.A. Low (ed.), *Soundings in Modern South Asian History*, London, 1968, pp. 159-95.

⁴³ Owen records that among those who joined the League were constitutionally minded men, such as Motilal Nehru, Jinnah, Sapru, and Chintamani. Even Moderates who did not join the League, such as Banerjea, Wacha, and Sastri, condemned the Government's action, Owen, *op. cit.*, p. 176, n.95 & 96. There is evidence that it was not just the internment of Besant that worried the Moderates, but also the previous speeches by Lord Pentland and Sir Michael O'Dwyer, Governors of Madras and the Punjab respectively, which had seemed to indicate that the Government was clamping down on the constitutional movement for self-government. See Sir V. Lovett to Meston, 28 June 1917, Home Poll A, procs. 86-106, Aug. 1917.

were indeed worrying times. However, nationalist unity was somewhat artificial and unstable. The consideration of passive resistance opened up all sorts of fissures in the Congress. Bombay Moderates were dismayed by Mrs Besant's own support of passive resistance, including non-payment of taxes: Dinshaw Wacha, N.M. Samarth and Chimanlal Setalvad walked out of a joint meeting of Congress and the Muslim League which was considering the adoption of passive resistance on 28-29 July 1917.⁴⁴ The Bombay Moderates were subjected to a good deal of personal abuse in the meeting and were in a minority on the passive resistance issue. Surendranath Banerjea, who chaired the meeting, managed to get the issue deferred by having it sent to Provincial Congress Committees, apparently hoping that the Moderates would win the day in most of the provinces, as indeed they did.⁴⁵ The Bombay Moderates felt that what had happened had vindicated their opposition to the re-entry of the Extremists to Congress, and they held Mrs Besant primarily responsible.⁴⁶ Srinivasa Sastri, representing more thoughtful Moderate opinion, explained his opposition to passive resistance in a letter to Vaze:

1. Roughly passive resistance is of two kinds: that which is almost forced upon us by Government's prohibition of meetings and processions- being denial of elementary rights of free speech- and that which we invent as a special form of protest against wrong or as a means of obtaining political concessions. I was for the former but not for the latter.
2. Passive resistance is only justified when other means have been tried in vain. Gandhi tried meeting, protest, deputation, etc. [in South Africa] before resorting to passive resistance. We have yet to try resolutions in Viceroy's Council and appeals to Parliament and English politicians.
3. Passive resistance will embarrass Government in war time and alienate Premier and other English friends whose sympathy is our chief hope in the present political situation.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Home Poll A, procs 628-638, Nov. 1917.

⁴⁵ Owen, thesis, pp. 276-85; Ronaldshay to King George V, 3 Oct. 1917, R3. In the meetings of the P.C.C.s, only Madras came out clearly in favour of passive resistance; the other provinces either voting against or shelving the issue as did Bombay, where the Moderates successfully called for a decision be postponed pending Montagu's visit to India. The release of Mrs Besant in September 1917 made the issue largely irrelevant.

⁴⁶ D. Wacha to Vijiaraghavachariar, 8 Aug. 1917, Vijiaraghavachariar MSS.

⁴⁷ V.S.S. Sastri to Vaze, 16 Aug. 1917, Sastri MSS, NAI. In fact the Servants of India Society was itself divided on the issue- Indulal Yajnik, one of their most dynamic young members was forced to resign because of his membership of the League.

Sastri's letter epitomises the Moderate-Extremist differences: outwardly the differences were over political methods, but at a deeper level they reflected entirely different outlooks on the British-Indian relationship. Moderates like Sastri believed in the fundamental beneficence and constitutional responsiveness of British rule. The British might do wrong, but these wrongs were aberrations which could be righted if the matter was brought to the attention of the proper authorities, ultimately Parliament. Parliament, however, was made up of a mixture of those sympathetic to Indian needs and those not, and it was vital that Indian politicians should do everything to support the former and do nothing which might give a handle to the latter.

The return of common sense to British policy-making also contributed to breaking the fragile nationalist coalition. The new Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, announced the goal of British rule in India on 20 August 1917 and promised to visit India in the winter of 1917-18 in order to draw up constitutional reforms with the Viceroy and Government of India. In September Montagu had Besant released. The basis of a good deal of the support of the Home Rule League was now gone and there is evidence that local organisations quickly lapsed into inactivity.⁴⁸ There is little doubt that much of the Moderate opposition to Mrs Besant, explicitly stated by Dinshaw Wacha, but implicit in the writings of Srinivasa Sastri and others, was personal animosity and fear that Besant's success threatened their own position in the Congress organisation. Besant's regal manner, her organisational drive, and the adoration of her Theosophical disciples, all alienated the Moderate leaders.⁴⁹

When Mrs Besant was released she was elected as President of the forthcoming annual session of the Indian National Congress at Calcutta. The decision was

⁴⁸ See the evidence of the Allahabad branch in Manzhar Ali Sokhta to Jawaharlal Nehru, 24 Jan. 1919, J.Nehru MSS, vol.45.

⁴⁹ Owen, thesis, p. 279.

contested by Bengal Moderates but their failure to have their own nominee, the Raja of Mahmudabad elected, was a sign of the growing domination of the Extremists in the Bengal Congress and the Moderate walkout from the Reception Committee was a forerunner of the Moderate-Extremist split of 1918. Bengal was the only province to refuse Besant's election and a meeting of the Reception Committee for the forthcoming Congress was held at Calcutta on 30 August 1917 to resolve the matter. The Extremists packed the meeting and, as a result of the ensuing conflict with the Moderates, the chairman Rai Bakuntha Nath Sen dissolved the meeting and Surendranath Banerjea and some 100 moderates left the meeting.⁵⁰ The Extremists elected Motilal Ghose to the chair and reversed the previous Bengal Provincial Congress Committee's rejection of Besant as President. A compromise was eventually reached whereby Besant was elected President but Baikuntha Nath Sen was restored as chairman of the Reception Committee.⁵¹ One Bengali Moderate, Prithwis Chandra Ray, felt that the writing was now on the wall and that the Moderates were being swept off the board by a new broom. He exaggerated his case when he wrote an open letter to Congressmen on 10 November 1917 arguing that since 1915 Congress and all its machinery had practically been captured by the Extremist party, and that 'the Congress today has no separate existence and only flourishes as an appanage of the Home Rule Leagues.'⁵² Ray's call for the formation of a new Moderate organisation was premature but indicative of the pressure that Moderates felt. In many respects, the capture of the Congress organisation by the Extremists was only a matter of time. Tilak and Besant restrained their followers from pushing the Moderates into a corner lest the united national front should be lost.

⁵⁰ Home Poll, Sept. 1917, no. 6 Dep., fortnightly report from Bengal, 1 Sept 1917, stated that the Extremist, Byomkesh Chakravarti, purchased some two to three hundred seats on the Reception Committee.

⁵¹ Owen, thesis, p. 279; Ronaldshay to King George V, 3 Oct. 1917, R3.

⁵² Cited in Wolpert, *Tilak and Gokhale*, p. 286.

The turning point came in December 1917 in the elections from provinces to the All India Congress Committee for the following year.⁵³ In Bombay nine out of fifteen places went to Home Rulers and a number of prominent Moderates such as C.H. Setalvad, H.W. Wadia, N.M. Samarth and N.V. Gokhale were excluded.⁵⁴ In Bengal the Moderates were also swept aside, every Moderate losing his place, except for ex-Presidents who were permanent members. Bengal Moderates such as Baikuntha Nath Sen, P.C. Ray, H.C. Maitra, N. Sircar, K. Mitra and S. Mullick were kept out in favour of Extremists such as C.R. Das, I.B. Sen, Jitendralal Banerji, B.C. Pal and Hirendranath Datta.⁵⁵ Once the controversy died down, the annual Congress session of 1917 and Mrs Besant as chairman, proved to be less radical than the Moderates feared.⁵⁶ Besant dropped the idea of passive resistance, fearing that it might lead to widespread violence and alienate the Moderates. Congress stuck to the Congress-League scheme despite the efforts of young Bengalis to press for more radical demands. However, the writing was clearly on the wall as far as Moderate domination of the Indian National Congress was concerned. The Extremists were beginning to dominate the machinery of Congress at the local level and this was inevitably feeding through to the national level by the end of 1917.⁵⁷ Thus the Moderates were in a situation where their political survival seemed to depend on major British constitutional concessions which would vindicate the path that they had traditionally argued for. The Moderates were ripe, in other words, for Montagu's efforts to woo them away from their adherence to the Congress-League scheme and towards the pattern of constitutional development which the British preferred.

⁵³ See Owen, thesis, p. 304 for details.

⁵⁴ Smith, thesis, p. 88.

⁵⁵ Idem.

⁵⁶ Sastri had predicted that this would be so. Owen, thesis, p. 287.

⁵⁷ Smith, thesis, p. 88; Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, pp. 138-9.

CHAPTER II : REFORMS-MAKING 1917-1918

This chapter examines the intentions of British policy-makers in drawing up the constitutional reforms of 1919. A number of historians have assumed that the reforms were part of a consistent attempt by the Raj to meet new challenges by a process of timely constitutional concessions. These concessions, it is argued, were designed to widen the political field in which Indian politicians could operate and so incorporate further layers of 'collaborators' in the imperial process.¹ Further considerations included reversing some of the over-centralisation of administrative power which seemed to have accrued over the years, with the added benefit that in devolving power to the provinces Indians would have their minds distracted from the central vestiges of power, which were to remain untouched. It is the argument of this thesis that, whilst the above arguments formed part of British considerations in the making of the reforms, they do not in any way form an accurate reflection of the broader liberal and educative purposes of the reforms. The reforms, which started out in the hands of the Government of India bureaucracy as an attempt to adjust the reins of power whilst remaining firmly seated in the saddle, became a deliberate attempt to start India on the process of parliamentary democracy leading to ultimate self-government within the empire. The change in the nature of the reforms owed largely to the circumstances of the war, most particularly the pressures throughout the world for advances towards national self-determination, the radicalisation of Indian politics and the consequent pressures on the Indian Moderates, and the appointment in 1917 of Edwin Montagu, the most radical Secretary of State for India since Lord Ripon in the 1880s. It quickly became obvious to the Government of India that the type of reforms that would have

¹ See, e.g. Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire*, p. 1; Hutchins, *Spontaneous Revolution*, p. 44; Tomlinson, *The Indian National Congress and the Raj*, introduction; J. Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, Oxford, 1985, p. 194.

been acceptable both in India and at home in 1916 would no longer be so in 1917 or 1918.

The reforms can only be understood in terms of the international context in which India was recognised as having its own representation in the Imperial War Cabinet, at the Peace Conference and in the League of Nations that was born out of it. The constitutional implications of India's new status were that India should in future have greater independence from Whitehall and would be treated more and more like one of the Dominions, the white colonies which were rapidly establishing greater autonomy within the Empire. If, as was now agreed, the process of devolution of power should continue downwards to the provinces and to local government, this devolution would have to be accompanied by a clear devolution of political responsibility: Westminster could not consider transferring any of its powers unless they went to an authority that was properly answerable to an electorate. The devolution of power in India would therefore meet the needs of rewarding India's war effort, making the over-centralised machinery of government more workable, transferring some of the burden of raising taxation to Indians themselves, and winning back the political initiative in India by establishing a clear goal for British rule and incorporating reasonable nationalist opinion in the constitutional process.

The process of making constitutional reforms was inevitably divisive in that it encouraged a wide variety of Indian groups to come forward and demand that their interests be recognised and safeguarded under the new system.² For the British this was considered to be a natural part of the political process in India, but for many Indian nationalists it was considered to be a deliberate attempt to break up the new found unity of the Congress and the Muslim League. The Congress split of 1918, in which the Moderates left the Congress and formed their own party, might seem *prima*

² See, for example, the petitions presented by various organisations in India to the Montagu delegation in 1917-18, M45.

facie to be another example of the imperial tactic of divide and rule. The Moderates were wooed and encouraged to form their own party which would support the reforms. This chapter will examine this question of the British contribution to the Congress split of 1918 and will argue that although the breach was not directly encouraged by the British, in fact it was actively discouraged, the British did bear a major responsibility for the Moderate secession.

1. The Formulation of a Policy

The Search for a Goal

The process by which the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms were announced and then formulated provides an excellent example of the way in which the contradictions and tensions within the process of British policy-making for India worked. Proponents of the liberal and the paternalist views were locked in combat over a period of some three and a half years and the resulting reforms inevitably bore the stamp of compromise between the two approaches. However, the reforms finally marked the triumph of the liberal view that India could and should be developed along western democratic lines. This conclusion, however, would have looked far from inevitable when the process began in the spring of 1916, at which point most provincial governors and members of the Government were still thinking in terms of further progress along the lines of the Morley-Minto reforms, which, as we have seen, were predicated on the unsuitability of India to western political institutions. How did the Government come to accept a goal which was generally accepted to mean the development of India through parliamentary democracy towards the goal of dominion self-government? One answer is that the issues were never really presented in this form. Thus, conservatives were slow to realise the radical nature of political changes that were being agreed to because of the unexceptionable way in which the

issues were initially posed. When the new Viceroy Lord Chelmsford circulated local governments with the questions, 'what is the goal of British rule in India?' and 'what are the first steps on the road to that goal?' he seemed to indicate a fairly leisurely reconsideration of the broad lines of India's development after the war, without in any way indicating a response to pressures from the growth of Indian nationalist demands. Furthermore the Government of India's recommended statement of goal of endowing 'India as an integral part of the British Empire with the largest measure of self-government compatible with the maintenance of the supremacy of British rule' was sufficiently circumscribed and open to varying interpretations that even the most conservative governors could accept it.³ Besides, recipients were assured that there would be no doctrinaire imposition of a dominion model of progress:

The special circumstances of India must govern the form of self-government with which we shall eventually be endowed. They differ so widely from those of any other part of the British Empire that we cannot altogether look for a model in those forms of self-government which already obtain in the great Dominions. In all parts of the Empire which now enjoy self-government it has been the result, not of any sudden inspiration of theoretical statesmanship, but of a steady process of practical evolution, substantially facilitated by the possession of a more or less common inheritance of political traditions, social customs and religious beliefs.

Governors would have taken this statement as an acknowledgement that India was a long way behind in this process of political evolution and that the necessary educative process would be the work of many generations.⁴

³ Circular letter from Chelmsford to local governments and administrations, 20 July 1916, CS1. This volume in the Chelmsford MSS, entitled 'The Goal of British Rule in India, 1916-1917' is an invaluable source for studying the origins of the August 1917 declaration in that it brings together a variety of relevant papers and correspondence in chronological order.

⁴ Danzig argues persuasively that the Government's suggested statement of goal was deliberately eschewing any idea of dominion self-government. See R. Danzig 'The Announcement of August 20th. 1917', *Journal of Asian Studies*, xxviii, 2, Feb. 1969, pp. 19-37.

The orthodox nature of Government thinking on constitutional reform at this time can be further judged from the two memoranda which the Government of India circulated to local governments in June 1916 outlining alternative proposals.⁵ The first memorandum, which bore all the hallmarks of having been written by Sir Reginald Craddock, the very conservative Home Member, argued for a continuation of the Morley-Minto system, in which the provincial legislatures were advisory councils not assemblies of representatives.⁶ Further it argued that until the influence of Congress

can be reduced to its proper proportion, the introduction of any kind of representative government might be gravely prejudicial to the interests of the teeming millions whose continued happiness and prosperity must depend on the maintenance of peace and orderly progress. India requires breathing time during which the moderating sentiment which characterises those who have the greatest stake in the country may become vocal and responsible and hold their own in the constituencies, in the Legislative assemblies and in the press.⁷

The main method of progress that was recommended was to enlarge the electorates and remodel the constituencies so that 'the Councils be representative of the main classes and interests of the community in some reasonable ratio to their relative importance.'⁸

⁵ Memoranda attached to circular letter from Chelmsford to local governments 20 June 1916, C51.

⁶ Memo B (Memo A was on the development of local self-government) marked 'most secret', regarding provincial legislative councils, C51. It has some resemblance to arguments in Craddock's note of 26 June 1916, C17.

⁷ Idem.

⁸ Idem.

The second memorandum rather gave the game away by starting with the premise that,

because of the war it is impossible to stand still in India...a policy of mere inaction would almost certainly, after the present crisis, be overruled from home...the fear is that if we don't widen the councils then home pressure will give more power to the existing councils, thus creating an oligarchy of the intelligentsia.⁹

In other words, determination of the goal of British rule and reforms envisaged at the end of the war would allow the Government of India to maintain the initiative as against both the Home Government (much more closely influenced by the liberalising impact of the war) and Indian nationalists. Rather than giving more power to the councils, the memo opted for provincial councils with a substantial majority of elected members, seven-twelfths of whom would be elected by direct general constituencies. Thus the Morley-Minto system of representation by classes would now be superseded.

If the Government of India gave the conservative lead it was followed by the majority of local governments. The cautiousness of the provincial replies is remarkable; O'Dwyer's response might have been taken as the watchword for continued paternalism- 'we must assure good government before self-government, unless they are compatible.'¹⁰ The majority seemed to want to continue with or build on the Morley-Minto system despite evidence of its failings. Most doubted whether India was suited to Dominion self-government and even people like Willingdon, who came from a British parliamentary background, were not in favour of initiating any parliamentary system in India.¹¹ There was general agreement

⁹ Memo C, C51.

¹⁰ M. O'Dwyer (Lieutenant-Governor Punjab) to Chelmsford, 25 Aug. 1916, C51.

¹¹ Willingdon to G.I.(HD), 24 Aug. 1916, C51.

that no further powers should be granted to the legislatures and the main concern seemed to be to try and make the legislatures more representative of the 'real' India as Morley and Minto had intended. There was an almost obsessive concentration on the argument that the lawyer-politician element must be restricted and help given to the traditional allies of the British, for instance the landowners of the United Provinces, the rural masses and the Princes.¹²

Generally the responses seemed to be made within a bureaucratic vacuum. Some of the governors did seem to recognise the flaw in the Government's proposals, namely that any statement of goal was intended to be directed at an Indian audience and would need to satisfy reasonable Indian political expectations. However, none of the versions currently under consideration would meet that basic requirement.¹³

Percy Lyon, of the Bengal Government, was one of the few men to appear aware of the importance of burgeoning Indian nationalism to the considerations of post-war reforms. In a lucid paper he argued that the educated minority wanted self-government, and that it was 'probably unsafe to regard them as an isolated group in the population.'¹⁴ He argued in favour of a goal of 'the gradual transfer of the work of the government in India from foreign to Indian hands' and argued that the bureaucracy in India would have to respond to nationalist demands that they be given real power to govern themselves.¹⁵

¹² See e.g. Meston (Lieutenant-Governor, U.P.) to Chelmsford, 19 Aug. 1916; note by Verney Lovett (Commissioner of Lucknow, 18 Aug. 1916; memo from W.M. Hailey (Chief Commissioner, Delhi) 22 Aug. 1916; M. O'Dwyer (Lieutenant-Governor, Punjab) to Chelmsford, 25 Aug. 1916, C51.

¹³ The most liberal replies came Willingdon in Bombay, and from Carmichael and Percy Lyon in Bengal. Willingdon to Chelmsford, 24 Aug. 1916; Carmichael to Chelmsford, 20 Aug. 1916; memo by P.C. Lyon (member Bengal Government), 15 Aug. 1916, attached to Carmichael's letter, C51. But even conservatives, such as Sir Archdale Earle, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, recognized this deficiency, though, in terms of the practical reforms he was willing to consider, he also failed to consider Indian opinion. A. Earle to Chelmsford, 6 Aug. 1916, C51. See also Roos-Keppel, Chief-Commissioner, N.W.F.P., to Chelmsford, 20 Aug 1916, C51.

¹⁴ See Lyon's draft letter on the political situation in Bengal, attached to his memorandum above.

¹⁵ *Idem.* Interestingly, Lyon also argued that the transfer of power should begin at the provincial level and not at the district level as conservatives tended to argue. Craddock described Lyon's ideas as being 'fantastic', but within two years many of his ideas would be accepted by his colleagues as very
(continued...)

The Government of India's despatch¹⁶ was still almost as unattractively worded¹⁷ as Chelmsford's original draft, although, following the advice of the India Office, there was no longer explicit reference to the 'maintenance of the supremacy of British rule.'¹⁸ The despatch concluded that 'we do not recommend any immediate expansion of these powers [of the legislative councils] in the direction which a number of "progressive" politicians desire. We have no wish to develop the councils as quasi-parliaments.' [my emphasis]¹⁹ Rather the despatch concentrated on extending the Morley-Minto system by giving elected majorities in the legislative councils and greatly expanding the franchise. The Government was divided on the issue of whether the system of election should be a continuation of the Morley-Minto system based on classes and interests or one based on territorial constituencies. Craddock was totally opposed to a system of territorial elections, seeing it as leading inevitably to a western-style parliamentary system.²⁰ He fought a running battle with Sankaran Nair who saw territorial electorates as an essential advance. Chelmsford, ever looking for consensus, agreed to leave the issue to local option, but this satisfied neither Craddock nor Nair, both of whom wrote minutes of dissent.²¹ Instead of extending the powers of the legislatures, the despatch

¹⁵ (...continued)

much in line with the thinking of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. Craddock to Chelmsford, 25 Oct. 1916, C51.

¹⁶ Despatch no. 17, G.I.(HD) to S/S, 24 Nov. 1916, C51.

¹⁷ 'Elephantine' is the description of the wording in Sir. A. Rumbold, *Watershed in India, 1914-1922*, London, 1979, p. 55.

¹⁸ The aim now was 'the endowment of British India, as an integral part of the Empire, with self-government,' adding that 'the rate of progress...must depend upon the improvement and wide diffusion of education, the softening of racial and religious differences and the acquisition of political experience.' Rumbold argues persuasively that, despite the change of wording, the intended effect was the same, i.e. to exclude the idea that India's goal might be dominion self-government. Rumbold, *Watershed*, pp. 57-8.

¹⁹ According to Robb the Government was divided on this matter: Craddock, O'Dwyer and Duff were opposed to the concession of any increase in the powers of the legislatures, while Meyer, Hill Lowndes and Nair argued the case for moving forward in this direction. See Robb, *Government of India*, pp. 58-61.

²⁰ See e.g. Craddock's arguments, cited in Robb, *Government of India*, p. 61, n. 29.

²¹ See 'Conclusions in Executive Council as regards Provincial Legislative Councils', 31 Aug. 1916, C51. Craddock's views on the desired formula are set out in a note of 12 Sept. 1916, C51.

concluded that the way forward would be through changes in local self-government and the Indianisation of the public services. The despatch was a disappointing document which either adhered to existing lines of development or fudged controversial issues. There are no signs of Chelmsford giving a lead in a reforming direction, indeed on the issue of territorial electorates he told Chamberlain that he was in substantial agreement with Craddock's views.²²

Neither the formula, with its emphasis on the preconditions for India's advance towards what appeared to be a distant goal, nor the proposed reforms were likely to satisfy even Moderate nationalist opinion. The Government of India would have been well aware of Indian Moderate demands as they had a copy of Gokhale's political testament before them in August 1916, and also details of the Congress deliberations during 1916 which culminated in the scheme of the 19 members of the Imperial Legislative Council and the Congress-League scheme at the end of the year.²³ All these schemes called for a substantial accession of power to Indians both in the centre and the provincial executive councils, as well as the increase in the elected element of the legislature. However, during most of 1916, the need to conciliate nationalist opinion was not the paramount consideration in Government thinking on reforms. Despite the establishment of Home Rule Leagues by Tilak and Besant, the Congress remained a predominantly Moderate body. The annual meeting of the Congress at the end of December 1916, however, indicated a marked shift towards Extremist domination at the provincial level and this was bound ultimately to work its way through to the national level.²⁴ Willingdon was one of those to express alarm at the new trend and to write to Chamberlain suggesting an early announcement

²² See V to S/S, 24 Nov. 1916, C51.

²³ All to be found in C51.

²⁴ Meston actually attended the Congress and warned Chelmsford of the urgent need of a policy statement so as to rally the Moderates who were faced with an Extremist landslide. Meston to Chelmsford, 11 Jan. 1917, JM18.

of the goal of British rule in order to 'throw some plank to...the Moderates [who] would be swept away in the approaching Congress.'²⁵ Chamberlain, who was sceptical of the value of a public pronouncement without corresponding measures of concrete reform, wavered for just a moment but returned to his old position when Chelmsford turned down the idea of an early announcement.²⁶ The shift of power from the Moderates towards the Extremists was not the only worrying feature about the Lucknow Congress from the British point of view. At Lucknow the Congress and the Muslim League had met together and agreed a joint programme of constitutional reforms and had even agreed the details of communal representation. During 1917 the pace of Indian political developments increased considerably and the Home Rule agitation took on an altogether more menacing perspective in the eyes of British administrators. At the end of January 1917 Chelmsford wrote to Chamberlain requesting a full statement of policy 'as early as we can'.²⁷ However there remained a lack of urgency in the India Office's deliberations on the matter.²⁸ An India Office committee chaired by Sir William Duke, reported internally to Chamberlain in March 1916 that they doubted 'the wisdom of dangling before the Indian politicians a formula of political progress, hedged with restrictions that nullify its meaning and calculated to embarrass, by the vagueness of its promises, our successors in Indian government.' It argued that the Government of India's reform proposals did not mark an effective way forward because they did not devolve any responsibility on Indians and merely perpetuated the faults of the Morley-Minto

²⁵ S/S to V, ptel. and enclosures, 27 Nov. 1916, C51.

²⁶ Robb, *Government of India*, p. 69.

²⁷ V to S/S, 31 Jan. 1917, C51.

²⁸ Rumbold argues persuasively that the lack of a clear and agreed method of arriving at political decisions between the India Office and the Government of India, plus the lack of personal correspondence on the key issues at an early stage, meant that the process was much more drawn out than it need have been. It was still believed, well into 1917, that any declaration of goal would not be made until after the war was over, which was still a distant prospect. See Rumbold, *Watershed*, pp. 61-2.

Councils which could no longer be seen as a useful means of political education.²⁹

The Announcement of 20 August 1917

It was not until May 1917 that the situation took on a real urgency. Chelmsford was now persuaded of the need for an announcement of goal before any steps to implementing it. Two things convinced him. Firstly, he had come to realise that the home Government might not make an announcement of goal for some considerable time because Chamberlain had now indicated that the Government of India's despatch was lacking in what was needed both in the matter of stated goal and the measures to be taken towards fulfilling it.³⁰ For this reason, although Chamberlain was putting the despatch before the Cabinet, he felt that a further study of the problem was needed. Chelmsford knew already that this meant the appointment of a commission of enquiry which would adjudicate between conflicting opinions within British circles in India and allow some involvement of Indian non-official opinion in the process.³¹ Such an enquiry was considered an anathema by Chelmsford and the Government of India, who preferred that the Secretary of State himself visit India and then report.³² Secondly, Chelmsford was influenced by some important changes in British thinking about India's constitutional position within the Empire. Chamberlain's stress upon the need to allocate responsibility to Indians

²⁹ See Rumbold, *Watershed*, p. 69; Robb, *Government of India*, pp. 64-5. Robb notes the important introduction of this stress on a scheme which devolved responsibility in certain defined areas of government. It is interesting that the Duke committee came down against replacing class electorates with territorial ones because it felt the latter would only result in the continued dominance of the educated classes.

³⁰ S/S to V(HD) ptel., 22 May 1917, CS1.

³¹ J. Brunyate (IO) interpreted these as being among Chamberlain's motives for wanting a commission. See Brunyate to Chelmsford, 20 June 1917, CS1. He also added that Chamberlain felt that the forthcoming Mesopotamia Report would undermine confidence in the Government of India as the body to take such decisions.

³² See V to S/S, ptel., 30 May 1917, CS1; V to S/S, 26 & 31 May 1917, C3.

in certain definite areas had made Chelmsford reconsider the sort of ideas put forward by Lionel Curtis the previous year, which, despite Chelmsford's initially favourable response, had been demolished by officials in India on grounds of their impracticability. Curtis's suggestions seem, however, to have had an influence on India Office thinking, particularly on Sir William Duke. In the Viceroy's Council it was Sir Claude Hill who seemed most influenced by Curtisite thinking and who wrote an important note to Chelmsford in June 1917 outlining his proposals.³³ Hill put particular emphasis on the change which had taken place in India's status within the Empire since the Government of India's despatch was sent off in November 1916. In 1917 India had been given separate representation in the Imperial War Cabinet and Conference. The significance of this was that whereas the Round Table group had been originally considering federation of the white dominions with India and other colonies being governed by an Imperial Parliament, now India would have the same status as the Dominions. As power was inevitably devolved from the Imperial Government to the Government of India so real power could be devolved to responsible Indian ministers selected from elected representatives.

The third factor influencing Chelmsford related to the deteriorating political situation in India. It resulted particularly from correspondence Chelmsford had with Willingdon, who, as Governor of Bombay, considered himself the Governor most affected by the slide towards the Home Rule movement that was taking place among politically active Indians. Willingdon seems to have been looking partly for a 'sop' to satisfy Indian moderate opinion and partly for a clarification of which objectives were legitimate for Indian politicians to press for, so that he could come down hard on the Extremists. The Home Rule movement had left matters in a confused state and Chelmsford's tendency to leave these issues to local authorities meant that there were

³³ C. Hill to Chelmsford and enclosed note, 26 June 1917, C51.

no clear guidelines, with each province dealing with the Home Rule movement and its leaders in a different way.³⁴ Chelmsford outlined the rapidly changing political situation to Chamberlain, who now realised the urgent need to obtain Cabinet approval for some announcement of goal. In his telegram Chelmsford referred to the rapid and worrying rise of the Home Rule movement in India and the growth of democratic values in the world at large owing to the Russian Revolution and the subsequent outpouring of declarations of war aims sympathetic to the ideal of national self-determination.³⁵ It was these political factors, especially the recognition of the need to rally moderate Indian opinion, which was in danger of drifting towards the Home Rule Leagues, which finally persuaded the Secretary of State, Chamberlain, to change his mind and agree to try and push the matter into the very busy War Cabinet agenda. As Chelmsford himself admitted, the pace of change in Indian and world affairs had made the Government of India despatch of 24 November 1916 seem almost reactionary.³⁶ The pace of political change in India was quickened considerably by the Madras Government's decision in June 1917 to intern the Home Rule leader Annie Besant and two of her followers. This led to precisely what the Government feared- a shift of moderate politicians towards the more extreme Home Rule movement. In the United Provinces such Moderate figures as Malaviya and Sapru actually joined the Home Rule Leagues, and Congress began to consider moves towards passive resistance to achieve Besant's release. An announcement was now an urgent necessity if the middle ground was to be rallied; both Chamberlain and Chelmsford were prepared to accept a more limited interim announcement if it would secure the Cabinet's approval.³⁷ If in 1916 the prime consideration in making a

³⁴ See Willingdon to Chelmsford, 14 Jan. 1917, C51; Willingdon to Montagu, 18 July 1917, M18.

³⁵ V (HD) to S/S, ptel., 18 May 1917, C51.

³⁶ Robb, *Government of India*, p. 72, citing V to S/S, 7 May 1917, C3.

³⁷ See e.g. V to S/S, ptel., 10 July 1917, C51.

declaration of policy had been that of clarifying thinking on policy and goals within the Government itself, by 1917 external political considerations had taken priority .

The new Secretary of State, Edwin Montagu, was immediately pressed by Chelmsford to make an announcement as soon as possible.³⁸ However, it took Montagu several weeks to obtain Cabinet agreement on a form of words for the declaration. Montagu slipped the following statement into a reply to a prepared question at the very end of a parliamentary session:

The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire...

I would add that progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages. The British Government and the Government of India, on whom the responsibility lies for the welfare and advancement of the Indian peoples must be judges of the time and measure of each advance, and they must be guided by the cooperation received from those upon whom new opportunities of service will thus be conferred and by the extent to which it is found that confidence can be reposed in their sense of responsibility.³⁹

The origin and meaning of the wording of the declaration have been the subject of much historical debate.⁴⁰ It is generally agreed that Curzon and Balfour were the delaying and constraining forces within the Cabinet. The latter took the view that India as an oriental country was not suited to receiving western democratic institutions and never would be: 'East is East and West is West. Does India as a whole possess the characteristics which would give Parliamentary government a chance? To me it

³⁸ V to S/S ptel., 18 July 1917 & pl., 19 July 1917, C51.

³⁹ 97 H.C. Deb. 5s, cols. 1695-6.

⁴⁰ See S.R. Mehrotra, 'The Politics Behind the Montagu Declaration of 1917', in C.H. Philips (ed.), *Politics and Society in India*, London, 1963, pp. 71-96; Danzig, 'The Announcement of August 20th, 1917', pp. 19-37; P. Robb 'The British Cabinet and Indian Reform 1919-1919, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 4, 3, 1976, pp. 318-34; Rumbold, *op. cit.*, ch vi.

seems that it does not.⁴¹ Curzon, whilst sharing Balfour's doubts, did not wish to raise false expectations in India. Curzon, as an ex-Viceroy, saw himself in the role as chief defendant of the British legacy in India against the advancing hordes of ill-informed reformers.⁴² It was Curzon who drafted the final wording of the declaration embodying the essence of the Government of India's draft but making a number of significant changes. In fact, as Danzig argues, the change of wording resulted in giving a crucial foundation to the edifice of the Montford reforms, much of which Curzon detested.⁴³ Curzon had argued against using the term 'self-government' because it was open to very different interpretations, and naturally Indians would adopt the most liberal interpretation! Curzon saw self-government as the gradual Indianisation of the administration, starting at the local level and working upwards. He did not envisage any parliamentary system in India, certainly not at the central government level.⁴⁴ Because of the different ways in which the word 'self-government' was used and because of Balfour's political objections to the term, Curzon preferred to use the term 'responsible government' but seems to have believed that it amounted to the same thing. The new term seems to have connoted in Curzon's view the prerequisite that the new constitutional system should be truly representative of, and answerable to, all India, not just the lawyer-politician oligarchy that had come to dominate the Morley-Minto councils.⁴⁵ It had the advantage of meeting Balfour's objections to the use of the term 'self-government', whilst still suggesting to Indians that some form of self-government was a potential outcome. It also had moral connotations of requiring responsible attitudes from Indian politicians. Despite this,

⁴¹ Balfour: A Note on Indian Reform. Cab. 24/22 GT 1696.

⁴² See Curzon to Montagu, 26 July 1918, F439.

⁴³ See Danzig, *op. cit.* (JAS, 1968), pp. 31-7.

⁴⁴ Curzon to Montagu, 3 Aug. 1917, AS3/2/13. See also Curzon memo, GT 1252, for the War Cabinet, 2 July 1917, Cab 24/17, which Lloyd George took as the definitive interpretation of the word 'self-government'.

⁴⁵ See R. Danzig, *op. cit.* (JAS, 1968), p. 27.

Curzon must have known that most people would interpret 'responsible government' as involving a system of government where Indian ministers would be responsible to elected legislatures. Lionel Curtis had explained to interested parties in Britain and India that his preference for 'responsible government' to 'self-government' as a goal was based on his belief that the former indicated a democratic form of government along the lines of western systems whilst the latter could have meant autocratic Indian government on the lines of the princely states, for instance. The use of the term by Curzon and the rest of the Cabinet can only be explained, therefore, by the particular situation in which it was made. For all his desire for clarity Curzon had, in the end, agreed to a deliberate ambiguity in the announcement in the interests of the war effort.⁴⁶ In any case, the promise was for the very distant future and the agreed statement ensured that British authority and permanent supremacy was maintained.

The choice of the goal of 'responsible government' met the needs of Montagu for a liberal announcement to meet the demands of moderate Indian nationalists, whilst apparently satisfying the conservatives, Curzon and Balfour, that there were to be strict limits on the pace of advance and also that the continuance of British rule in India was inviolable. Such were the pressures of coalition government. As it turned out, it was Montagu's more liberal interpretation that better suited the rapidly changing mood of Britain and India at the end of the war. Curzon's strictures were quietly dropped and, not for the last time, Curzon found that he had given his support to a policy statement that came to be interpreted quite differently from the way he had

⁴⁶ The statement was a political statement aimed at educated moderate Indian opinion. See Chamberlain's contribution to the cabinet meeting on 29 June 1917 & Montagu's to the Cabinet on 14 Aug. 1917. Curzon also recognized this to be the case when he differentiated it from any reward that might be made to those Indians who had helped in the war effort. See Curzon's memo GT 1199 for War Cabinet 27 June 1917 Cab. 24/17. One has only to examine the making of the nearly contemporary Balfour Declaration (2 Nov. 1917) or the later Anglo-French declarations regarding the future of the Middle East to see the same war-time considerations at work. See the treatment of the labyrinthine British diplomacy in the Middle East in R. O'Connell, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Wars*, London, 1984, chs. 2-3. Curzon's doubts are dealt with on p. 43.

intended.⁴⁷ Dr. Danzig is right, therefore, to see the reform-making process as analogous to the baking of a many-layered cake; each element of government, from provincial governors through to the Cabinet, contributed a layer to the cake and each was reasonably satisfied that the finished product was an accurate reflection of their labours.⁴⁸ Perhaps the cake analogy would be better replaced by that of the proverbial broth being spoilt by too many cooks, for the resulting reforms lacked the basis of genuine political consensus. The resulting dissatisfaction when men like Curzon found that they were, in effect, giving their imprimatur to measures of which they entirely disapproved was eventually to play its part in undermining the working of the reforms and contributing to the backlash against the reforms which took place during 1922. Having announced the goal of British rule in India, Montagu now prepared to leave for India in order to turn the broad aims into concrete proposals.

Montagu's Visit to India, 1917-1918

Montagu and his party left for India in November 1917. They had used the time on board ship to study a number of proposals for constitutional reform in India. There were three main sources of ideas on the subject. Firstly, of course, they had the views of the Government of India, as set out in the despatch of November 1916. As we have seen this despatch was deliberately cautious in its proposals in that it attempted to represent a broad consensus among both the Viceroy's Council and the local governors. It emphasised progress through further democratisation of district boards and through greater Indianisation of the services. As far as the legislative councils were concerned, it was prepared to agree to elected majorities but would not

⁴⁷ See, e.g., Curzon's arguments re. the Balfour Declaration (2.11.1917), War Cabinet 245, CAB 23/4, 4 Oct. 1917, in T.G. Fraser (ed.), *The Middle East 1914-1974* [Documents], London, 1980, pp. 15-17. Also, for Curzon's later disquiet, expressed as Chairman of the Eastern Committee, 5 Dec. 1918, in D. Ingrams (ed.), *The Palestine Papers 1917-1922*, London, 1972, pp. 48-51.

⁴⁸ R. Danzig, 'The Many-Layered Cake: A Case Study in the Reform of the Indian Empire', *Modern Asian Studies*, 3, 1 (1969), pp. 57-74.

give those councils greater powers over the executive. There was an emphasis throughout on the need to make the electorates more representative so as to stop the lawyers dominating the councils and to allow other interests such as the landowners due representation. Although the scheme marked an advance on the Morley-Minto scheme it followed along the same lines. However, whereas the Morley-Minto scheme denied the logic of what it was implementing, i.e. it denied that it was developing parliamentary institutions, the 1916 despatch accepted that logic and tried to make good the failings of the Morley-Minto system to devise a system of representation that reflected the 'realities' of Indian society. The despatch therefore, had much more liberal assumptions about the possibilities for the distant future; it was prepared to offer 'self-government', but laid rather too much emphasis on the problems involved in laying the groundwork. All the evidence indicates that Chelmsford and his government adhered to the lines of the 1916 despatch until Montagu's visit in the autumn of 1917.

Although Chelmsford had been careful to try and form a consensus, a number of the local governors had shown themselves unhappy with developments. As Danzig has argued, although conservatives might oppose constitutional developments leading towards parliamentary institutions in India, they would support reform along the lines of administrative devolution to the provincial level.⁴⁹ There was widespread agreement at all levels that the British rule in India had become over-centralised and over-bureaucratic and needed overhaul.⁵⁰ Provincial administrations were anxious to free themselves from having to refer even relatively small matters to Delhi, and the Government of India resented the fact that they were not free to govern India without

⁴⁹ *Idem*, pp. 58-9.

⁵⁰ Indeed, some historians have erroneously seen this administrative factor as the key to the Montford reforms. See, e.g., Tomlinson, *Congress and the Raj*, p. 10. For contemporary views on the problem see, e.g., F. Slocock (Chief Secretary Government of C.P.) to Seton, 28 Aug. 1917, S7; Islington's speech at Oxford University on 'The Problems of India', enclosure to Islington to Chelmsford, 9 Aug. 1917 CS1.

constant reference to Whitehall where domestic political needs or wider imperial considerations might take priority. The need for administrative reform was much accentuated by the war and the concomitant requirement for efficiency at the cost of red tape. The Mesopotamia Commission Report (June 1917) brought out all the failings of the machinery for governing India and led to the resignation of the Secretary of State, Austen Chamberlain. Administrative decentralization, in the form of devolution of power to the provinces was therefore widely considered to be the way forward and, as we shall see, was attractive not just to administrators in India but also imperial reformers such as Lionel Curtis, and those, such as Montagu, who wished to devolve greater power to Indian representatives as well.

The second main source of ideas for reform came from outside India, in the form of Lionel Curtis and the Round Table group of imperial reformers. Curtis's influence turned out to quite progressive, despite the fears of many Indians that Curtis and his friends were aiming to place India under an Imperial Parliament containing Britain and the white dominions. Indian nationalists knew of Curtis from his South Africa days when he had been in charge of immigration controls on Asiatics in Lord Milner's administration.⁵¹ This was hardly the sort of record that would endear him to Indians and there was a strong groundswell of mistrust to overcome when Curtis visited India in the winter of 1916-17. Curtis was writing a major study on the future of the Commonwealth and had come to realise that India would have to be included on a basis of equality in an Imperial Parliament whose creation, he believed, was crucial for the survival of the Empire. He claimed that it was in discussions which took place before the war with the Indian civil servant William Marris that he had come to realise that India was potentially suited to western democratic institutions and thus a status similar to the dominions.⁵² It seems that the experience of the

⁵¹ See W. Nimocks, *Milner's Young Men*, London, 1970, passim.

⁵² See L. Curtis, 'A Letter to the People of India', in *Dyarchy*, Oxford, 1920, pp. 41-2.

war and India's participation in it strengthened Curtis's convictions and led to his ideas progressing ahead of other Round Table members in England. Curtis wrote to Philip Kerr, the editor of the *Round Table* journal and chairman of the London organisation, that 'Educated India has reached the stage when its political aspirations require sympathy and guidance instead of snubbings. In plain words, I am convinced that what you have to do is to foster political aspirations in India instead of repressing them.'⁵³

Curtis's method in India was to meet with officials and with educated Indians, to listen to their views and then to write draft proposals which were circulated to interested parties for circulation and comment. It was redolent more of academic debate than of political propaganda. The Round Table group was the equivalent of a present-day political 'think-tank'. There was a belief that well thought out programmes which had stood the test of detailed scrutiny by officials and non-officials would be able to have a strong influence on members of Government.⁵⁴ This sort of influence seemed to be working at the time of Lord Chelmsford's appointment when Curtis was asked to forward a copy of his draft proposals on Indian reform to the new Viceroy. Chelmsford seems to have been impressed with the proposals, which had been worked out by Sir William Duke, a Member of the India Council, but not long after found that his advisers in India shot holes in the scheme as a practical proposition.⁵⁵

⁵³ Curtis to Kerr, 25 Mar. 1917, Lothian MSS, vol. 33. For Kerr's doubts about a rapid transfer of Western democracy to India see Kerr to Curtis, 20 July 1917, Lothian MSS, vol. 33.

⁵⁴ In fact, members of the Round Table were actually in the Government: for instance, Milner was Secretary of State for the Colonies and Kerr took on an influential position at the end of 1916 in Lloyd George's private office as the Prime Minister's secretary, his so-called 'kitchen cabinet'.

⁵⁵ This scheme became known as the Duke Memorandum. Chelmsford may have been attracted to the basis of the proposals because he shared Curtis' background of working a colonial constitution (in Curtis' case that of South Africa where as a member of Milner's 'Kindergarten', as Curtis and other young followers of Alfred Milner were known, he helped to devise the Union constitution. In Chelmsford's case he had been Governor of two Australian provinces), and thus could more readily understand the arguments for a more devolved constitution.

The officials in India probably didn't like the Curtis scheme because of their view that India was entirely different from any of the white colonies, lacking their cultural homogeneity. What was Curtis proposing? He was advocating a goal of self-government for India, but preferred to call it 'responsible government within the Commonwealth' to stress the maintenance of the imperial link. The goal, argued Curtis, could only be reached by successive stages and the pace would be determined by regular investigations by the Imperial parliament, whose representatives would include members from Britain, the Dominions and India itself. Curtis was convinced that the only way to train responsible Indian ministers was to devolve effective power on them in certain limited spheres at the provincial level. From this derived the idea of 'dyarchy' or dividing the government into two parts- one responsible to the British people, and the other responsible to the Indian people. These ideas are so similar to the eventual Montagu-Chelmsford reforms that it is tempting to assume that the influence of Curtis was decisive in formulating the reforms. This would be misleading. As Curtis himself admitted, it would be perfectly possible to reach similar conclusions to his, once one accepted the same basic assumptions. It seems that the India Office was quicker to accept Curtis's premises than the Government of India which, as we have seen, adhered, throughout 1916 and the first three-quarters of 1917, to a very different set of proposals. Sir William Duke, Sir Lionel Abrahams, M.C. Seton, C.H. Kisch and J.E. Shuckburgh, all members of the India Office, had participated in Curtis's early discussions on Indian reforms and seem to have fed back some of Curtis's views to the Secretary of State, Austen Chamberlain. Thus, particularly in May 1916, Chamberlain criticised the Government of India scheme precisely because it perpetuated some of the faults of the Morley-Minto scheme, in that it did not devolve real power and responsibility to elected Indians. At this stage Chelmsford still believed that the criticisms of Indian officials had ruled out a Curtisite scheme and he did not believe it would stand the scrutiny of the Secretary of

State or a reform commission sent to India. Indeed, the Government of India had instructed officials in India at the end of 1916 not to participate in Round Table moots or to write for the Round Table quarterly. This followed the leak of a private letter sent from Curtis to Kerr, which showed the extent to which Curtis had received the hospitality of Indian officials, such as Sir James Meston, the Governor of the U.P. and William Marris, and, it was claimed by some Indian nationalists that this letter indicated a British conspiracy to place India under the control of an Imperial Parliament in which India was not represented.⁵⁶ The influence of Round Table thinking at the highest levels of policy-making, therefore, flowed initially in the direction of Whitehall to Delhi and not vice-versa. Curtisite ideas formed an important, though not easily quantifiable, influence on the thinking of many members of the Cabinet which met on 14 August 1917 and drew up the goal for India. Once this had happened Chelmsford took up the Curtisite scheme as the most effective proposal available for implementing the new policy, and Curtis's scheme was amongst a number of documents circulated to local governments.⁵⁷

The third influence on the making of the reforms came from the demands of Indian nationalists themselves. Sometimes it seemed that the reforms were being discussed by the British in a vacuum, but they always had to consider the need to take moderate Indian opinion with them in the reforms process and this increased once Montagu's party arrived in India. The problem for the British was that they saw an enormous gulf between their own proposals and those of the Indian National Congress and Muslim League as agreed at Lucknow in December 1916. Chelmsford described

⁵⁶ It was not until September 1917 that the Government of India took up a direct contact with Curtis again. See Curtis to Chelmsford, 8 Sept. 1917, C51. The matter of the government ban still rankled in December 1917 when Montagu recorded in his diary that Curtis refused to make peace with Chelmsford. See Edwin S. Montagu, *An Indian Diary*, London, 1930, p. 101.

⁵⁷ If anything, Chelmsford turned out to be a stronger proponent of dyarchy, which was presumably advocated by Meston and Marris, than Montagu, who became worried that unless dyarchy was well hidden it would make the scheme unacceptable to many Britons and Indians alike. Montagu, *Indian Diary*, 24 & 25 Jan., pp. 218, 220.

the Lucknow scheme as 'preposterous' and few if any Britons were enamoured of it. The reason was partly that the scheme went much further than Government proposals, for instance it called for four-fifths of the members of both the Imperial legislative Council and provincial legislatures to be elected, and it gave councils much wider powers including budgetary control and the right to pass resolutions which would be ultimately binding on the Government. It made distinct inroads into the central government, which other schemes, such as the Government of India despatch of November 1916 and the Curtis scheme, had left sacrosanct. Provincial autonomy would mean restrictions on the powers of the central government and also the Secretary of State, who henceforth would have a relationship with the Government of India similar to that of the Secretary of State for the Colonies with the dominion governments. But what the British also objected to was the potential for deadlock which seemed to be built into the system, for the Executive Councils were to be half British (not I.C.S. men) and half Indian (elected by the members of the legislatures) and were subject to binding resolutions from the legislatures, subject only to the temporary veto of the Governor/Governor General in Council. The only spheres that were left unequivocally in the control of the British were foreign and military policy. The Congress-League scheme gave away the control of the British over the process of the devolution of power and Montagu remarked that 'it is practically responsible government at one fell swoop.'⁵⁸

The task of Montagu and Chelmsford and their advisers in drawing up a scheme of reforms during the winter months of 1916- 1917 was:

1. to find a scheme which faithfully implemented the 20 August announcement, and this, it was agreed, meant devolving power in the provinces to Indian ministers who

⁵⁸ Montagu, *Indian Diary*, p. 57.

would have control over certain distinct departments and who would have some form of responsibility to a much more representative electorate.

2. to achieve a reasonable consensus within Government of India and local government circles in favour of the scheme.

3. to find a scheme which would satisfy moderate Indian opinion and to wean Indian educated opinion away from the Congress-League scheme.

4. to find a scheme which the British Parliament, including the House of Lords, would pass into law.

There was little doubt that if the first three aims were met then the fourth would present few problems. Montagu obviously felt that he would have to temper the reforms to go some way to meet the views of his most important Cabinet colleagues, Chamberlain and Curzon.⁵⁹ He invited Lord Donoughmore to accompany him on his visit because he hoped that Donoughmore would be helpful in winning over Conservatives on his return.⁶⁰ The problem was that the second and third aims pulled in opposite directions. By determining to visit India and devise reforms in consultation with the Viceroy, Montagu was effectively committing himself to achieving proposals with which Chelmsford agreed and this meant that Montagu had to be prepared to revise his ideas in a more conservative direction. On the other hand he was acutely aware that Indian nationalist opinion would find his own proposals too conservative and would definitely reject even more cautious proposals.⁶¹ This was the tightrope that Montagu walked in devising the reforms in India.

Montagu's visit to India was an important stage in the politicisation of India. Indians responded to the prospect of real political power being devolved at the provincial level with a flurry of political activity in the form of the creation of

⁵⁹ Montagu to Chamberlain, 12 July 1918, AS4/9/23.

⁶⁰ S/S to V, 21 Aug. 1917, M1 ; also *Indian Diary*, p. 377.

⁶¹ See *Indian Diary*, p. 251.

deputations and memorials by a wide variety of interest groups. The British encouraged this process, not always for the most progressive reasons. There was obviously a fear that only the voice of the articulate lawyer-politicians would be heard and that loyalist groups would fail to organise themselves. At one level this involved Chelmsford circularising local governments urging them that 'It is all-important that the interests of every class...should be represented' and encouraging them to awaken any important group which had not realised this.⁶² At another level, some members of the European community in Madras encouraged the non-Brahmin, Justice Party to organise itself to put forward its views on reforms, which were, of course, opposed to those of the Congress.⁶³ Almost as soon as he arrived, Montagu was involved in seeing deputations on an official basis. He soon complained about the formality of the whole proceedings and managed to talk with members of the deputations on a more informal basis.⁶⁴ Whereas Chelmsford was by nature, and now by office, aloof and dignified, Montagu saw the reception of the deputations as part of a political process; he wanted not only to listen but also to persuade and win over those who attended.⁶⁵ The reception of deputations continued in the Presidency capitals, Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, and was not completed until the end of the year. In the new year Montagu's party met with the Government of India and the local governors and a reforms scheme was devised.

Montagu had originally expected to leave India in January 1918 but this schedule proved much too optimistic, and he did not leave until the end of April, when he had helped to draft and agree the report that took his and Chelmsford's names. Montagu and Chelmsford were agreed from an early stage on the basic aim

⁶² Chelmsford to heads of provinces, 27 Sept. 1917, C19.

⁶³ Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict*, p. 66.

⁶⁴ See *Indian Diary*, entry for 15 Nov. 1917, pp. 33-5.

⁶⁵ Montagu argued that the Viceroyalty should be divided into ceremonial functions, which would be carried out by a member of the royal family and political functions, which would be carried out by a political appointee from home. See *Indian Diary*, pp. 16-17.

which was the gradual transfer of responsibility in the provinces from British to Indian hands, and the means of achieving this was through 'dyarchy', i.e. the division of subjects into those which were to be transferred to the domain of the legislatures, and those which were to be reserved and in which the Government's authority was ultimately decisive. The main matters at issue were essentially at what stage this transfer should begin and how it should be progressed in the future, but as Montagu was prepared to reach a compromise on these issues they were not difficult to resolve. On other issues there was less agreement. Montagu believed that the reforms would have to include the sphere of the Government of India, partly because Indians would accept no less, but also because he saw that changes were needed at the higher levels of decision-making if provincial autonomy was to prove a reality. Chelmsford defended the citadel of the Government of India valiantly. It was not just a defence of vested interests but it also reflected a genuine belief that maintaining the British hold at the centre was what made the transfer of power in the provinces both politically acceptable at home, and also constitutionally correct.⁶⁶ There were also the questions of how central and provincial finances should be divided, whether the official bloc should be maintained in the legislatures, whether the Imperial legislature should become a two-chamber assembly, whether a ratio should be established for Indianisation of the services, and whether a range of concessions to Indian opinion on other matters could be made- what Montagu called the 'lubricants.' Montagu's desire throughout was to lay the foundations of a parliamentary system in India. Thus, he opposed the maintenance of a bloc of official votes as undermining the political educative process, and his argument for a second chamber in the provinces followed from the same line of reasoning- if the Government needed constraints on the legislature he preferred that it should be provided from within the legislative system,

⁶⁶ Interestingly, Lionel Curtis agreed with this argument. See *Dyarchy*, p. 122.

by a body composed primarily of men experienced in the legislatures. Chelmsford's natural preference was to ensure that the Government could continue to operate and maintain the essentials of good administration under the new system. Robb summarises the role of damage limitation which Chelmsford's administration undertook when he argues that Montagu provided much of the impetus for change and the ideas for implementing reform, but that 'the Government of India effectively set the limits for the Reports's proposals.'⁶⁷

2. The Publication of the Reforms and the Congress Split of 1918. Divide and Rule?

Towards the end of his period in India Montagu summarised the achievements of his visit:

We have got an agreed report...We have kept India quiet for six critical months. When I came out, moderates were rushing to join the Home Rule League; on leaving, the succession of moderates from the Home Rule League is making marked headway, particularly in the United Provinces- Mahmudabad, Chintamani, Sapru etc.⁶⁸

This statement immediately raises the question of whether the process of reforms-making was a deliberately divisive tactic on the British part. Some historians, presumably accepting Ronald Robinson's argument that colonial powers maintain themselves in power by the skilful manipulation of competing elites in indigenous society, assume that this was the case. B.R. Tomlinson, for instance, argues that constitutional reforms were determined, in part, by the need to widen the base of political support for the Government.⁶⁹ Carl Bridge follows a similar line of

⁶⁷ Robb, *Government of India*, p. 95.

⁶⁸ *Indian Diary*, p. 363.

⁶⁹ *Indian National Congress and the Raj*, p. 23.

argument when he says of the reform acts of 1909, 1919 and 1935 that 'Constitutional reforms were more mechanisms for ensuring the survival of the Raj by creating a buffer of collaborators, than they were means of terminating it.'⁷⁰ David Page, however, makes a much more serious allegation, namely that the reforms hardened communal divisions in Indian society by maintaining (and in fact widening) separate electorates by focusing on concessions at the provincial and not the national level, which tended to put a premium on issues that divided rather than united Indians, and by manipulating the balance of urban and rural constituencies to further their conservative ends.⁷¹ This search for collaborators was inevitably a divisive process as it involved not only the decision to work with some groups but also a determination to keep other groups at arm's length.

In this section, two issues will be examined so as to throw light on the allegation of British tactics of divide and rule. Firstly, we will look at the problem of separate electorates and secondly, at much greater length, at the question of whether the British reformers contributed to the Congress split between Moderates and Extremists which took place in the summer of 1918. One of the problems in dealing with both of these issues is how to distinguish intention from result. It cannot be denied that on both of the above issues the Montford reforms did have an outcome that was divisive, but it will be argued that in neither case was this the deliberate intention of the reformers.

From their earliest discussions in 1916, the Government of India had called into question the continuation of separate electorates for Muslims which had been introduced in the Morley-Minto reforms and which had been seen as a concomitant of Lord Minto's reply to the distinguished Muslim delegation in 1906. The issue was raised partly as a result of the debate as to whether future representation should be by

⁷⁰ Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire*, p. 1.

⁷¹ Page, *Prelude to Partition*, ch. 1.

classes and interests or whether territorial constituencies should be formed with direct elections to the legislatures. But even those who preferred representation by interests had their doubts about separate electorates and weighted representation for Muslims.⁷² In fact the Viceroy's Council was divided on the matter and it was ducked in the despatch of 24 November 1916.⁷³ Whatever doubts the British might have had about perpetuating separate electorates had to be set aside because the Muslims were crucial to the war effort, and it would be suicidal to antagonise Muslim interests just at the point when Islamic issues of great importance were being raised by the conflict with the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East and younger Muslims were tending to look away from the loyalist Muslim League towards a stance of nationalist unity with the predominantly Hindu Congress. The Lucknow Pact of December 1916, with its agreement to separate electorates and weighted representation for Muslims in minority provinces, reduced the problem from the British point of view. Whatever their theoretical dislike of communal electorates, they found that they were a *fait accompli*, approved of (albeit very reluctantly and temporarily) in Congress circles. Montagu undoubtedly had a deep dislike for communal representation, arguing that it was 'fatal to democratisation of institutions and causes disunion between the Hindu and the Mohammedan', but quickly recognised whilst on his Indian tour that separate voting could not be got rid of in the case of the Muslims.⁷⁴ However, he was most reluctant to see the system extended, and wanted it to be recognised as only a temporary institution.⁷⁵ Thus the Montagu-Chelmsford Report contained a damning indictment of separate electorates as being opposed to the ideals of political

⁷² Memo B (see p. 63 above), argued against plural voting for Muslims, and an end to numerical weighting. Memo C agreed and argued for proportional representation for Muslims, C51.

⁷³ Letter and enclosure dated 9 Sept. 1916 from Sir W. Meyer, Member of Viceroy's Council, regarding discussions in Council on 8 Sept and alterations to 31 Aug. conclusions, C51.

⁷⁴ *Indian Diary*, pp. 100 & 68. For other examples of Montagu's dislike of communal representation, see *Indian Diary, 1912-13*, M39, p. 61 ff.

⁷⁵ *Indian Diary*, p. 100; Montagu's memo on reforms, 1 Feb. 1918, M41.

education and common citizenry leading to self-government, but reluctantly maintained the system for Muslims (although it argued that they should be limited to provinces where Muslims formed a minority of voters) and extended it to the Sikhs as another minority in need of representation.⁷⁶ In all other cases the report indicated a preference for representation of minorities, if necessary, to be by nomination and not by separate electorates.⁷⁷ The whole tone in which this issue was dealt with in the making of reforms suggested that far from a Machiavellian desire to perpetuate communal divisions, there was a genuine desire on the British behalf to recognise past mistakes and to try and correct them in the new spirit of democratisation.⁷⁸

The Congress Split, 1918

It is much more difficult to determine whether the British deliberately helped to bring about the Moderate/Extremist split in the Congress Party in 1918. Before leaving for India, Montagu heard news of divisions within the Congress resulting from the debate at provincial level as to whether passive resistance should be used to try and bring about the release of Mrs Besant, and the question of Besant's election as Congress President, which the Moderates opposed.⁷⁹ He expressed satisfaction at the news and asked for further information.⁸⁰ As we have seen, the policy of announcing a goal of British rule was largely undertaken with a view to 'rallying the moderates' who were in danger of being swamped within the Congress organisation

⁷⁶ Montagu-Chelmsford Report, Cmd. 9109, 1918, paras 227-232. The Sikhs, like the Muslims, had played an important part in the Indian Army during the Great War.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 232.

⁷⁸ This is not in any way to deny that 'divide and rule' tactics were used by British officials in India, it is only to argue that they do not appear to have been a feature of the considerations of those involved at the higher levels with the making of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms.

⁷⁹ V(HD) to S/S, ptel. 1110, 8 Oct. 1917, C8. See pp. 56-57 above.

⁸⁰ S/S to V, ptel. 1900, 11 Oct. 1917, C8.

and, indeed, of being won over to the Home Rule organisations.⁸¹ Montagu sensed when he met the Indian delegation that not everybody was wedded to the Congress-League scheme and he did what he could by personal negotiation to build on these doubts. He had unsolicited help from Lionel Curtis, who helped a group of Calcutta Moderates, Indian and European, to devise a scheme which would be put to the Government.⁸² Naturally the scheme favoured a dyarchical solution rather than one based on the Congress-League scheme.⁸³

Montagu's wooing of the Moderates went further than merely persuading them to accept one constitutional scheme rather than another. He firmly believed that Indians had been forced into a situation of opposition to the British, partly because of the failure of the Government to act politically and attempt to win them over, partly because previous constitutional schemes had placed them in that position, i.e. as irresponsible critics, and partly because the British had never allowed educated Indians sufficient outlets for their abilities. Montagu believed that it was a key aim of the reforms to break this perpetual opposition between Government and Indian nationalists. In his view Indian opinion was far more varied and more open to being won over to supporting the British on many issues than the Government had ever realised. The alienation of the educated elites was the most serious result of the tendency of Government to treat all dissent as seditious. In an important note which he drafted to his colleagues whilst on board ship bound for India, Montagu divided Indian people into three groups.⁸⁴ Firstly, there were the outright extremists and anarchists who hated the British connection and for whom no reforms would

⁸¹ See pp. 68-71 above.

⁸² See Curtis, *Dyarchy*, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii & 326-356.

⁸³ H.S.L. Polak regarded the support of Calcutta moderates for this scheme as an indication that they might secede from the Congress and form a new body. Polak to V.S.S. Sastri, 4 Feb. 1918, Sastri MSS, NAI.

⁸⁴ Montagu's note to colleagues, written on board *Kaisar-i-Hind*, 7 Nov. 1917, M41.

ultimately be acceptable.⁸⁵ Secondly, there were the moderates whom Montagu described as

...people of genuine belief in the benefits of British rule; people really apprehensive that the growth of the extremist movement may endanger it; people anxious as citizens of the Empire, for a greater share in the destinies of their own country. These are few in number and in a precarious position. Although they are called moderates they are not always moderate in their views. They are competing, at present unsuccessfully, with the extremist for the younger politician. Their army is continually being seduced to the extremist army; their leaders are continually exposed to the dangers of the story that we do not mean what we say, and that what we propose is wholly inadequate. At the present moment, too, they are, I think, sulking in their tents and so untrusting and shaken, so far as many of them are concerned, in their position as to be of little political use. Now I believe that unless we can split them clearly from the seditionist without showing that is our desire; unless we can get them to organise as a fighting force against the seditionist; unless we can restore their confidence in themselves and fortify their belief in our intentions, we must fail. It is to them to whom we must look immediately for the acceptance of our scheme and for assistance in working it.⁸⁶

The means to achieve this was to offer substantial reforms so as to meet their demands as far as possible, and where this could not be done to only do so when convincing arguments and not just prejudice could be raised against them. The third group was described in the rather condescending language that also characterised the Montagu-Chelmsford Report as 'the dumb, inarticulate mass of the people of India.' Montagu argued that their eventual political awakening was a prerequisite to real responsible government. In other words Montagu wanted to politicise India, including the rural areas; to see political parties develop which would be based on ideological

⁸⁵ It should be noted that Montagu believed that this group was rather narrower than those treated as Extremist by the Government of India and local governments. Thus, he felt that people like Besant, Jinnah and Malaviya could be won over and he spent some time with them. See respectively, *Indian Diary*, pp. 56-60, 117, 118-9; 56-7, 142-5; 61-2, 286-7, 325.

⁸⁶ Montagu's note to colleagues, written on board *Kaisar-i-Hind*, 7 Nov. 1917, M41.

differences and not just on deference or interests. For these reasons Montagu supported large electorates and additionally the transfer of the administration of land to elected ministers.⁸⁷ On this basis, Montagu was keen to see the formation of a political party which would support the reforms. Otherwise he felt the reforms could fail by default. Unless Parliament could see evidence of support for the proposals from a substantial section of Indian opinion, it would be easy for the right-wing opponents of reform to sabotage them. Within a month of arriving Montagu had put his ideas to Chelmsford's private secretary, John Maffey, namely that

When we get our scheme published we must have an organization to run it and to support it in every conceivable way; take the people into our confidence; invite a deputation on it to come over to England to help with the passage of the Bill; get a journalist out from England to run a good paper for it; collect funds for it, and so forth; allow the Civil Service to expound the scheme...and so on.⁸⁸

Montagu proposed that before he left India, selected Indian political leaders be invited to Delhi and told the outlines of the reforms scheme. They should then be asked to 'form the nucleus of an Association made to support it, and to give the Government every assistance in carrying it through. Every facility should be offered them. They should be informed that they will be kept in full confidence by the Government, recognised as the channel of communication on this subject between the Government

⁸⁷ Montagu seems to have had in mind that the educated politicians, who had so far concentrated on constitutional demands, would take up rural concerns, and that the rural electorate would be able to judge properly whether their interests were being furthered by their elected representatives. This was very much opposed to traditional British thinking about India which tended to see classes, interests, religions etc. as being compartmentalised and opposed. Thus the British were always suspicious if western-educated politicians took up rural issues. They were regarded as encroaching outside of their sphere. See P. Robb, 'Some aspects of British Policy...', 1988, pp. 61-97. Indian politicians like Bhupendranath Basu tried to counter this sort of argument during the reforms discussion. He contended that it was the Indian politicians and not the British who were best acquainted with the masses and their needs and cited their opposition to British increases in the salt tax and their support for the expansion of primary education as examples of this. See 'Minutes of a conference with Provincial Governors', 22 Jan. 1918, *JM20*.

⁸⁸ *Indian Diary*, entry for 30 Nov. 1917, p. 71; see also p. 104.

and the Indian peoples generally; that a special branch of the Secretariat be at their disposal to keep in touch with them, and to assist them by sending out leaflets, essays and perhaps, if they wished it, journalists to run newspapers for them.⁸⁹ These ideas were discussed with Moderate politicians like Srinivasa Sastri, Bhupendranath Basu and Satyendra Sinha, who all approved of Montagu's ideas.⁹⁰ Nothing came of Montagu's idea of a Delhi conference, at least not in this form, and as he himself pointed out in listing the pros and cons of his own idea, it would be very difficult to know whom to invite and whom to exclude, and everyone in the latter category would regard themselves as alienated from the reforms.⁹¹ However, the idea of a Moderate organisation was maintained. It seems that Montagu expected it to include moderate Congressmen and loyalists (e.g. large landowners and Europeans).⁹² His fertile mind had amalgamated a number of his concerns, including the need for the politicisation of India and the formation of parties on ideological grounds. But he had also incorporated his ideas on the need for the Government to undertake propaganda activities so as to persuade the Indian public of the Government case. Montagu was convinced that Indians would not listen to the formal Government channels of communication and in that respect the Government had its hands tied behind its back. If, however, Indian newspapers and Indian politicians would argue the Government case it would be another matter.⁹³

Montagu's method of taking Moderate Indian politicians into his confidence was disarming. If one looks at the example of one man, Srinivasa Sastri, one can see how many other Moderates were won over to support of the Montagu-Chelmsford

⁸⁹ See Montagu note, dated 27 Dec. 1917, M41.

⁹⁰ See *Indian Diary*, pp. 123, 217. Of the Indians invited to the Delhi Conference, Sastri is reported as saying that 'they should be moderates, because a time is coming when we shall have to declare war on the extremists.' Ibid., p. 123.

⁹¹ See Montagu note, dated 27 Dec. 1917, M41.

⁹² Montagu to Marris, 13 March 1918, M41.

⁹³ This was a rather naive view of the inevitably adversarial politics of colonialism and nationalism, and Chelmsford and his advisers were rightly sceptical.

scheme. Originally, Sastri was one of the strongest exponents of the Congress-League scheme and published an exposition of the it.⁹⁴ Although Sastri supported the Congress-League scheme wholeheartedly, he was prepared to consider some parts of the scheme as negotiable as long as the main principles were left intact,⁹⁵ and was still apparently unenthusiastic about Montagu and Chelmsford's rival scheme when he met them on 1 February 1918.⁹⁶ From Sastri's own account of the meeting, however, it is clear that, although he was holding his cards close to his chest, he was now impressed with the Montford scheme, which he regarded as guaranteeing self-government in 15 years time. He was flattered generally by the importance attached to his opinion, and more specifically by the invitation proffered by Montagu and Chelmsford for Sastri, in conjunction with Basu, to make up a list of leading men who would be consulted on the reforms scheme at the end of the month.⁹⁷ Sastri must have envisaged repeating the sort of role that his mentor Gokhale had performed in the making of the Morley-Minto reforms, an idea which Chelmsford may have skilfully played on when he presented Sastri with a copy of Lord Morley's, *Recollections*.⁹⁸ By April 1918, Sastri was persuading other Indian leaders, such as C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, of the virtue of the Montford proposals,⁹⁹ and writing to the editor of the *Servant of India* counselling support for the war effort and for the Empire in its hour of need.¹⁰⁰ By the following

⁹⁴ V.S.S. Sastri *The Congress-League Scheme- an Exposition*, Poona, 1917.

⁹⁵ V.S.S. Sastri to T.R.V. Sastri, 8 Sept. 1917, Sastri MSS, NAI. These essentials were presumably the four principles he told Montagu of in their interview on 20 Dec. 1917, *Indian Diary*, pp. 122-3. In January 1918 Sastri was still opposed to Montagu's dyarchical scheme. Sastri to Vaze, 14 Jan. 1918, Sastri MSS, NAI.

⁹⁶ *Indian Diary*, p. 236.

⁹⁷ V.S.S. Sastri to Ramaswami Sastri, 3 Feb. 1918 Sastri MSS, NAI.

⁹⁸ Sastri to Vaze, 13 April 1918, Sastri MSS, NAI. Montagu contributed as well by referring to Sastri as 'the Lionel Curtis of Indian Politics'! V.S.S. Sastri to Ramaswami 31 Jan 1918, Sastri MSS, NMML.

⁹⁹ V.S.S. Sastri to Ramaswami, 31 Jan 1918, Sastri MSS, NMML.

¹⁰⁰ Sastri to Vaze, 14 & 15 April 1918, Sastri MSS, NAI. The fact that this was a mutually supportive relationship can be seen by the fact that at about this time the Sir George Barnes of the Government of India offered to place advertisements in the *Servant of India*. Sastri was too proud to

month Sastri was organising fellow Moderates to come out in broad support of the report as soon as it was published.¹⁰¹ In Sastri's case a whole range of factors seem, therefore, to have been important in winning his support for the reforms scheme, and thus separating him from the official Congress position. Firstly, although he maintained certain principles of reform, he was flexible as to how they could be achieved; this open-mindedness was an important factor. Secondly, he was looking for a way in which the Moderates could regain the advantage in Congress and this seemed a great opportunity for showing that the Moderates had the ear of British policy-makers. Thirdly, he was won over by Montagu by a mixture of flattery and openness.¹⁰²

Sastri's conversion was typical of the experience of a number of moderate politicians, such as C.Y. Chintamani,¹⁰³ C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar,¹⁰⁴ Motilal Setalvad,¹⁰⁵ Narayan Chandavarkar,¹⁰⁶ Surendranath Banerjea,¹⁰⁷ and the Raja of Mahmudabad.¹⁰⁸ All these men were taken into confidence about the scheme and gave their approval in one form or another. Even Annie Besant was apparently won over by the same mixture of flattery and candour.¹⁰⁹ Montagu's tactic with Besant may have been the same as that used with Sastri, namely that he

¹⁰⁰ (...continued)

accept, though he wrote that he had expectations that the Bombay Government would help. Sastri to Vaze, 21 March 1918, Sastri MSS, NAI. Willingdon, the Governor of Bombay, had seen Sastri earlier in the year and encouraged him in his establishment of the *Servant of India* weekly. See V.S.S. Sastri to Venkatasubbiah, 26 Jan 1918, Sastri MSS, NMML.

¹⁰¹ Sastri to Chintamani, 24 May 1918, Sastri MSS, NAI.

¹⁰² It may well have been that Montagu's very vulnerability won over Sastri, who saw Montagu as an isolated figure, opposed by the Government of India on many issues and supported openly by few if any Indian politicians. See V.S.S. Sastri to Ramaswami Sastri, 21 March 1918, Sastri MSS, NMML.

¹⁰³ *Indian Diary*, pp. 48, 279, 313, 322, 363.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 123, 177, 274.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-9.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 149, 163.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 56-7, 274-5, 276.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 195, 338.

¹⁰⁹ V.S.S. Sastri to Ramaswami Sastri, 24 Feb. 1918, Sastri MSS, NMML.

indicated that if there was a general acceptance of the basis of the scheme he would do what he could to meet Indian criticisms of it when he returned to England.¹¹⁰

In the process of drawing up the reform proposals, therefore, the Moderates had been wooed by the British and encouraged to organise themselves in support of the reforms. The extent of this encouragement was quite unprecedented, but at this stage it seems the British had no thought of actually encouraging a split in the Congress organisation. After all, Congress remained the only representative nationalist organisation and it would be senseless to help create a situation in which the majority in Congress was permanently opposed to the reforms and a Congress rump was isolated in support.¹¹¹ The British saw themselves as rallying the Moderates so that they would organise within the Congress and fight their cause. It was the Moderates themselves who initiated the split, but the manoeuvrings of Montagu and some of the provincial governors created the environment in which they felt that the division would be approved of and supported by the British.¹¹² Furthermore the whole tendency of British administration in India in dealing with Indian nationalism was not only to view it as divided by religion, caste and interest but also to categorise it as either broadly tolerable to the maintenance of British interests in India or unacceptable. Thus Indian nationalists were divided into sheep and goats, Moderates and Extremists, those who could be parleyed with and those who were to be kept at arm's length. Of course these categories were not entirely rigid and differed over a period of time, and from administrator to administrator, but, on the whole, there was a remarkable degree of unanimity amongst the British in India as to which category individual Indians fell into. Sometimes the views of Indian nationalists mellowed over

¹¹⁰ V.S.S. Sastri to Chintamani, 24 May 1918, Sastri MSS, NAI; C. Jinarajadasa to C.W. Leadbeater, n.d., enclosure, V to S/S, 31 Aug. 1918, M7.

¹¹¹ It was generally recognised by both Moderates and British alike that the Moderates were by now in a minority within the Congress. Sastri admitted as much to Montagu. See *Indian Diary*, p. 236.

¹¹² Ronaldshay and Willingdon were the provincial governors who gave most encouragement to the Moderates. See below, pp. 104-105.

time and the firebrand of the past became a mild-mannered constitutionalist.

Surendranath Banerjea was an obvious example; he had been a very effective critic of British rule in India and had played a leading role in the agitation against the partition of Bengal, but he had been successfully absorbed into the constitutional system through the Morley-Minto Councils and became a stalwart of the new Moderate breakaway organisation and eventually a Minister in the first Bengal Ministry.¹¹³

Usually the British were slow to recognise such changes as representing a genuine change of heart and thus to re-order their categories. One can see, for instance, the slow re-categorisation which took place in the case of Annie Besant and her supporters during this period. In 1917 Besant was regarded as public enemy number one and is interned; by 1919 she was regarded as part of the legitimate mainstream of Indian politics, and by 1921 she was seen as a valuable critic of Gandhian non-co-operation. These changes in British perception of Besant partly reflected her growing conservatism, partly the fact that she was wrongly categorised in the first place, but most of all, that the criterion for categorising Indian politicians became more straightforward in this period- it became a matter of determining whether they were supportive of the Montford reforms or not. The British created this new litmus test of political moderation by the methods which they used to ensure the political success of the reforms, but it was the Gandhian boycott of the new reforms which gave the new test rigidity.

The British use of the terms 'Moderate' and 'Extremist' could form a study in its own right. The terms were rarely used with any precision and one suspects that this vagueness was often deliberate, in that its use would not stand up to closer analysis. In the broadest sense the word 'Moderate' meant those who supported the British, but this could cover a range of people from those who would be better called

¹¹³ For a study of Banerjea, see Argov, *Moderates and Extremists*.

'loyalists', e.g. groups like the taluqdars of Oudh who traditionally owed their position to the British to those who were more discriminating supporters, for instance, those on the right-wing of the Congress. The term was used differently by different people, the more conservative administrators, like Harcourt Butler, tending to use the term to mean loyalists, whilst more liberal Britons, such as Edwin Montagu, using the term to refer to the reasonable element amongst the western-educated nationalist politicians. Increasingly the term is used to mean the latter group during this period, but usually with some idea that this group is connected to wider social groups in India. The scope of the term 'Moderate' had therefore widened to include nationalists; the war had resulted in nationalism and even the demand for ultimate self-government being considered legitimate by the British. The term 'Extremist' was also used rather unclearly and could cover anyone from a terrorist to a rather outspoken Congressman, in fact the British often assumed that the two were inter-connected. There were two rules of thumb for distinguishing Moderates from Extremists in British eyes, but neither was very reliable. The first test was whether Indians were fundamentally hostile to the continuance of British rule in the future and to the maintenance of Britons in the administration, and the second was whether they were prepared to limit themselves to achieving political change by constitutional methods and to eschew direct action. The second criterion was one, which as we have seen had some meaning by the standards of contemporary Indian politics. The first criterion was however, very rough and ready and based on a range of information, some of it of dubious reliability, much of it coming from the C.I.D. who seemed to keep a watch on the complete spectrum of Indian politicians.¹¹⁴

It is very important to understand the British use of the Moderate/Extremist categories if one is to understand how they envisaged the new round of constitutional

¹¹⁴ Montagu reported that he had heard that Gokhale and Bhupendranath Basu, two distinctly constitutionalist politicians, had been subjected to C.I.D. inspection. S/S to V, 8 March 1919, M3.

reforms. Traditionally, the concession of Indian representation on executive and legislative councils was seen as a means of strengthening the Raj by the incorporation of influential Indians in advisory capacities. The 1892 reforms were essentially of this type and the Morley-Minto reforms continued along the same lines. However, the latter had also to take into account the growth of more extreme Indian nationalism, a nationalism more prepared to strike at the Raj directly by boycott or even by the bomb. No clear demarcation was made between political extremists and the terrorists: particularly in Bengal it was believed that they were connected. The Morley-Minto reforms were predicated on the basis that reasonable constitutional concessions would meet the needs of the Moderates, whilst the Extremists, who by their very nature would never be satisfied by constitutional reforms, would be clearly separated from the Moderates and would be vulnerable to repressive measures, such as a Press Act, which would accompany the reforms. The dual nature of this process, rallying the Moderates whilst smashing the Extremists, was agreed to by both Conservative and Liberal politicians. Morley, the disciple of Gladstone, was as firm in his resolve to crush political terrorism in India as his Conservative Viceroy Minto was. Montagu shared Morley's distaste for arbitrary repressive measures but he also shared the belief that constitutional reforms would pave the way for tougher measures against political terrorism.¹¹⁵ The Montford reforms were also based on the idea that Indian politicians were divided into Moderates and Extremists, but there was no desire to exclude Extremist politicians from the political arena, providing that they eschewed violent methods. The scope of acceptable political comment and activity had been broadened as a result of the announcement of August 1917 and the new policy towards the Home Rule movement. The reforms were based upon the view that the Extremists

¹¹⁵ In fact Montagu believed that the reforms, by involving responsible Indians in decisions on matters of law and order, would make the British task considerably easier. See Montagu to Ronaldshay, 25 Sept. 1918, *M27*.

would form the opposition in the new political system and that they would be outnumbered by the Government in conjunction with Moderates, i.e. loyalists and Moderate nationalists. At this general level Peter Robb is correct when he argues that 'the reforms were directed at all those Indians who believed in the advance to self-government' and not just at the Moderates.¹¹⁶ Montagu and Chelmsford were, of course, hoping for support for their scheme from a wide spectrum of Indian politicians, but the limits they placed on constitutional advance and the way in which they took Moderate politicians into their confidence and held Extremist ones at arm's length, suggested that, in practice, the reforms were targeted at the Moderates and that it was felt that it was inevitable from an early stage that Extremists would not find them acceptable. In this respect I cannot agree with Robb's view that the British only concentrated on Moderate support after they realised that the Extremists dominating the Congress would reject the reforms.¹¹⁷ The fact that Montagu did not expect extremist support for the reforms can be seen in the note he wrote to his colleagues on board ship bound for India in November 1917.¹¹⁸ While he was in India, Montagu tried to win over individual Congress leaders to support of the reforms but he gives no real indication in his Diary of expecting Congress to find them acceptable. A little later, on returning to England in April 1918, he had read a speech by Tilak which made it clear that he would not accept the reform proposals. Montagu commented that, 'This seems all to the good: he is the leader of the opposition.'¹¹⁹ This remark might be considered mere bravado, but the second phrase entirely accords with Montagu's view of the reforms. Montagu had commented earlier that Tilak was the one real Extremist he had met whilst touring India, and he was quite convinced that he would not be satisfied with less than the Congress-League

¹¹⁶ Robb, thesis, p. 288.

¹¹⁷ See Robb, *Government of India and Reform*, p. 263.

¹¹⁸ 7 Nov. 1917, M41.

¹¹⁹ *Indian Diary*, p. 374.

scheme.¹²⁰ In August, shortly before the Special Congress, Montagu expressed himself satisfied on the whole with the attitude towards the reform proposals. 'I never expected', he told Ronaldshay, 'to have the extremists with me and they would have been an embarrassment rather than a source of help.'¹²¹ Later Montagu and Ronaldshay agreed that Congressmen were unacceptable as appointments to executive councils and to underline this Montagu added with characteristic hyperbole that 'My whole aim in life is to work with the moderates and to regard the extremists as the opposition.'¹²²

Further evidence of the way in which the British clearly distinguished between the Moderates and the Extremists can be seen in the War Conference which was held in Delhi in April 1918. Montagu was keen that Chelmsford bring leading Indian figures together so that the Government could make a personal appeal to a wide spectrum of Indian opinion for political differences to be put aside for the duration of the war and for concentration on further contributions to that war effort.¹²³ However, Chelmsford had a rather different view of how the Conference would operate; about one hundred representatives were selected by the provinces, predominantly from amongst Moderate and loyalist Indians, and sixteen princes also attended. A small Home Rule contingent was invited, including G.S. Khaparde, but the Home Rule leaders, Tilak and Besant, were not invited.¹²⁴ Any political discussion was ruled out of order.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ See *Indian Diary*, pp. 216-7 & 61.

¹²¹ Montagu to Ronaldshay, 13 Aug. 1918, M27.

¹²² Montagu to Ronaldshay, 4 March 1919, M27.

¹²³ S/S to V, 15 & 17 April 1918, M41.

¹²⁴ Gandhi was, invited, however, as he had a record of recruiting Indians for the war effort. See V(HD) to S/S, ptel. 465, 1 May 1918, C9; V to S/S, 28 April 1918, M7.

¹²⁵ Montagu's disapproval of the way that Chelmsford conducted the Conference and his exclusion of the Extremists can be seen in Montagu to Willingdon, 4 July 1918, M16.

The Publication of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report

When the Montagu-Chelmsford Report was published on 8 July 1918 its reception had been carefully prepared by Montagu. The previous month Bhupendranath Basu, the Indian Member of the India Council, had wired his counterpart in the Indian Government, Sankaran Nair, asking him to 'endeavour to have telegrams sent to the Viceroy and Secretary of State from public bodies and associations all over India...according hearty support for the scheme.'¹²⁶ There can be little doubt that this message was intended for Moderate Indians with whom Nair was in close touch. In fact Moderate leaders had already prepared a concerted strategy to ensure that their views were first in the field and that they should give general approval to the scheme.¹²⁷

Montagu had become nervous about the reception of the report in the days running up to its publication and stressed to Chelmsford the importance of not censoring hostile opinion on the reforms from the right-wing in England: he felt that 'the Indian reform party may otherwise undervalue our proposals and think that their very moderation has commended them to the British public and that by pressure more could be obtained.'¹²⁸ He also tried to persuade Chelmsford to make a personal appeal to Indian leaders, including Extremists like Besant and Tilak, for moderation in their response,¹²⁹ anxiously pointing out that it would not matter 'if the extremist section were isolated or in a small minority, but will they not sweep the whole board?'¹³⁰ There is no doubt from this correspondence that Montagu was worried at this stage of the impact of an outright rejection of the reforms by Congress, reminding Chelmsford 'that the Congress has some historical significance to people in this country.'¹³¹

¹²⁶ S/S to V, ptel. 1348, 17 June 1918, C9.

¹²⁷ See V.S.S. Sastri to Chintamani, 24 May 1918, Sastri MSS, NAI.

¹²⁸ S/S to V, ptel. 1438, 27 June 1918 C9.

¹²⁹ S/S to V, ptels. 1465, 1592 & 1663, 2, 15 & 24 July 1918, C9.

¹³⁰ S/S to V, ptel. 1663, 24 July 1918, C9.

¹³¹ S/S to V, ptel. 1663, 24 July 1918, C9.

Chelmsford would have been extremely busy if he had followed Montagu's advice and interviewed all the politicians he was recommended to see, but, in fact, the Viceroy was convinced that Montagu's fears were hopelessly pessimistic and he replied that 'the fact that the extremists are committed to an unreasoning policy must be accepted by us and I am therefore not in favour of any personal appeal to the Besant-Tilak group.'¹³² Chelmsford's attitude was re-iterated at the end of July when he reported that the special session of Congress which was due to be held at the end of August was most likely to condemn the reform proposals as the machinery of Congress had been captured by the Extremists at the end of the previous year. Chelmsford reported growing Moderate organisation in the provinces and confidently concluded that 'it is difficult to see why, in the face of this solid body of opinion, the scheme should be jeopardized by the ban of a Congress constituted mainly by Besant and Tilak and their entourage.'¹³³

Montagu's jitteriness over the reception accorded to the report reflected the difficult position he was in at home. He could not get the Cabinet to give any commitment to any part of the report and Curzon, who was particularly aware of the crucial role he could play in the success or failure of the reforms, wanted to slow down the pace and scope of change.¹³⁴ Austen Chamberlain acted as a very effective conciliator in the disputes between Curzon and Montagu and, step by step, the reforms were moved towards legislative enactment. By the end of the year, however, Curzon was absorbed in his work as Foreign Secretary and Montagu's path seemed a little easier. The difficulty of Montagu's political position at home at a time when he knew that reforms were an urgent necessity if they were to be accepted in

¹³² V to S/S, ptel. 738, 3 July 1918, C9.

¹³³ V to S/S, ptel. 849, 27 July 1918, C9.

¹³⁴ Curzon to Montagu, 25 July 1918, AS3/2/63. See Rumbold, *Watershed*, p. 121, for an excellent description of the difficult relations between Montagu and Curzon.

India helps to explain some of his concern at the reception of the reforms in India at this time.

The Congress Special Session and First Moderate Conference, August 1918

Montagu would not have to wait long for the Congress response to the reforms as a special session was held to discuss them in August 1918. The majority of Moderates, fearing that they would lose the argument on reforms, that their opinion would be submerged and thus jeopardise the reforms, decided not to attend the Special Congress and held their own conference instead. All the evidence indicates that there was little, if any, direct encouragement of this split from the British side.

Bhupendranath Basu, a member of the Secretary of State's Council, who would have been the likely channel for any such encouragement, was in fact doing what he could to encourage Moderates to go to the Congress and fight it out. Only if they were defeated should they hold their own convention, which could form the basis of a new Moderate party if Congress remained in the hands of the Extremists.¹³⁵ Montagu gave no direct encouragement but was obviously interested in the possibilities that presented themselves if a split should take place. He told Chelmsford that:

I know you appreciate the importance of doing all in our power to help the moderates, who seem to be making a genuine effort to separate themselves from the extremists. If the moderates, as suggested, stand aloof from the forthcoming special Congress would not the occasion be ripe for the formation of a separate organisation to back reforms on our lines? A combination of the moderates in Bengal, Bombay and the United Provinces, taking the announcement of August 20th. as their watchword, might form a rallying point for persons still sitting on the

¹³⁵ B. Basu to V.S.S. Sastri, 1 Aug. 1918, Sastri MSS, NAI. Henry Polak, the editor of *India*, the journal of the British Committee of the Congress, wrote in a similar vein after the split had taken place, reporting that both Sinha and Basu deplored the separatist attitude adopted by the Moderate leaders. H.S.L. Polak to V.S.S. Sastri, 30 Aug. 1918. Sastri MSS, NAI. Polak could foresee that with a formal split in Congress the British organisation would soon have to fall into line with the new Congress policy.

fence, and I believe if such an organisation could be established in India, it will be easy to establish a corresponding branch in London...The creation of such an organisation would no doubt immensely facilitate our task here as well as in India.¹³⁶

Montagu's arguments in the above telegram follow in direct line from everything that he had been pressing on Chelmsford during his winter visit. His support for a separate Moderate organisation was shared by two of the provincial governors, Willingdon and Ronaldshay. Willingdon took the same sort of pleasure as Montagu in the political game. He was in touch with Bombay Moderates and was obviously trying to ginger them up to take a stand in support of reforms and avoid a compromise with the Extremists.¹³⁷ However, Willingdon seems to have envisaged the Moderates operating *within* the Congress and was in fact keen that they should attend the Special Congress and fight it out with the Extremists. Once it became clear, however, that the Moderates were actually going to form their own organisation, Willingdon could see the advantages for the future in that a separate party organisation would mean that they 'may be able effectively to contest some of the seats against the extremists and not allow them to win the lot.'¹³⁸ Ronaldshay, the Governor of Bengal, was also involved in encouraging Moderate leaders to make their opinions known and to 'possess an influential newspaper with editions in English and Bengali.'¹³⁹ Although Ronaldshay expressed his pleasure at the establishment of a separate

¹³⁶ S/S to V, ptel. 1727, 1 Aug. 1918, C9.

¹³⁷ Willingdon to Montagu, 30 July 1918, M18.

¹³⁸ Willingdon to Montagu, 11 Aug. 1918, M18. Interestingly, Stanley Reed, the editor of the Times of India and someone who was involved with Moderate politicians in Bombay and with Government publicity schemes, told Willingdon that he was 'certain we are backing the wrong horse.' Willingdon to Montagu, 8 Nov. 1918, M18.

¹³⁹ Ronaldshay to King George V, 27 April 1918, R3. Ronaldshay stressed that his encouragement to the Moderates had necessarily to be 'quiet and unostentatious', so as to avoid 'the possibility of creating any suspicion that the movement is one the wires of which are being pulled by official agency.'

Moderate organisation there is no evidence that he encouraged the Moderates to stay away from the Special Congress or to split from Congress permanently.¹⁴⁰

Chelmsford was sceptical about Montagu's plans for Government encouragement of the Moderates. He sensibly felt that any direct encouragement would be counterproductive as it would taint the Moderates as Government lackeys.¹⁴¹ A practical way of supporting the Moderates was to ensure that they and not the Extremists were represented on any committees the Government established in connection with the reforms. Thus when two reforms committees were established under the overall chairmanship of Lord Southborough, one to decide on the division of functions in the provinces, and the other to examine the franchise, Chelmsford refused any suggestions of men who might be considered Extremist. He rejected Malaviya because he was President-elect of Congress and warned that such an appointment 'would directly discourage those who are attempting to give us their assistance.'¹⁴²

Chelmsford's interest in supporting the Moderates had less to do with any belief that the Moderates could form a pro-Government political party and more to do with the immediate concerns of Indian politics. In the current Imperial Legislative Council the Moderates were the dominant presence and their support was needed, not only with regard to the reform bill (they welcomed the Montagu-Chelmsford report in an overwhelming vote in September 1918), but for the pressing problem of dealing with legislation to replace the special powers the Government had taken on during the

¹⁴⁰ Ronaldshay to King George V, 18 Oct. 1918, R3.

¹⁴¹ V to S/S, ptel. 25, 7 Aug. 1918, C9.

¹⁴² V to S/S, ptel., 10 Dec. 1918, C9. Malaviya had in fact been suggested by Bhupendranath Basu, see S/S to V, ptel. 2845, 9 Dec. 1918, C9. Montagu also saw such appointments as a way of supporting the Moderates and had suggested Surendranath Banerjea for the Franchise Committee for this very reason. See Montagu to Ronaldshay, 25 Sept. 1918, M27. Moderates played an important part as non-officials on these committees and on the provincial committees established to advise the main committees: K. Natarajan & N.M. Samarth (Bombay), Dr. Suhrawardy & P.C. Mitter (Bengal), C.Y. Chintamani (U.P.), M.V. Joshi & Krishna Sahay (C.P.). See V (HD) to S/S, ptel. 2, 27 Nov 1918, C9.

war to deal with terrorism and sedition. Elections were due for the legislative assembly in the spring of 1919, but Chelmsford had the assembly's life extended by a year, arguing that this was

...in the interests of the infant moderate party who for their attitude in the last Council have been subjected to much abuse and who will need heartening if they are to maintain new relations with the Government which is considered of great importance.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ V to S/S, ptel. 2287, 13 Nov. 1918, C9.

CHAPTER III : BRITISH-INDIAN LIBERAL RELATIONS UNDER STRAIN, 1919-1920

The years 1919 and 1920 were difficult ones for the new Moderate Party. Their relations with both the Congress Party that they had left and their British rulers were put under great strain by two issues, the Punjab and Khilafat grievances. Taken together, these two issues were to push Congress into embarking on a programme of non-co-operation at the end of 1920, which marked the final break between Congress and the Moderate secessionists. It was somewhat ironic that the new constitutional reforms did not in the end prove the crucial issue between the British and the Indian nationalists. Almost up until the time when nominations were to be put forward for the elections, it looked likely that Congress would be represented. For all the criticisms that men like Tilak had made of the reforms, most Congressmen were prepared to work them.

The Punjab and Khilafat issues were ones over which the Moderates and the bulk of the Congress saw broadly eye to eye. The differences between them were once again over method, not over aims. Yet these differences over method reflected fundamental differences of political outlook. The Moderates' emphasis on constitutional methods, their abhorrence of anything that might involve the wider Indian public in a political agitation which they could not control and contain, and their fear lest anything was done which might jeopardise the constitutional reforms on which they had staked their political futures, meant that they completely failed to keep in touch with popular feeling at this time. The different responses of individual Indian politicians to the Punjab and Khilafat grievances polarised Indian politics in a decisive way. When Congress took up Gandhi's programme of non-co-operation in September 1920 to fight against these grievances it marked the complete break between Moderate

constitutionalism and the new grass-roots activism of the Congress. Right up to this point some Moderates persevered in attending Congress and putting their case. Now they realised that their actions were futile.

The Moderates might have felt less isolated if they had believed that the British sympathised with their position, but these years were marked by a series of errors on the part of the colonial rulers which highlighted some of the worst aspects of imperialism and must have made the Moderates doubt whether they had taken the right decision in hoisting their flag to the mast of the reforms. In the final stage of making those reforms the Moderates felt that they had to fight a rearguard action to stop the Government of India whittling the bill down. In fighting the Rowlatt Bills, which had the purpose of continuing special war-time anti-terrorist legislation into peace-time, the Moderates considered that the Government showed little sympathy for their position.

1. The Moderates and the Rowlatt Bills

Probably no other issue caused so much friction between the British and the new Moderate Party as that of repressive legislation. The Moderate Party was founded in support of constitutional reforms but soon found that an extension of British powers to deal with terrorism was considered by some British policy-makers to be the inevitable concomitant of political reform.¹ This had also been the case with the Morley-Minto reforms, which were followed a year later in 1910 by a Press Act which was effectively forced on a reluctant Gokhale as the price of reforms. Now similar arguments were used for the extension of powers which the Government had taken on in wartime and which were due to expire six months after the peace. The

¹ See e.g. Austen Chamberlain to Ronaldshay, 7 June 1918, AC21/5/70.

Government believed that the Defence of India Act (1915) had been responsible for the dramatic decrease in outrages which took place in the second half of the war.² They feared that, unless they made new provisions, prisoners interned under the D.I.A. would have to be released sometime after the war had ended. It was argued that without the maintenance of special Government powers to deal with political violence it would be difficult to convince critics at home that it was safe to pass the new reforms. In retrospect it seems incredible that the Government should have tried to introduce a new political regime which involved greater democracy and participation of Indians in government whilst simultaneously strengthening their autocratic powers. Yet Chelmsford's government did not see things in this way: they believed that the case for new legislation was overwhelming and urgent. In fact, they believed originally that the legislation would be passed quickly during wartime and, therefore, would not clash with post-war political reforms. But, in the belief that political objections to the new measures would be best met by establishing a committee of enquiry into anarchical crime, they actually delayed the whole process and thus led to the very unfortunate coincidence of the reforms passing through Parliament whilst the Imperial Legislature was debating the new measures against political crime.³

The committee of enquiry, under the chairmanship of the Scottish judge, S.A.T. Rowlatt, and containing Indian non-official representation in the form of an Indian Judge, C.V. Kumaraswami Sastri of Madras, and P.C. Mitter, a prominent Moderate member of the Bengal Legislative Council, was established in December 1917 and its report was published not long after the Montagu-Chelmsford report in

² The number of 'revolutionary outrages' in Bengal decreased from 64 in 1915-16 to only 10 between January 1917 and February 1918. See Robb, *Government of India*, p. 147.

³ Even the right-wing Home Member, Craddock, had stressed the need to avoid such a clash when the matter was first discussed at the end of 1916. See R.H. Craddock's letter, 21 Dec. 1916, in Home Poll. A Procs., 225-232, Aug 1917.

July 1918.⁴ It concluded that normal judicial methods had completely failed to solve the problem of revolutionary crime, especially in Bengal where such crime was virtually endemic, and that special measures were needed to counter it. It proposed that extra-judicial wartime powers should be continued, although with added safeguards. Measures could be introduced by notification in specific areas, with the authorisation of the Governor-General in Council, in three escalating stages. The first stage allowed for the speeding up of trials by establishing trials for seditious crime by three high court judges, thus doing away with the right to juries, appeals etc. In the second stage, suspects could be required to give security, and have their movements and activities restricted. In the third stage the authorities would be permitted to arrest and search without warrant and to detain prisoners for up to one month, subject to independent investigation. These powers were to be available throughout the country, not just in Bengal which had been the centre of the problem, and could be applied without notification to persons already restricted under the D.I.A. when it expired. There were also to be permanent changes in the criminal law which were designed to strengthen the chances of successful convictions, for example, allowing evidence of previous convictions to be revealed in cases of sedition. As Peter Robb has argued, the Rowlatt Report, which was clearly intended as a propaganda measure, acted as a straitjacket on Government policy.⁵ It would have proved very difficult indeed not to have implemented Rowlatt's recommendations in full: the committee's report was regarded as authoritative. However, whilst Austen Chamberlain had been pressing for firm action against political terrorism, his successor, Montagu, shared the Liberal distaste for extra-legal measures. In fact Montagu was already pressing Chelmsford to start to do away with existing repressive legislation, such as the Press Act of 1910, so

⁴ *Report of Committee Appointed to Investigate Revolutionary Conspiracies In India* [Rowlatt], Cmd. 9190, 1918.

⁵ See Robb, *Government of India*, ch.6. This chapter provides an excellent analysis of the factors leading to the implementation of the new legislation.

as to meet Moderate criticisms.⁶ His initial response to the Rowlatt report was that,

There is much in its recommendations which is most repugnant to my mind...I loathe the suggestion at first sight of preserving the D.I.A. in peace time to such an extent as Rowlatt and his friends think necessary. Why cannot these things be done by normal or even exceptional processes of law? I hate to give the Pentlands of this world or the O'Dwyers the chance of locking up a man without trial.⁷

However, Montagu agreed to publication of the Report and met the Government of India's request that they should start legislation to implement the report's recommendations. It may be that Montagu saw the new legislation as a necessary price for the scrapping of other repressive legislation such as Regulation III of 1818, or, more broadly, as the necessary price for constitutional reforms to go through.⁸ He told Lloyd that he recognised that drastic legislation was 'unavoidable on the unanimous recommendations of the [Rowlatt] Committee which contains a strong Indian element.'⁹ Chelmsford's reassurances that the Legislative Council would not balk at the legislation may have calmed his worries. He saw no contradiction between the new legislation and the reforms, indeed he told Ronaldshay that the Rowlatt Report

...emphasises the urgency of pressing on with our reforms so that we may establish a definite Indian party which will help and work with the Government in suppressing a movement which is fraught with a danger [sic] to the future of the country. It will be infinitely easier to deal with anarchical crime when there is a stronger popular element in the Government than at present.¹⁰

⁶ S/S to V, 10 Oct. 1918, M2.

⁷ *Idem.*

⁸ Robb, *Government of India*, p. 156.

⁹ Montagu to Lloyd, 16 March 1919, M22.

¹⁰ Montagu to Ronaldshay, 25 Sept. 1918, M27.

Clearly Montagu expected the Moderates to support the Government on law and order issues. If they did so, autocratic powers could be safely replaced by democratic powers to deal with revolutionary crime.

The belief that the Moderates hated revolutionary crime was well-founded, but Montagu misjudged the nationalism of the Moderates; they could not afford to be seen in the eyes of the public to be helping the Government to extend repressive measures. This misunderstanding was at the heart of much of the failure of the British and the Moderates to work together. When the Moderates criticised Government repressive measures many Britons felt that the Moderates had let them down, that they had been cowardly. The British particularly resented what they claimed was Moderate perfidy: they might support stern measures against the Extremists in private conversation but attack any such measures in the public arena. The attitude of the Moderates to the Rowlatt Bills was to be the testing ground of British relations with the new Moderate Party. It was also to be a crucial element in the widening gap between the Moderates and the Congress Party which they had now left.

One element in Chelmsford's desire to have the recommendations of the Rowlatt Committee made law as a matter of urgency was his mistaken belief that the present legislative council would accept the need for the new legislation. This view was probably formed as a result of a debate in the legislative council in September 1918 when G.S. Khaparde, a Tilakite, had tried to have consideration of the Rowlatt Report delayed. He was opposed by Moderates such as Sastri, Sapru and Banerjea. Sastri argued that 'the vote was meant to be a test vote and would have cost us more than we could have saved...England would have been rent with cries of "no reforms"- and this country would have replied with vigorous agitation.'¹¹ Seton, in the India Office, regarded the outcome of the debate 'as indicating that legislation on the lines

¹¹ V.S.S. Sastri to Vaze, 11 Oct. 1918, Sastri MSS, NAI, cited in S. Mahajan, *Imperialist Strategy and Moderate Politics. Indian Legislature at Work, 1909-1920*, Delhi, 1983, p. 147.

proposed would not be unfavourably received.¹² Government intelligence received from Bombay also suggested that Moderates would not go further in their protests at the new legislation than to recommend amendments and additional safeguards.¹³

In January 1919 two draft bills were published and in February the main bill, containing the emergency powers, was introduced in the legislature.¹⁴ It received a rough ride from the non-official members, amongst whom not a single one could be found to support it.¹⁵ A Select Committee of the Legislature, on which both Moderate and Extremist members were represented, was set up to examine the Bill. It appears that the greatest resistance on this Committee came from the Extremist members, Khaparde, Vithalbhai Patel, and Malaviya.¹⁶ The other members of the select committee including the Moderates, Sastri and Surendranath Banerjea, were unwilling to take the sort of obstructive measures considered by the Extremists, such as walking out of the legislatures.¹⁷ They shared some of the British horror of revolutionary crime, and accepted that special measures should be used to meet these special categories of criminal, provided that it was clear that this would in no way impinge upon legitimate political activity.¹⁸

The Government was prepared to make concessions along these lines. The Act was made temporary, it would last only three years and it was written into it that it was

¹² Robb, *Government of India*, p. 154, n. 44.

¹³ See Bombay Fortnightly reports by James Crerar, 1/4 Feb. & 16/21 Feb. 1919, Home Poll., Feb & March 1919, nos. 42 & 16.

¹⁴ The second bill was eventually dropped by the Government.

¹⁵ A unique sign of unanimity according to G.S. Khaparde. See B.G. Kunte (ed.), *Correspondence and Diary of G.S. Khaparde*, Government of Maharashtra, 1978, pp. 448-9, entry for 7 Feb. 1919 [hereafter *Khaparde Correspondence*].

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 449, entry for 18 March 1919. This is corroborated by Chelmsford. V to S/S, 19 Feb. 1919, M8.

¹⁷ Additional members were Mohammad Shafi and Nawab Ali Chowdhri. See V.S.S. Sastri to Sapru, copy pl., 5 March 1919, Sastri MSS, NAI.

¹⁸ For Moderate ambivalence on the Rowlatt Bills, see V.S.S. Sastri to Vaze, 28 Jan. 1919, S.I.S. Papers, NMML.

specifically for the purpose of dealing with anarchical and revolutionary crime.¹⁹ Sastri now felt satisfied that 'the legislation cannot be used against ordinary agitation.'²⁰ Perhaps because of the reasonable attitude of the Moderates, Chelmsford was optimistic that opposition to the legislation would eventually be overcome.²¹ He told Montagu that he felt that they were on 'solid ground and that the position is healthy', despite the overwhelming evidence of the opposition of non-official members.²² His belief was that many non-official members privately supported the legislation,²³ a view which was made less tenable by the decisions to resign from the Council on this issue of Jinnah, Malaviya and B.D. Shukul.²⁴

Even Gandhi's threat to start passive resistance over the issue did not deter Chelmsford, who talked of calling Gandhi's bluff.²⁵ He was strengthened somewhat by the publication of a manifesto signed by Moderate members of the Legislative Council, which, while condemning the Bills, deprecated Gandhi's call for passive resistance.²⁶ But Moderates like Sastri not only disapproved of passive resistance in principle, but felt that it was not a suitable remedy in the case of the Rowlatt legislation, which could not itself be disobeyed.²⁷ However, one of Sastri's main concerns was that passive resistance would create a backlash of opinion

¹⁹ *The Servant of India*, 6 March 1919, p. 53, claimed that these concessions resulted from Moderate influence, and the evidence suggests that the 3 year limit resulted from private discussions between the Government and Moderate leaders. V to S/S, ptel., 11 Feb. 1919, C10.

²⁰ Sastri to Vaze, 3 March 1919, Sastri MSS, NAI, emphasis in original. A number of other amendments were accepted, see Robb, *Government of India*, pp. 162-3.

²¹ Chelmsford told Montagu of 'a nucleus of reasonable people led by Sastri and Banerjee...'. V to S/S, 12 March 1919, M8. The figures show that out of 16 divisions on the Rowlatt Bill, Wacha voted twice with the officials and Sastri, Majithia and Nandi did this once, Mahajan, *Imperialist Strategy*, p. 171.

²² V to S/S, 20 March 1919, M8.

²³ Chelmsford to King George V, 21 May 1919, C1.

²⁴ B.N. Sarma also thought of resigning but was persuaded by the Viceroy not to. See Mahajan, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

²⁵ *Idem.* Also V to S/S, ptel., 28 March 1919, C10.

²⁶ See V(HD) to S/S, ptel. 242, 6 March 1919, C10. The manifesto was dated 2 March 1919. Naturally the Extremists were disappointed by the action of the Moderates- Khaparde remarking that 'They [the Moderates] were not called upon to help Gandhi, but why should they obstruct him?'. Kunte (ed.), *Khaparde Correspondence*, p. 451, entry for 2 March 1919.

²⁷ Sastri to Vaze, 3 March 1919, Sastri MSS, NAI.

in Britain and might jeopardise the reforms, for which the Moderates had sacrificed so much.²⁸ Another Moderate, R.P. Paranjpye, probably summarised Moderate dislike for passive resistance when he said that 'such a movement, though it may start as a protest against the bills, will very soon degenerate- expand if you like- into a movement against law and order generally.'²⁹ He felt that the movement was bound to fall under the control of Extremists leaders and that the Moderates would lose their reputation for supporting progress with order if they lent their support to it. Like other Moderates, Paranjpye stressed the need not to jeopardise the reforms, which 'however meagre they may be, will put more power into our hands....'³⁰

The growing division between the Moderates and Gandhi can be traced back earlier in the war when Sastri's Servants of India Society had rejected Gandhi's application for membership on the grounds that Gandhi would have radically changed the nature of the Society.³¹ Many Moderates objected to the religiosity which Gandhi imported into the nationalist movement (though so too did many Extremists, e.g. Tilak and his followers). Sastri regarded Gandhi as a good man, but one who was politically naive.³² Mrs Besant added her voice to those nationalists who objected to passive resistance against the Rowlatt Act, and thus edged closer to the Moderates.

The violence that took place in various parts of India as a result of Gandhi's campaign of passive resistance and Government responses to it brought protests from all sections of Indian political opinion.³³ Details of events in the Punjab were still hazy and it took some months before news of the Amritsar Massacre, which took

²⁸ *Idem.* Also V.S.S. Sastri to Sapru, copy pl., 4 March 1919, Sastri MSS, NAI.

²⁹ R.P. Paranjpye to Satyananda Bose, 28 Feb. 1919, Paranjpye MSS.

³⁰ *Idem.*

³¹ Gandhi was, of course, originally a Moderate and a follower of G.K. Gokhale. The British seem to have continued to regard him as so, although a rather maverick one, as long as he was recruiting for them during the War. Thus he was invited to the Delhi Unity Conference in April 1918.

³² 'A straight, unbending, adorable person, but unpractical.' was how Sastri described Gandhi. V.S.S. Sastri to Sapru, copy pl., 4 March 1919, Sastri MSS, NAI.

³³ For details of the satyagraha in different regions see R. Kumar (ed.), *Essays on Gandhian Politics. The Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919*, Oxford, 1971.

place on 13 April 1919, became general knowledge. But Surendranath Banerjea telegraphed an early appeal for the withdrawal of martial law, the replacement of O'Dwyer as Lieutenant-Governor, the release of the two leaders, Kitchlew and Satyapal, who had been deported from the Punjab, and the use of ordinary criminal procedure for those arrested.³⁴ The fact that Moderates protested as loudly as the Extremists over Government actions tended to alienate the British, who felt that the Moderates should have supported them in what was the most serious crisis they had faced since the Mutiny.³⁵ Willingdon protested of the Moderates that 'they don't care to come out honestly or courageously in even partial support of Government on any occasion'.³⁶

The approaches of the Moderates and Extremists to the Rowlatt legislation and the violence that took place in India in April 1919 were markedly different. Moderates maintained the view that Government had a duty to maintain law and order, and, whilst they protested loudly at what they considered repressive measures, they adhered to the view that all protest should be through constitutional channels.³⁷ Whilst the Extremists talked of boycott and passive resistance, Moderate leaders, such as Sastri, believed that they achieved real improvements in the legislation due to discussions with the Government of India. Likewise, they believed that they were much more successful than the Congress delegation in discussing the Punjab issue when they were in London for the Joint Select Committee hearings in 1919.³⁸ The Moderates recognised the wrongs that had been done by the British in the Punjab in April 1919 and protested as fully as they could at the prolongation of martial law, but they

³⁴ Banerjea to Chelmsford, 28 April. 1919, C22.

³⁵ See, for instance, the resolutions of the Moderate Conference Committee held in Calcutta on 27 April 1919, reported in the *Leader*, 1 May 1919.

³⁶ Willingdon to Chelmsford, 23 April 1919, C22. 'But', he added, 'I still feel that we must try to bolster them up and see if we can't get a little courage, Dutch or otherwise into their natures.'

³⁷ Wacha to G.A. Natesan, 12 April 1919, Natesan MSS.

³⁸ V.S.S. Sastri to Ramaswami Sastri, 17 Aug. 1919, Sastri MSS, NMML.

believed that the remedy lay through normal channels of protest. Two Moderates, Pandit Jagat Narayan and Chimanlal Setalvad, agreed to sit on the Hunter Committee which was set up to examine the happenings in the Punjab. The Indian Members insisted on signing a minority report which was much more critical than the majority report of the way in which British officials had handled the crisis.³⁹ But the Moderates position on the Punjab entirely failed to match the public mood, and whereas Extremist leaders identified themselves with the sufferings of the people of the Punjab by visiting the province and collecting evidence from witnesses for their independent enquiry, the Moderates lay low, knowing that if they raised their heads they were likely to be reviled by both British and nationalists alike.⁴⁰ It was hard for the public to understand why, on this of all issues, the Moderates and Extremists should not have joined forces in England and India in pressing their case. But, whilst Congress held its annual session at Amritsar the Moderates stayed at Calcutta, and ignored Motilal Nehru's pleas that they should attend the Congress.⁴¹ The Bombay Liberals justified their refusal by arguing that although they agreed with Congress about the Punjab grievances they differed as to the best means to protest about them.⁴²

Not only did the Liberal response to the Punjab issue fail to match the public mood but it also indicated important divisions in the Moderate Party. These were illustrated in the debates on an Indemnity Bill which the Government put before the legislature in September 1919 in order to try and protect officials from private

³⁹ See pp. 137 below for more details.

⁴⁰ See Sapru to V.S.S. Sastri, April 1919, Sastri MSS, NAI. For complaints from the Punjab of the failure of Moderate leaders to come to the Punjab, see Ruchi Ram to Devadhar, 30 Dec. 1919, Sivaswamy Aiyer MSS.

⁴¹ See P.S.S. Aiyer to M. Nehru, 5 Dec. 1919; M. Nehru to P.S.S. Aiyer, 12 Dec. 1919, M. Nehru MSS.

⁴² As evidence of this they cited the Congress boycott of the Hunter Committee because of the restrictions on non-official evidence. See 'Draft reply to Congress letters of 20 Nov. & 1 Dec. 1919 exhorting the Liberals to attend the next session of Congress', Dec. 1919, WINLA correspondence files.

prosecutions on actions they had taken during the Punjab crisis. Some Liberals, such as Sivaswamy Aiyer, opposed the Indemnity Bill as prejudging issues prior to an enquiry, but others, notably Sir Dinshaw Wacha, supported the bill.⁴³

2. The Joint Select Committee of 1919

The proceedings of the Joint Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament on the India Bill, 1919, were significant for two reasons. Firstly, because they largely decided the final shape of the Montford reforms, determining that there should be no going back on the Montagu-Chelmsford proposals, and, indeed, that in certain important respects there should be advance. Secondly, however, the events that took place in London in 1919 helped to harden and define the splits in the nationalist movement which had opened up over the issue of constitutional reform in the previous year. Although the Congress 'old-guard' had been effectively ousted from positions of importance in the organization in 1918, the split was not irrevocable. Some Moderates, such as Srinivasa Sastri, were expecting to attend future Congress meetings to put their point of view. They realized the importance of maintaining, as far possible, a united nationalist front if the British were to take them seriously and not to play on divisions within the nationalist movement. Sastri's view was that the delegations, even if they could not co-operate on the reforms issue, should at least come together on the Punjab and South African questions.⁴⁴ Amongst the Extremists, B.G. Tilak also felt that the deputations should co-operate, and that the differences between his followers and those of Besant's delegation, which now tended to ally with Moderates, were minimal and that every effort should be made to

⁴³ See P.S.S. Aiyer to V.S.S. Sastri, [n.d.], Sept. 1919, Aiyer MSS; V(HD) to S/S, ptel. 948, 29 Sept. 1919, & V to S/S, ptel.916, 20 Sept. 1919, C11.

⁴⁴ V.S.S. Sastri to V.S. Ramaswami Sastri, 17 Aug. 1919, Sastri MSS, NMML.

achieve co-operation.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, Sastri and Tilak represented only the middle spectrum of their respective parties, and were outvoted by their colleagues.⁴⁶ The result was that the Moderates and Extremists not only failed to join together on the Punjab issue on which they generally agreed, but also gave separate and conflicting evidence to the Joint Committee, thus parading their differences publicly in England.

On 3 July 1919, the House of Commons voted to put the Government of India Bill to a Joint Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament.⁴⁷ The Committee was to consider whether the Bill, which was substantially based on the Montagu-Chelmsford Report of July 1918, was the best way to execute the Government's policy announcement of 20 August 1917. In fact there were five documents for the Committee to consider. First, the Reforms Bill drawn up by a Cabinet Committee consisting of Sinha, Milner, Fisher and Chamberlain; next, the two reports of the Franchise and Functions committees, which had investigated detailed aspects of the reforms during the winter of 1918/19, and in which Moderates had participated; fourthly, the Crewe Committee Report on the Home Management of Indian Affairs; and lastly, the Government of India's considered recommendations on the preceding documents, set out in a despatch of 5 March 1919. The Joint Select Committee had, in effect, not only to decide whether dyarchy was the best means of implementing reform, but also whether they preferred the alternative dyarchical

⁴⁵ S.L. Karandikar, *Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak*, Poona, 1957, p. 525.

⁴⁶ For the position of Tilak and his supporters, see V.S.S. Sastri to A.V. Patwardhan, 26 June 1919, in T.N. Jagadisan (ed.) *Letters of Srinivasa Sastri*, London 1963 edn., p. 56 [hereafter *Sastri Letters*]. For an idea of Sastri's sense of isolation at this time, see V.S.S. Sastri to Venkatasubbiah, 10 Sept. 1919, Sastri MSS, S.I.S., Madras.

⁴⁷ The members of Committee were:- from the House of Lords: Lord Selborne (chairman), Marquess of Crewe, Duke of Northumberland, Viscount Midleton, Lord Islington, Lord Sinha and Lord Sydenham. From the House of Commons: T.J. Bennett, Sir Henry Craik, Major Ormsby-Gore, Sir John Rees, Ben Spoor, Edwin Montagu, F.D. Acland.

schemes of the Government of India or of the Secretary of State.⁴⁸ The essential difference between Delhi and Whitehall was that whereas the former supported dyarchy in the provinces, they did not wish to see any weakening of British authority at the centre. Montagu, on the other hand, saw the opportunity to broaden the reforms scheme, something which he had failed to achieve in the initial negotiations with Chelmsford, and which would have been impolitic in the period after the report was published. In particular, he wished to add a third Indian member to the Viceroy's Executive Council, to give both provincial and central legislative assemblies the right to vote on budgets, with the provincial budget to include both reserved and transferred subjects, and for higher education to be added to the list of transferred subjects in the provinces. These were all points on which Montagu could expect support from the main Indian delegations to the Committee, but the advantage to Montagu of fostering the Moderate delegation rather than the more widely representative Congress delegation was that it suited his political game. He believed that the support of the Extremists would only serve to alienate the more conservative members of the Committee. The Moderates, however, were pictured as representative of reasonable Indian opinion, and were used by Montagu to argue his case for liberalising the reforms. Significantly, they were allowed to present their evidence first, and when Tilak stood up to put the Congress case, not only did the die-hard Lord Sydenham leave the room, but, much to Tilak's surprise and dismay, he was not even cross-examined by the rest of the committee. The Moderates were rewarded by being allowed into government circles; Srinivasa Sastri was included in the India Office team which helped to draft the Bill, and Surendranath Banerjea was appointed the only non-official member of a committee to enquire into the applicability of the institutions

⁴⁸ For detailed discussion see Robb, *Government of India*, pp. 105-16, and Rumbold, *Watershed*, p. 157 ff.. Rumbold points out that, unusually, the Cabinet had refused to give their support to the Reforms Bill before publication of the report of the Joint Select Committee. This gave the committee greater power to determine the final outcome of the reforms.

of local self-government in England to Indian conditions.⁴⁹ Sir James Meston, representing the Government of India's interests in England, was horrified at the sway of the Indian Moderates over Montagu.⁵⁰ Meston regarded Moderate influence as sinister and saw his own role as counteracting it, whilst keeping Chelmsford as well informed of the proceedings as possible.⁵¹ Not surprisingly, Meston was pleased when the delegations returned to India, and he felt certain that Montagu became more reasonable when 'released from the curious magnetic influence which Sastri, Chintamani & Co. exercise over him'.⁵² The end result of the deliberations of the Joint Select Committee was a compromise which, whilst upholding dyarchy in the provinces, proved reluctant to go much further in the direction of the demands of the Indian nationalists. Montagu's most important victories were the addition of a third Indian member on the Viceroy's Executive Council, the addition of higher education as a transferred subject in the provinces, and the granting of some powers over the budget to the central legislature.

On the face of it, therefore, the Moderates were not very successful in their tactic of allying their demands with those of the Secretary of State. However, this would be to misunderstand their expectations in 1919. Their greatest anxiety was that the reforms might in fact be whittled down under pressure from the bureaucracy in India. Their fears were based upon their knowledge of the fact that the majority of the local governors continued to oppose dyarchy and had come up with a unitary scheme which emphasised the power of provincial governors to override their executive and legislative councils as they thought necessary.⁵³ As Rumbold says, their scheme

⁴⁹ See S. Banerjea, *A Nation in the Making*, Madras, 1925, p. 324.

⁵⁰ See Meston to Chelmsford, 31 Oct. 1919, C15.

⁵¹ See Rumbold, *Watershed*, p. 167.

⁵² Meston to Chelmsford, 10 Aug. 1919, C15.

⁵³ In fact only Bihar & Orissa supported the dyarchical scheme when the local governors met in January 1919. See V to S/S, 15 Jan. 1919, enclosure B, 'The Structure of the Provincial Executive.' M8.

'would have left the door open for India's progress to self-government otherwise than down the path of the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy.'⁵⁴

Chelmsford's argument was that the governors were continuing on the lines of association of Indians with government rather than responsibility of Indians in government. O'Dwyer rather confirmed Chelmsford's view when he stated that the governors

...had not been thinking of the politicians or the politically minded classes. Their anxiety for the good government of the country explained what might be regarded as anomalous in their views, their adherence to the existing system and their desire for continuity. In their plan they had deliberately given a back seat to responsibility in fulfilment of their duty to the great masses.⁵⁵

The 'satraps' scheme, as Montagu called it, was sent to the Joint Select Committee accompanying the Government of India's despatch of 5 March 1919, which was in itself a conservative interpretation of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report.⁵⁶ The controversial features of the despatch were the insistence on a separation of reserved and transferred finances in the provinces (a departure from the original report), the disapproval of making higher education a transferred subject, and opposition to any further concessions in the Government of India.⁵⁷ C.Y. Chintamani saw the Government of India proposals as another example of the bureaucracy tending to whittle down in practice what had been conceded in principle.⁵⁸ Kunzru believed

⁵⁴ Rumbold, *Watershed*, p. 156. Chelmsford wrote that the governors's scheme 'would be an admirable working out of the Government of India despatch of 1916 but, if accepted, the Moderate Party in India would be shattered.' V to S/S, 15 Jan. 1919, M8.

⁵⁵ Minutes of a conference between Viceroy, Heads of Government and Government of India, Jan. 1919. Enclosure to V to S/S, 22 Jan. 1919, M8.

⁵⁶ This was Montagu's description but it was accepted by Chelmsford also. See S/S to V, 31 March 1919, M3 ; V to S/S, 30 April 1919, M8.

⁵⁷ For an explanation of the rationale behind these requirements see Robb, *Government of India*, pp. 107-8.

⁵⁸ *Servant of India*, 29 May 1919, pp. 196-8.

that the proposal for a divided purse, which he attributed to Meston, would, if accepted by the committee, give a death blow to responsible government in the provinces. He argued that it was 'easily the most reactionary and the most dangerous of all the amendments which the Government of India desire to see introduced into the scheme.'⁵⁹ In the end a compromise was reached on this last issue whereby there was to be a joint purse originally, but the government was to be allowed to intervene and allocate separate revenues for the two halves of government if friction occurred.⁶⁰ Higher education did become a transferred subject, whilst the Government of India remained inviolate, apart from having to accept a third Indian member on the Viceroy's Council, and the grant of limited budgetary powers to the legislature.⁶¹

From the Moderate point of view, the first task of their delegation to London was to ensure that 'the reactionary proposals made by the Government of India in their despatch of 5 March and the alternative scheme of five heads of local governments were not accepted by the Joint Committee.'⁶² The second task was to see that the Bill was brought up to the level of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report in all essentials, and thirdly the deputation sought 'to press for an advance over that scheme on the lines of the Moderate Conference of November [1918], more particularly as regards fiscal autonomy and the introduction of a measure of responsibility in the Central Government.'⁶³ The Moderate view of the situation was basically pessimistic. They believed that they would do well to hold on to the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme, let alone advance on it, particularly in view of the emphasis they placed on the influence of conservative factors in Britain in the

⁵⁹ H.N. Kunzru report, 28 Aug. 1919, *Servant of India*, 25 Sept. 1919, pp. 404-6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁶¹ Military, political and certain other subjects were not to be voted on.

⁶² Chintamani speech on returning to India, *Servant of India*, 4 Dec. 1919, pp. 525-7.

⁶³ *Idem.*

finalising of the reforms. They over-emphasised the potential influence of die-hards like Lord Sydenham and the Indo-British Association, and were worried by the fact that Lords Sydenham and Midleton, both considered to be 'last-ditchers', were appointed to the Joint Select Committee and that the chairman, Lord Selborne, had recently questioned the suitability of establishing responsible government in India on the lines of the dominions in a speech in the Lords in 1918.⁶⁴

This Moderate pessimism is an important key to their tactics in 1919 and is in marked contrast to the position of the Congress delegation who believed that talk of die-hard influence was a trick of the bureaucracy to try to get Indians to reduce their demands.⁶⁵ This pessimism was not warranted, especially in view of the fact that, as Curzon noticed, Montagu had packed the Joint Select Committee with people likely to support him.⁶⁶

In his report on events in India in 1919, Professor Rushbrook Williams had written fulsomely of the success of the Moderate delegation in London in 1919. He wrote that,

Indeed there was little doubt as the summer went on, that the Moderate party, both on account of the responsible attitude of its representatives, and the skill with which they urged their case, had been more successful in winning for itself the confidence of English public men in power than had been the case with the extreme Nationalist Party...When the Joint Committee's report was published, it was hailed by the Moderate party and by Mrs Besant's supporters as a conspicuous triumph. Nor indeed can it be denied that the views and opinions which had been submitted by these bodies had exerted very great influence upon the final shaping of the measure, for while the Moderate

⁶⁴ See *Servant of India*, 10 July 1919, p. 266. Selborne's background was, indeed, not very promising to Moderate expectations. He had been Governor of the Transvaal and High Commissioner of South Africa in the years 1905 to 1910 when the South African Union was being developed.

⁶⁵ Tilak put great emphasis on the fact that the die-hard bogey had been exaggerated and it was 'therefore, no use lessening our demands in view of this opposition.' Tilak to Khaparde, 5 & 13 March 1919, B.G. Kunte (ed.), *Khaparde Correspondence*, pp. 82-4. See also Tilak to D.V. Gokhale, 23 Jan. 1919, *ibid.*, p. 4; B.S. Moonje, 'How We are Getting On', 1 May 1919, *ibid.*, p. 13.

⁶⁶ Curzon to Montagu, 27 June 1919, *AS3/3/26*.

party had not secured the satisfaction of every claim put forward, they had been successful in achieving much.⁶⁷

Yet one needs to treat this piece of propaganda with some caution. Were the Moderates really so effective in presenting their case or was Rushbrook Williams trying to encourage the political methods of the Moderates? It seems that a number of factors undermined the effectiveness of the Moderate delegation. Firstly, the pessimism that we have noted seems to have vitiated their position in seeking improvements in the reforms from the Joint Select Committee. Despite their demands for further revisions to be made to the Montagu-Chelmsford proposals, it was transparently clear that they were generally satisfied with the reforms offered and that they would work whatever scheme was finally granted. Surendranath Banerjea, the Moderate leader, argued that this was the main difference between his delegation and the Congress delegation; the latter refused to accept the reforms unless they were greatly transformed. The drawback of this position as a negotiating stance is obvious, and the failure of the Moderates to make a stronger critique of the reforms needs explaining. Firstly, of course, support for the reforms was the *raison d'être* for the Moderates; to go back on their general acceptance of the reforms would make a nonsense of their having stood apart from Congress and of having organised a separate delegation to London.⁶⁸ Secondly, they undoubtedly felt ties of loyalty to Montagu, who had taken them into his confidence and appeared to be jeopardising his whole career for Indian reforms. Finally, as we have seen, they accepted the view which Montagu propagated, namely that if Indians raised their demands too high they

⁶⁷ L.F. Rushbrook Williams, *India in 1919*, Calcutta, 1920, p. 45. This publication was the new form of presentation of the annual report made by the Government of India to Parliament. It was formerly known as the Moral and Material Progress Report and the new format was a sign of the new interest shown in propagating the official view on Indian affairs. Its author was later appointed Director of Publicity. See Robb, *Government of India*, p. 32.

⁶⁸ As Tilak explained, in a different context, the Moderates needed to differentiate themselves from the Extremists- 'to show they are four annas less than you...that they are Moderates' as he put it. Tilak to Khaparde, 13 March 1919, Kunte (ed.), *Khaparde Correspondence*, p. 84.

would be playing into the hands of the die-hards in Britain, who would see that the reforms were wrecked.

Another problem for the Moderates was that they could not maintain unity in their delegation, small though it was. For example, whereas Banerjea and Sastri stood out against the vote for women at this stage, Chintamani and Prithwis Chandra Ray argued in its favour. Some of the delegates could not resist giving their personal opinions, even if they conflicted with the official party line.⁶⁹ Sastri was exasperated with the open divisions within the delegation and the personal backbiting.⁷⁰ At this stage there was little question of party cohesion or discipline; the Moderate party gave the impression of being largely made up of ageing 'prima donnas', anxious not to be upstaged by their rivals from other regions. The Bengalis, Surendranath Banerjea and Prithwis Chandra Ray, whose region had dominated Congress politics for so long, maintained a rivalry with the younger delegates from the United Provinces, H.N. Kunzru and C.Y. Chintamani. All of this was particularly distressing to Srinivasa Sastri as he felt a particular obligation to help Montagu with the reforms, and saw himself as playing a very similar role to that of his guru Gokhale in the making of the 1909 reforms. Sastri was impressed by Montagu on a personal basis, and also by the difficulties which the latter faced in British political circles.⁷¹

Sastri contrasted his role in London with that of Tilak who 'has no entry into the higher political circles'.⁷² He realized though that there was a danger of the

⁶⁹ Kunzru reported that K.C. Roy and Prithwis Chandra Ray, although witnesses on behalf of the Moderates deputation, 'did not support the representation submitted to the committee by the deputation and took a line of their own.' *Servant of India*, 11 Sept. 1919, p. 380.

⁷⁰ V.S. Sastri to Venkatasubbiah, 27 Aug. 1919, Sastri MSS, S.I.S., Madras.

⁷¹ V.S.S. Sastri to Joshi [presumably N.M. Joshi], 5 June 1919; V.S.S. Sastri to Ramaswami [Sastri], 14 Aug. 1919, Sastri MSS, S.I.S., Madras. Further evidence of the unbounded admiration which the Moderates felt for Montagu may be found in Banerjea, *Nation*, p. 323.

⁷² V.S.S. Sastri to S.G. Vaze, 28 May 1919, Sastri MSS, S.I.S., Madras.

Moderates losing political support in India if they were seen to be 'official-worshipping' and if they neglected to maintain an activist stance.⁷³

There were four other main delegations, representing the Congress, the Besantite or National Home Rule League, the Muslim League, and the Justice Party, representing the non-Brahmins of South India. The Moderate delegation seems to have enjoyed good relationships with Besant's group, and with the Muslim League, represented by M.A. Jinnah, whose political views virtually coincided with the Moderates. Besant benefited from co-operation with the Moderates by being treated well in official circles in London, whilst she in turn, provided them with an indirect link with Labour Party circles through M.P.s like George Lansbury and John Scurr. Besant also provided them with her dynamic organizational and activist skills, something notably lacking in Moderate circles. Her evidence was superbly presented and provided strong support for the Moderate case. There were minor areas of disagreement, particularly with Banerjea's more conservative interpretation of the Moderate programme, but, on the whole, Besant accepted the need for gradualism, remarking that 'it is wise to conciliate contrary opinion, to effect by compromise that which otherwise might arouse dangerous conflict of opinion and increase racial antagonism'.⁷⁴ Besant agreed with Sastri and other Moderates that communal electorates should be opposed on principle (the Lucknow Pact with the Muslims being a temporary exception). Sastri, himself, refused to do a deal with the Justice Party representatives and, inevitably, the Moderates received tough cross-examination from the die-hard supporters of the non-Brahmins.⁷⁵

Besant had arrived in London in a very similar position of political isolation to the Moderates. Her views were nearest to those of Srinivasa Sastri, who did not yet

⁷³ V.S.S. Sastri to Venkatasubbiah, 10 Sept. 1919, Sastri Mss, S.I.S., Madras.

⁷⁴ See Mrs. Besant's evidence to the Joint Select Committee, Report of the Joint Select Committee, vol.2, Evidence, H.C. 203, 1919, para. 1336, p. 72.

⁷⁵ See Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, pp. 137 ff., for more details.

see the break with Congress as irrevocable. She had, after all, played the leading role in re-uniting Congress in 1915-1916, and she regarded Congress as a pluralistic rather than a monolithic organisation.⁷⁶ In December 1918, she and Sastri had been soundly defeated on a number of issues at the annual Congress session. The most important issue was the Tilakite demand for immediate provincial autonomy, which Sastri and Besant opposed on the grounds that unless there was a simultaneous advance in central government they would merely be playing into British hands by allowing their rulers to oversee India's centrifugal tendencies. Besant had good reason to resent the way in which the followers of Tilak and Gandhi were forcing her and her supporters out of the regional Congress organisations. She refused to be mandated as a Congress delegate to the Joint Select Committee and, despite strenuous efforts by the Tilakites to arrange for her to work jointly with the Congress delegation, she maintained her separate role.⁷⁷ Despite never formally joining the Moderate party (she would not have been allowed admittance by the Bombay Moderates in particular), henceforth she was, in effect, one of their number. After the delegations returned to India, the Tilakites made a devastating attack on Besant's activities in London, complaining that 'she, like the Moderates, embarrassed the Congress deputation and obstructed its work'.⁷⁸ There some truth in these charges, as Besant was an active and effective organiser of Parliamentary, particularly

⁷⁶ See A. Besant 'Letter to Various Political Leaders', 29 Dec. 1924, Besant MSS. For more details on Mrs. Besant's political position at this time, see P. Woods, 'Annie Besant in Indian Politics, 1914-1929', unpublished paper presented to postgraduate seminar on Commonwealth History, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London University, 1974.

⁷⁷ For Tilak's desire to keep in with Mrs Besant see Tilak to D.V. Gokhale, 6 Feb. 1919, Tilak to Khaparde, 6 Feb. 1919, in Kunte (ed.), *Khaparde Correspondence*, pp. 6 & 80. Also Kelkar to Besant, 17 Jan. 1919, and Besant to Kelkar, 24 Jan. 1919, Besant MSS.

⁷⁸ See Tilak to A.I.C.C., 16 April 1920, letter published as a supplement to the *Mahratta* newspaper, 25 April 1920, and reproduced in T.V. Parvate, *Bal Gangadhar Tilak*, Ahmedabad, 1972 edn., pp. 458-64.

Labour, support, for which the Congress was also vying.⁷⁹ It is ironic to find that Besant, who was interned by the British in 1917 for her nationalist activities, was now allowed to present her evidence immediately after Banerjea and before the Congress, despite the fact that she represented no organisation of any standing in India. Conversely, from being the darling of the Indian nationalist movement in 1917-1918, she was now likened by Khaparde to Putana, the Puranic female demon.⁸⁰

One of the major sources of conflict between the Moderate and Congress delegations was over the control of the British Committee of the Congress. This committee resulted from the traditional Congress emphasis on propaganda in England. Indeed, for many years Congress spent more money on its propagandising activities in England than it did on its work in India.⁸¹ Tilak and other members of the 'New Party' generally believed that Congress resources should be concentrated in India. However, when the Tilakites gained control of Congress in 1918, they were keen to continue the work of the British Committee of Congress, which they regarded as a valuable propaganda weapon in a period when major decisions relating to India would be taken in London, in the case of the constitutional reforms, or Paris, in the case of the post-war peace conference. Tilak also valued the committee as a means of maintaining contact with the Labour Party, which he expected one day to form the Government. What was needed was to bring the work of the British Committee into line with Congress policies. Tilak, in England since November 1918 pursuing his libel case against the *Times* journalist, Valentine Chirol, regarded the British

⁷⁹ Parvate, *Tilak*, p. 462. The Moderates did not share the enthusiasm of Besant and Tilak for securing Labour Party support; quite apart from their natural inclination towards the British Liberal Party, they did not feel it was wise to put all their political eggs into one basket.

⁸⁰ Idem.

⁸¹ For the history of Congress activities in England, see H. Kaushick, *The Indian National Congress in England (1885-1920)*, Delhi, 1972.

Committee and its organ *India* as mere adjuncts of the India Office.⁸² Dr Clark, the acting Chairman, followed what he himself regarded as a policy of neutrality between the Moderate and Extremist factions, although this policy tended to maintain the *status quo ante* the Extremist takeover. Clark's view was that income from Congress delegate fees assigned to the British Committee only amounted to about one half of expenditure, and that the balance was made up by voluntary contributions in this country.⁸³ The clear message was that if Congress wished to call the tune they must first pay the piper. Sastri, realizing the danger of losing control of the British Committee, wired India for money to be sent immediately to secure its allegiance.⁸⁴

The Tilakites eventually won the day and insisted that the British Committee adopt a new constitution, which was in line with its Indian parent. The Moderate, H.S.L. Polak, was replaced as editor of *India* by Helena Normanton. Just as in India, the Moderates responded to their defeat by establishing their own rival organizations. Annie Besant set up the Parliamentary Committee on India, which was made up mostly of Theosophists and Labour politicians. It was typical of Besant's dynamism that by 1920 between 200 and 250 Trade Union and Labour organisations were claimed to be affiliated to this body.

The Moderates, led by N.M. Samarth, organised their own Indian Reform Committee, which received a message of support from Edwin Montagu on its inauguration in January 1920.⁸⁵ There can be little doubt that the India Office

⁸² See B.G. Tilak et al., 'Paper to be placed before the Subjects Committee of the Indian National Congress', Dec. 1918, on The British Committee of the Indian National Congress', dated 28 Nov. 1918, Besant MSS.

⁸³ See *Indian Review*, 1 April 1919.

⁸⁴ See V.S. Sastri to Vaze, 28 May 1919, Sastri MSS, S.I.S., Madras.

⁸⁵ For more details on the Parliamentary Committee on India and on the Indian Reforms Committee, see C. Cook et al. (eds.), *Sources in British Political History, 1900-1951*, vol.1, A Guide to the Archives of Selected Organizations and Societies, London, 1975, section on 'Indian Pressure Groups'.

encouraged the setting up of this organization; this surely was the British organisation in support of the Indian Moderate Party which Montagu had promised during his visit to India in 1917-18.⁸⁶ The membership of the committee included Lord Carmichael, the Liberal ex-Governor of Bengal, Charles Roberts, who had served on the Montagu delegation to India in the winter of 1917-1918, J.D. Rees M.P., who served on the Joint Select Committee, and Evan Cotton of the old Liberal Indian civil servant family. Like some other Indian Liberal institutions, the Indian Reform Committee existed more in name than in activity, but it does confirm the close links that were maintained between the India Office and the Indian Moderates. The final irony is that, after the prolonged struggle for control of the British Committee, the victorious Extremists were soon to find the Committee disbanded as a result of the adoption of the new Gandhian constitution for Congress in December 1920. Henceforth, Congress managed without a British organization until Krishna Menon founded the India League in 1930.

Was the distance that the Moderates kept from the Congress delegation in 1919 really necessary and did it damage the nationalist cause? Certainly the Congress delegation thought so.⁸⁷ In questioning Surendranath Banerjea, Ben Spoor, the Labour M.P., asserted that 'the Congress and the Moderates differed very little in fundamentals on the reforms'.⁸⁸ Naturally, Banerjea disagreed, arguing that the Congress refused to accept the reforms unless the scheme was greatly transformed, whereas the Moderates welcomed the scheme as a definite advance, whilst pressing for changes. But as Kunzru admitted,

⁸⁶ See Montagu, *Indian Diary*, p. 70.

⁸⁷ See Tilak to A.I.C.C., 16 April 1920, letter published as a supplement to the Mahratta newspaper, 25 April 1920, and reproduced in Parvate, *Tilak*, pp. 458-64.

⁸⁸ Jt. Sel. Comm. Report, vol.2, para. 1113, p. 64.

on most questions of practical importance the deputations gave expression to similar views. For instance every deputation asked for the introduction of responsibility into the central government, the equalisation of the number of Indians and Europeans in the Viceroy's Executive Council, the grant of fiscal autonomy, unified finance in the provinces, the inclusion of land revenue among transferred subjects, etc. etc..⁸⁹

The issues on which the Moderates and Extremists differed were the demand of the latter for immediate transfer of all powers at the provincial level to Indian Ministers and also their desire for a fixed time limit for the achievement of self-government. Moderates believed that neither of these demands were in harmony with the British view of the declaration of 20 August 1917 and that they would be refused. It is difficult to believe, however, that the prospects of the reforms would be damaged by making a case for constitutional changes which the British felt to be too advanced. It was not as if the Congress was threatening to boycott the reforms if their demands were not met. Vithalbhai Patel, giving evidence on behalf of the Congress, agreed that if the Bill was passed on its present line the Congress would work it, whilst continuing to agitate to change it.⁹⁰ The differences between the Moderates and Extremists continued to reflect a combination of personal rivalries and fundamental differences in outlook on the interplay between the nationalist movement and the imperial ruler. The question of constitutional reform brought these rivalries to a head and crystallised the differences of outlook but were not in themselves the cause of the rift.

Congress's eventual decision to boycott the reforms resulted not from any deficiencies in the reforms themselves, but from the unrelated issues of Amritsar and the Khilafat. The boycott decision was not taken until September 1920 and that

⁸⁹ *Servant of India*, 4 Dec. 1919, p. 522.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, paras. 1790 & 1791, p. 112.

decision, it is now apparent, was a much closer affair than has been previously been recognised.⁹¹

3. Congress Opts for Non-co-operation.

On 23 December 1919 the royal assent was given to the India Act and the inauguration of the new reforms was marked by a general amnesty for those convicted of political offences or detained under special legislation. The fact that the central issue between the Moderates and Extremists had now been decided on might have led to expectations that the Moderates would now rejoin the Congress. Srinivasa Sastri did indeed favour such a line and attended the annual Congress session at Amritsar.⁹²

The address of the Congress President Motilal Nehru was suitably conciliatory and a resolution was passed thanking Montagu for his efforts and urging the working of the reforms (admittedly in somewhat ambiguous terms and balanced by a continued condemnation of the reforms).⁹³ But again Sastri was in a minority; Sivaswamy Aiyer and other prominent Moderate leaders rejected calls from Motilal Nehru to attend the Congress and continued with the Moderate Conference, which was held in Calcutta.⁹⁴ At this Conference the name of the Moderate Party was changed to the National Liberal Federation and a constitution and programme of work was established.⁹⁵ In his presidential speech Aiyer argued, rather illogically in view of the events of the last two years, that while the nationalist movement was struggling to wrest concessions from the Government it needed unity, but that now 'in time of

⁹¹ See R. Gordon, 'Non-co-operation and Council Entry, 1919-1920', *Modern Asian Studies*, 7, 3, (1973), pp. 443-73.

⁹² See A.M. Zaidi (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Indian National Congress*, New Delhi, 1979, vol. 7, p. 454.

⁹³ See Resolution xiv of the 34th. Session of the I.N.C., Dec. 1919. The most convenient place to find this is in A.M. Zaidi (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 530-1.

⁹⁴ See P.S.S. Aiyer to M. Nehru, 5 Dec. 1919, Motilal Nehru MSS.

⁹⁵ See copy of the resolutions of the Moderate Conference in L/P&J/6/1656/1920.

responsible government parties may be a good thing.⁹⁶ Sastri was not convinced, and wrote to Aiyer on the anniversary of the Amritsar massacre admitting that a party system was a necessary basis of parliamentary government, but indicating that the practical reality was that India did not have ideologically based parties at present, and was not likely to have them for some years to come.⁹⁷ Sastri expected such parties to evolve in time, and that they would be based around disagreements over major issues, and not follow the lines of the division between Moderates and Extremists. He felt that the best chance for a successful working of the reforms was for all nationalists to unite rather than forming opposition groups to ministers. He still felt the magnetic force of the Congress Party and urged that Moderates should not be forced out or place themselves in positions where they were liable to be represented as enemies of Congress. 'I am all for moderate organs and liberal leagues', he wrote, 'But they are to be for propaganda, not for conduct of elections or undermining Congress.'⁹⁸ Sastri's voice was, however, a lone one on this issue, and at the local level the Extremists took the view that only candidates who accepted the Congress resolutions framed at Amritsar could be endorsed on the Congress ticket.⁹⁹ At the Bombay Provincial Conference held at Sholapur in April 1920 the Moderates and Extremists clashed head on. The Moderates, who included R.P. Paranjpye, B.S. Kamat, V.G. Kale, Sir Narayan Chandavarkar and Mrs Besant and her supporters, brought with them a very large number of supporters- the Deccan Sabha alone was reported to have issued one thousand delegate forms.¹⁰⁰ The

⁹⁶ Newspaper reports on the Moderate conference, in L/P&J/&/1648/1920.

⁹⁷ V.S.S. Sastri to P.S.S. Aiyer, 13 April 1919, in Jagadisan (ed.), *Sastri Letters*, pp. 64-7.

⁹⁸ *Idem*.

⁹⁹ See *Citizen*, vol. 1, no. 3, 10 April 1920, p. 33, which reported on the recent provincial conferences at Jullundhar (Punjab), Midnapore (Bengal) and Sholapur (Bombay).

¹⁰⁰ Home Poll, April 75-Dep. OM's report 12.4. 1920, and enclosure 'A Bombay Letter', 7 April 1920. The Deccan Sabha formed an alliance with the non-Brahmins and the depressed classes to oppose Tilak and the social conservatives. They had tried the same tactic a month earlier in March 1920 when they unsuccessfully tried to take a large number of peasant delegates to the Poona District Conference at Junnar. See Deccan Sabha Annual Report for 1920-21, Deccan Sabha files, G.I.P.E..

conference nearly disintegrated in violence and the police had to intervene. When peace was restored the Moderates argued the case that people should be asked to vote for candidates who adhered to the general policy of Congress on administrative and legislative questions, not just those who adhered to the views of only one Congress session. However, the Moderates were defeated by 1600 votes to 750. Jamnadas Dwarkadas accused Tilak of depriving the Congress of its national character and reducing it to a party institution.¹⁰¹

However, it was not the attitude to the reforms that was to be decisive in finally splitting the Liberals from the Congress Party but the decision taken by a Special Congress in August 1920 to undertake a programme of non-co-operation based upon two main grievances, the Khilafat issue and the continuance of the Punjab grievance. Liberals felt some sympathy with their fellow nationalists on both these issues but regarded Gandhi's schemes of non-co-operation with abhorrence, particularly when, after July 1920, they came to include boycott of the new councils as part of their programme. The Khilafat issue came to a head in May 1920 with the publication of the allied peace terms which were being offered to Turkey. These terms seemed to undermine seriously the territorial integrity of the caliph or religious head of Islam. Many Indian Muslims were genuinely offended by what they regarded as a continuation of the dismemberment of the world of Islam by the dominant Christian states.¹⁰² At the end of the month a manifesto of the Central Khilafat Committee outlined plans for non-co-operation as a protest. At the beginning of June a four stage plan of non-co-operation was adopted, which involved, firstly the resignation of titles and honours, secondly the resignation of government posts, thirdly the resignation of

¹⁰¹ Home Poll, April 75-Dep. OM's report 12.4. 1920, and enclosure 'A Bombay Letter', 7 April 1920.

¹⁰² For details of the Khilafat movement (from rather different perspectives), see Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, ch.6; Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement*, New York, 1982.

police and soldiers, and finally a refusal to pay taxes.¹⁰³ Gandhi played a decisive role in the movement, believing that it was crucial to ally the Hindu and Muslim causes. It was not until the end of June, however, that Gandhi came out clearly in favour of boycott of the council elections which were due in November.¹⁰⁴

Liberals, such as Srinivasa Sastri, were highly dubious of the idea of non-cooperation, especially in the cause of what they considered a Muslim religious issue. Sastri's views were summed up in an article in the new organ of the Madras Liberals, the *Citizen*:

The main strength of their [Indian Muslims'] cause seems to rest on the pledge given by the Prime Minister of Great Britain, a pledge which is to be treated as idle breath because of the rich oil fields of Mosul and other temptations...I agree with Mr. Gandhi in condemning the violation of Mr. Lloyd George's promise. But I do not agree with him in considering the people of India in any sense a party to the wrong...We, in India, are not responsible at all, not even for the actions of the Government of India. And this Government stands clear and without blemish in this affair...I cannot, I confess, see the obligation resting on me to withdraw cooperation from a Government which has done right, in order to influence another Government which has done wrong, merely because the former is politically subordinate to the latter. The whole argument is fantastic to a degree.¹⁰⁵

Sastri doubted Gandhi's ability to control Muslim feelings and feared that the latter would turn to violence.¹⁰⁶

The second issue, that of the Punjab grievances, also resurfaced in May 1920, with the publication of the Hunter Committee report and accompanying despatches.

¹⁰³ This resolution was passed at an all-parties conference at Allahabad which was attended by Besant, Sapru and Chintamani, who naturally opposed it. See V(HD) to S/S, ptel. 477, 11 June 1920, C12.

¹⁰⁴ See Brown, *Gandhi's Rise*, pp. 221-2.

¹⁰⁵ *Citizen*, 15 May 1920, cited in P.K. Rao, *The Right Honourable V.S. Srinivasa Sastri. A Political Biography*, Bombay, 1963, pp. 83-4.

¹⁰⁶ See V.S.S. Sastri to P.S.S. Aiyer, 13 April 1920, in Jagadisan (ed.), *Sastri Letters*, pp. 64-7.

The committee divided on racial lines, the Indian members writing a minority report which played down the seriousness of the situation facing the authorities in the Punjab in April 1919, argued that martial law was unnecessary and was much more forthright than the majority report in its condemnation of Dyer and the martial law authorities. Two of the three authors of the minority report, Jagat Narayan and Chimanlal Setalvad, were Moderates, so that it was not surprising that Moderate organisations came out in favour of that version.¹⁰⁷

The Home Department rather unfairly dismissed the Moderate response as being made in part with a view to the forthcoming elections and a desire not to seem less critical than the Extremists.¹⁰⁸ However, it recognised that the 'violent utterances of the English press and bodies like the Bihar planters and European Association render it difficult for Indian moderates to remain moderate.'¹⁰⁹ The British response to the Hunter Report was, indeed, a painful revelation to all Indian nationalists. In the debate on the report in the House of Commons Montagu was given an extremely rough ride when, apparently nervous at confronting his critics, he made a speech that most M.P.s thought entirely inappropriate to the occasion. Instead of sticking to the facts of the treatment of Dyer he managed only an emotional tirade, asking whether India was to be ruled by 'terrorism, Prussianism, racial humiliation' or by 'partnership'. The speech gave his critics all the leverage they needed with which to attack him and this they did, with a good deal of anti-Jewish fervour. Austen Chamberlain wrote that he had 'never seen the House so fiercely angry...A Jew [Montagu] rounding on an Englishman [General Dyer] and throwing him to the

¹⁰⁷ For the resolutions of the council of the National Liberal Federation, see V(HD) to S/S, ptel. 497, 19 June 1920, C12.

¹⁰⁸ V(HD) to S/S, ptel. 461, 4 June 1920, C12. It argued that many Moderates felt privately that the Government had gone as far as could be expected. V(HD) to S/S, ptel. 477, 11 June 1920, C12.

¹⁰⁹ *Idem*.

wolves- that was the feeling.¹¹⁰ Maffey, Chelmsford's private secretary, was also in the House at the time and reported to his chief that Montagu now seemed to be a burden to the coalition Government and that he would be surprised if he was still in the Government in three months time.¹¹¹ With the aid of supportive speeches from Asquith and Churchill the Government recovered and won the division, but a large number of Coalition supporters voted against the Government. A petition calling for Montagu's resignation was signed by 93 members of the House of Commons.¹¹² The debate in the House of Lords on 19 and 20 July was much more circumspect and was marked by very effective speeches criticising Dyer from Curzon and Birkenhead. In this case the vote went against the Government by 129 votes to 86. It was this vote and the fact that Britons rapidly subscribed over £26,000 to a fund organised by the *Morning Post* for the benefit of Dyer which attracted so much attention in India. Racial tension was compounded by the fact that various European Associations, Ladies Associations and English newspapers energetically supported Dyer's fund.¹¹³ As Judith Brown argues, the combination of the British handling of the Punjab and Khilafat questions 'together resolved the ambiguity of Gandhi's attitude to the British Raj and prompted him to resort to non-co-operation with the rulers.'¹¹⁴ Gandhi came to believe that the British no longer had the intention of enacting the ideals of the new constitution.¹¹⁵

The British handling of the introduction of the Rowlatt bills and the Punjab disorders that followed showed up some of the worst aspects of British rule and British attitudes in India. The British could not see that wide-ranging repressive

¹¹⁰ Sir Charles Petrie, *The Life and Times of the Right Hon. Sir Austen Chamberlain*, vol. 2, London, 1940, pp. 152-3.

¹¹¹ J.L. Maffey to Chelmsford, 10 July 1920, C16.

¹¹² Rumbold, *Watershed*, p. 203.

¹¹³ V(HD) to S/S, ptel. 624, 30 July 1920, C13.

¹¹⁴ J. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise*, p. 246.

¹¹⁵ *Idem*.

legislation was in itself a reminder of the subservience to a semi-autocratic ruler, but that the introduction of such legislation, by riding roughshod over elected Indian opinion, entirely contradicted the new democratic spirit they were trying to inculcate. Furthermore, the haste with which India's rulers closed ranks and covered up for one another during and after the Punjab crisis was indicative of the worst aspects of imperialism.¹¹⁶ Chelmsford's support of O'Dwyer was far too uncritical and coloured by fears of the reaction of the European community in India rather than an intrinsic sense of justice. The closing of ranks was supported by a complete failure to properly investigate what had taken place and to provide the necessary information to the Secretary of State in good time. The Government of India tried to avoid an enquiry, fearing that it would undermine the morale of the services in India. Montagu was too prepared to leave issues of the maintenance of law and order to the men on the spot, but also perhaps was fearful of revelations that would threaten the passage of the constitutional reforms. The response of some members of the House of Commons in the debate on Dyer's treatment betrayed the worst aspects of the British ruling elite with its latent anti-semitism. The response of some members of the European community in supporting Dyer only confirmed that racial attitudes still ran deep in British India. All in all, the British handling of the Punjab matter must have left the Indian Liberals totally dispirited. Once their rulers had ensnared themselves in the policy of 'facing it out' it became impossible for them to extricate themselves by fulsome apology or the provision of proper compensation. The whole business was a very sorry one, but it seems that most Liberals in the Imperial Legislative Council

¹¹⁶ See H. Fein, *Imperial Crime and Punishment: The Massacre at Jallianwala Bagh and British Judgment, 1919-20*, Hawaii, 1977.

wanted to begin to put the matter behind them and to get on with the business of getting themselves elected to the new councils.¹¹⁷

The Government held out hope that Indians would themselves become involved in decisions on the maintenance of peace. During the summer of 1920, B.N. Sarma and T.B. Sapru were appointed to the Viceroy's Executive Council, and Satyendra Sinha was appointed as the Governor of Bihar and Orissa.¹¹⁸ Sinha's appointment was Montagu's own idea and proved highly controversial amongst British officials in India. Many of the arguments that were raised against Sinha's appointment were practical ones, for instance, there were fears that the I.C.S. would be antagonised because the position traditionally went to one of their number or that the new executive council would have an imbalance of Indians over Britons, or that the Indian states in Orissa would not wish to be governed by an Indian politician.¹¹⁹ But a number of the objections raised were based upon racial snobbery and the argument that the appointment was the thin end of the wedge. Montagu, who may have taken some pleasure in the fact that the I.C.S. member who was to be passed over was Vincent, whom he felt had been obstructive over the making of the reforms, stuck to his guns and argued that in future all the provincial governors should be Indian, just as the heads of provinces in Canada were Canadian.¹²⁰

The death of Bal Gangadhar Tilak on 1 August 1920 removed the Indian politician who was most likely to be able to lead a successful opposition to the

¹¹⁷ When Sastri joined with some of the Extremist members to press a motion on the Punjab grievances in September 1920, Surendranath Banerjea privately persuaded the Viceroy to disallow the motion because the Moderates wanted the issue buried and wanted to be saved from themselves. V to S/S, 1 Sept. 1920, M11 ; V to S/S, ptel. 755, 14 Sept. 1920, C13.

¹¹⁸ Montagu defended the appointment against the attacks of the existing Governor, Sir E. Gait, and also of Willingdon. V to S/S, ptel. 41, 23 Jan. 1920, C12, ; Willingdon to Montagu, 22 Aug. & 6. Oct. 1920, W4 ; Willingdon to Ronaldshay, 18 Aug. 1920, RON5.

¹¹⁹ See V to S/S, 26 Feb. 1920, M10.

¹²⁰ Montagu to Willingdon, 16 Sept. 1920, W4 & M29. In fact when Sinha resigned due to ill health in 1921 he was replaced by a Briton so that no precedent should be established. Montagu argued that Sinha had been appointed on merit, not because he was an Indian. See S/S to V, ptel. 1625, 16 Nov. 1921, R10.

adoption of non-co-operation at the Special Congress session in September 1920. As it was, there was a good deal of resistance to Gandhi's proposed programme, particularly from the three presidency regions. Once again the majority of Moderates did not attend the Congress, Surendranath Banerjea claiming that there was no point in attending because the Congress would be packed by Gandhi's supporters. Besant and her followers, such as Jamnadas Dwarkadas, did attend, however, and fought against the non-co-operation proposal. There turned out to be some basis for Banerjea's allegation, in that Gandhi brought large numbers of Muslim supporters who proved to play an important part in achieving the Gandhian majorities in the provincial delegations on the all-important subjects committee.¹²¹ It was only after long debate, during which Motilal Nehru switched to supporting Gandhi, that the majority for non-co-operation was achieved in the subjects committee, and then only by 144 votes to 132. The Gandhian majority in the open session was much larger, 1826 votes to 884, but about half the delegates did not vote.¹²² It seems that Gandhi won the day by his superior organisational skills, and that once the ball began rolling in his favour a number of politicians decided to defend their positions by going over to the winning side. It was reported that the Tilakites were 'very bitter against Gandhi and the Khilafatists in outmanoeuvring them...all the more so as Gandhi adopted the very tactics which they themselves utilised to oust the Moderates from Congress.'¹²³

One of the most immediate effects of the Congress decision was the boycott of the council elections which took place in November 1920. Chelmsford remained blissfully unmoved by the prospect. Earlier in the year when Montagu had expressed concern at the impact on Britain's image of a possible Congress boycott, Chelmsford replied that he did not think that many politicians would be prepared to 'cut off their

¹²¹ See Brown, *Gandhi's Rise*, p. 263.

¹²² V to S/S, ptel. 747, 10 Sept. 1920, C13.

¹²³ Fortnightly report from Bombay for the first half of September 1920, Home Poll Dep., Sept. 1920, no. 70, cited in Brown, *Gandhi's Rise*, p. 269.

nose to spite their face'.¹²⁴ He remained unperturbed even when he realised that his earlier forecast would be proved wrong. He saw the Congress boycott as a mixed blessing. On the one hand, the fact that all parties would not now be represented in the councils was to be deplored, but on the other hand he told Montagu that 'we have yet to see whether as a result any form of direct action will be tried after the Councils are established. If so, in any action we may take ought to have the support of the Moderates who will be in possession of the Councils.'¹²⁵ Leaving aside the signs in the above statement that the British continued to fail to respect Moderate independence, one can see that Chelmsford was coming to see a new importance to the role of the Moderates. If they were to become the dominant party in legislatures in which the British would be in a permanent minority, it would become more and more important to take Moderate opinion into account. The Government's concern not to alienate the Moderates can be seen most clearly in the cautious policy they followed in handling the non-co-operation movement and its leaders.¹²⁶ The Government had learnt the lessons from the internment of Mrs Besant in 1916 and was determined to avoid the unnecessary creation of martyrs. Thus the Government pursued a dual policy of leaving the leaders of the movement alone whilst being prepared to sanction action against minor figures and anyone who advocated violence. In October 1920 Chelmsford's council considered whether Gandhi should be prosecuted. Interestingly, the need to avoid alienating the Moderates was used on both sides of the argument. It could be argued that Government was letting its supporters down by not taking firm action against non-co-operation and thus allowing loyalists and moderates to suffer from social boycott. However, the alternative argument prevailed, namely that Gandhi's arrest would weaken the Moderates and jeopardise the elections and the

¹²⁴ S/S to V, ptel., 28 June 1920, C12; V to S/S, ptel., 30 June 1920, C12.

¹²⁵ V to S/S, ptel. 474a, 24 Oct. 1920, C13.

¹²⁶ This issue is dealt with very fully in Robb, *Government of India*, ch. 8.

reforms.¹²⁷ This policy of patience was also influenced by other considerations such as the temporary weakness of the army, the continued threats on the Frontier, the difficulties of dealing with non-co-operation through normal legal channels, and uncertainty whether the Secretary of State would support tougher measures.¹²⁸ But the need to conciliate Moderate opinion as expressed in the new legislatures, was to become more and more important under the reforms.

To some extent the Government of India felt vindicated by the election results of November 1920. In only 6 seats out of a total of 637 was there a complete absence of candidates.¹²⁹ In all provinces, except the Central Provinces, a majority of seats was contested.¹³⁰ The turnout was, however, generally low, on average just over 30% for the legislative councils and 25% for the Legislative Assembly, and this could only partly be explained by the lack of popular electoral experience.¹³¹ The shortfall of Muslim voters undoubtedly reflected the strength of feeling about the Khilafat issue.

With the Congress not contesting the seats, Liberals did quite well in the first council elections. About 50 Liberals were elected to the various councils throughout India.¹³² Although this made them the largest single group of members with any clear party affiliation, it meant that in individual provincial legislatures and in the central legislative assembly they formed only small minorities. Ray Smith calculates that out of the total of some 140 elected, nominated and official members of the new

¹²⁷ V(HD) to S/S, ptel. 3-C, 24 Oct. 1920, C13.

¹²⁸ Rumbold, *Watershed*, p. 219.

¹²⁹ Brown, *Gandhi's Rise*, p. 218.

¹³⁰ Robb, *Government of India*, p. 239.

¹³¹ Figures are extrapolated from Smith, thesis, p. 257. They can be compared with an average turnout for the 1923 elections (when the Swarajists stood) of just over 45% for the legislative councils and 44.6% for the legislative assembly. Polls varied from over 50% in parts of Madras to only 8% in Bombay City, and even lower (4.4%) in the urban Muslim constituencies of Bombay Presidency. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise*, p. 285.

¹³² Smith, thesis, pp. 258-9. I am indebted to Dr. Smith's research for the information on the 1920 elections in this section.

central legislative assembly, the Liberals numbered about 20 (14%); among 113 Indian members they constituted only about 17-18%. The Liberals did not form a larger proportion than this in the provincial legislative councils either. Smith comments that what the Liberals lacked in quantity they made up for in quality, providing at least one Minister in four provinces and the Law Member in the Executive Council of the Government of Bombay (Setalvad) and the Law Member in the Viceroy's Executive Council (Sapru).¹³³ It is clear also that the Liberals provided the best quality of contributions to the central legislative assembly.¹³⁴

At Nagpur at the end of the year, Congress confirmed the non-co-operation decision and spelt out the programme that it envisaged more clearly. The Nagpur Congress was a triumph for Gandhi in that his former critics, such as C.R. Das of Bengal, fell into line and supported his programme. Moreover, Congress adopted a new constitution which changed its stated aim and gave it an effective organisation reaching from the villages upwards. The new constitution marked officially the transition from the Moderate style of politics which had been the dominant mode since its birth in 1885. That style had emphasised the maintenance of the British connection, the use of constitutional methods only, a loose organisation allowing control by Presidency politicians, continued propaganda in Great Britain and a reliance on local organisations for agitational effort during the year. At Nagpur each of these tenets of the old Congress was undermined. The new aim of Congress was 'the attainment of *swarajya* by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means'. The old requirement that the means be 'constitutional' was dropped. It was decided to abandon the British Committee of Congress in London, and its paper *India*. The argument used to support this measure was that Congress should become more self-reliant rather than

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ A.F. Whyte, report on Imperial Legislative Assembly, 18.4.1922, enclosure to Reading to Peel, 20 April 1922, R5.

dependent on petitioning the British authorities for change. Congress was reorganised on language areas rather around the British-determined provinces. Delegate numbers were to be accorded on a population basis so as to try and end the system whereby the Presidency leaders had sometimes swamped Congress meetings with their supporters. As Judith Brown says, 'it meant that in the future control of Congress would go either to a continental alliance of regional leaders or to a politician who could muster an all-India following.'¹³⁵ Gandhi's almost dictatorial hold on decision-making in Congress was marked by the establishment of a much smaller Working Committee of the All India Congress Committee and this body was to be responsible for the day to day running of the party. Thus Gandhi simultaneously democratised the party (establishing a pyramidal system of election from village level upwards) and made it a more effective instrument for executing his will and that of his supporters. As Gopal Krishna argues, the Gandhian domination of Congress during the non-co-operation movement of 1920 to 1922, posed the most serious challenge to the traditional leadership of the western-educated professional middle classes.¹³⁶ If council boycott had seemed unattractive, the giving up of legal practices and the withdrawal of children and students from the government-supported educational system, seemed to threaten not only political but also social and economic ambitions. Many were swept along in a tide of what seemed to be inevitable change, whilst others saw the adoption of non-co-operation as a temporary expedient only. The range and numbers of those opposed to Gandhi was therefore much broader than the apparently unanimous support given to him at Nagpur. From the Government point of view this gave hope for the future. They continued to believe that non-co-operation would destroy itself by its own absurdities and that the sacrifices required of the professional

¹³⁵ Brown, *Gandhi's Rise*, p. 299.

¹³⁶ G. Krishna, 'The Development of the Indian National Congress as a Mass Organisation, 1918-1923', *Journal of Asian Studies*, xxv, 3, May 1966.

classes would undermine the movement. They were right in their last assumption, but what they underestimated was the extent to which Congress had now organised itself to reach areas and classes that were not much touched by Congress politics traditionally. This would have important implications should Congress be drawn back into the electoral system.

Unfortunately, Chelmsford lacked the imagination and human touch of a Viceroy like his predecessor Hardinge to be able to make the sort of magnanimous gesture or statement which might have gone some way to healing the damaged feelings of Indians resulting from the Punjab and Khilafat grievances. He did in fact have the martial law manual rewritten to try and avoid a recurrence of what had happened in the Punjab, but he felt constrained from taking the sort of measures which Indians were demanding for the punishment of officials and officers who were deemed responsible for what had happened. One constraint was that Chelmsford did not believe that any officer should receive a punishment that was the equivalent of or more severe than that meted out to the most serious offender, General Dyer, namely dismissal from the army.¹³⁷ But, more importantly, Chelmsford felt that an unbridgeable gap existed between his view of what had happened in the Punjab and that of the Indian nationalists.¹³⁸ Thus he refused to meet a Moderate deputation led by Chimanlal Setalvad on the grounds that some of their demands (they covered the Punjab, Khilafat and future constitutional reforms) were 'quite preposterous.'¹³⁹ Chelmsford explained that 'no-one knows better than Setalvad the gravity of the rising in the Punjab last year, but this side of the question is entirely ignored by him.'¹⁴⁰ Chelmsford was beginning to mark time until the opening of

¹³⁷ Robb, *Government of India*, p. 213.

¹³⁸ See Chelmsford to Lloyd, 4 Dec. 1920, C25.

¹³⁹ Chelmsford to Lloyd, 16 Dec. 1920, C25. For the history of this abortive deputation of Bombay Moderates see Lloyd to Chelmsford, 12 Nov. 1920, C25; S. Reed to Chelmsford, 20 Nov. 1920, C25. For details of the Moderate requisition see Lloyd to Chelmsford, 10 Dec. 1920, C25,

¹⁴⁰ Chelmsford to Lloyd, 4 Dec. 1920, C25.

the new councils in February 1920 and the end of his own term of office at the beginning of April. He was becoming more and more distanced from the difficulties of the situation he was leaving his successor who, he told Montagu, would 'find a peaceful atmosphere, not altogether devoid of anxiety because of the season, but on the whole not dangerous'.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ V to S/S, 16 March 1921, C6.

PART 2: THE WORKING OF REFORMS, 1921-1923**CHAPTER IV: HANDLING NON-CO-OPERATION, 1921-22**

The way in which the British handled the unprecedented threat of mass civil disobedience in the years 1920 to 1922 was a matter of prime importance to the relationship between the Indian Liberals and the Government. It was also one of the most sensitive areas in the relationship. British administrators felt that the main defect in Moderate support for the government was its unreliability on matters of law and order. There were constant complaints that whilst privately many Moderates expressed their keenness to see law-breakers (even if politically inspired) arrested, they would never express this support publicly, and thus from the British point of view, were moral cowards. What the British forgot was that the Moderates were both Liberals and Indian nationalists; the Moderates were genuinely offended by what they saw as over-zealous use of bureaucratic authority and identified themselves with the genuine patriotism of the broad Indian nationalist movement. The Liberals were in an awkward political situation. The relatively low levels of electoral support that they had garnered in the elections to the Councils indicated the limits to their public popularity. They were well aware that, come the next elections, due as early as the end of 1923, they would be held to some extent responsible for the Government's treatment of non-co-operators. It was important therefore not to be too closely identified with British policies for dealing with non-co-operation.¹

Astute members of the British administration recognised the difficulty of the

¹ One can see the ambivalence of their position in the United Provinces where Liberals supported anti-non-co-operation organisations provided they were not seen as officially sponsored. See below, pp. 292-294.

Moderate position and did not test the relationship too far.² Generally speaking this involved a policy of distinguishing between the leaders of the non-co-operation movement, Gandhi in particular, and the bulk of the rank and file. Learning the lessons of the Besant internment of 1917, the Government stalked Gandhi, waiting for him to overstep the mark and alienate the middle ground in Indian politics.³ The game of cat and mouse that ensued during 1921 and the early part of 1922 proved to be a risky political gambit for the British, in that it threatened to alienate their more conservative allies in India, such as the landowners and princes, whilst it also endangered the finely balanced coalition that Lloyd George had built up in British politics. At the end of the day, Reading's indecision and his patent bending to the concerns of Indian Moderate opinion so angered the Prime Minister that he submitted to die-hard pressure and made the Secretary of State, Edwin Montagu, a sacrificial victim in February 1922, shortly before Gandhi was finally arrested. Montagu's resignation was considered by many Indian Liberals to be the turning point in their relations with the British, which from that point they perceived as steadily deteriorating. However, this was to misread the situation, as British opinion on India had been hardening long before Montagu's resignation and there is plenty of evidence that Montagu himself shared some of the disillusion with Indian politics that set in around the time of the Prince of Wales' visit to India in the winter of 1921-1922.

It was not just a matter of the Government of India and local governments having now to consider the views of their legislatures and thus follow a policy of restraint in their treatment of the Congress leadership. These governments now included Indians within their ranks and, although law and order issues were the preserve of the Reserved side of government, in some provinces Indian Ministers

² Lord Reading, the Viceroy, and Sir William Vincent, the Home Member, are prime examples. See Low, 'First Non-Co-operation Movement', pp. 298-323.

³ P. Robb, 'The Government of India and Annie Besant', pp. 107-30.

were involved in discussions on these matters, and in the case of the Government of India, the Law Member, who held responsibility for these matters, was an Indian Liberal, Tej Bahadur Sapru. It was Sapru's concern for the proper use of judicial powers and his desire to seek a compromise solution between the non-co-operators and the Government, that influenced Reading so profoundly.⁴ Reading's government listened more carefully to the 'middle ground' of Indian politics than any of its predecessors.⁵ Reading defined the Indian centre ground in Indian politics widely enough to include not only the Indian Liberals but also Congressmen such as M.M. Malaviya, who acted as an intermediary between the Government and Gandhi. The failure of the intermediaries to bring Gandhi to the negotiating table may have been more a result of the stronger influence of Muslim Khilafatist no-compromisers on Gandhi than any failure on Reading's part. Reading was very keen to make some sort of political truce with Gandhi, at least so as to cover the period of the Prince of Wales's visit in the winter of 1921-1922. The extent to which Reading was prepared to go in order to reach such an agreement with Gandhi, including the calling of a round table conference at a time when the new reforms had only just been implemented, is indicative of the keenness of British policy-makers to maintain the constitutional nature of their rule. The Indian Liberals, as will be seen, were the most immediate beneficiaries of this concern; they took on a role that they were to play several times in coming decades, the role of intermediaries between government and the main-stream of the nationalist movement.

⁴ Low, 'First Non-Cooperation Movement', pp. 306-16.

⁵ For a study which argues the importance of the Indian centre as a political consideration for the British, see T.G.P. Spear, 'A Third Force in India 1920-1947: A Study in Political Analysis', in C.H. Philips & M.D. Wainwright (eds.), *The Partition of India. Policies and Perspectives 1935-1947*, London, 1970, pp. 490-503.

1. The Search for a Compromise

The New Viceroy

Rufus Isaacs, 1st. Marquess of Reading, was a popular replacement for the lacklustre Lord Chelmsford when he retired in April 1921. Indians were pleased to see that the Government had chosen a Liberal politician of the first rank, a man who had been Lord Chief Justice as well as Ambassador to the United States of America.⁶ It did not go unremarked that both the top posts in the administration of India had gone to Jews.⁷ Generally, however, there was a willingness all round to give the new Viceroy a chance to prove himself. There was a general expectation among Indian Moderate politicians that Reading might be prepared to consider further constitutional advances, and right from the start people were pressing on him the idea of a conference with Indian politicians of all hues.⁸

Arriving in April 1921, Reading came at one of the most difficult times for the Government in dealing with the non-co-operation movement. In the months before the monsoon broke there were fears that the movement would escalate. Indeed, Reading was far less sanguine about the prospects of countering non-co-operation; he recognised that the movement was far more dangerous now that it had reached beyond the urban educated classes and touched the lives of the rural masses.⁹ There were some signs that Reading was looking to take a tougher policy against non-co-

⁶ There are a number of biographies of Reading, including one by his son, G.R. Isaacs, the 2nd. Marquess of Reading, *Rufus Isaacs, First Marquess of Reading*, 2 vols., London, 1942-45; also, H. Montgomery Hyde, *Lord Reading*, London, 1967; D. Judd, *Lord Reading*, London, 1982; A. Sinha, *Lord Reading: Viceroy of India*, New Delhi, 1985.

⁷ See Hyde, *Reading*, p. 346. Anti-semitic prejudice is an important background factor which it is important to appreciate if one is to understand the hostility that Montagu and Reading incurred from some of their fellow Britons. People still revived memories of the financial scandals of 1912-1913 with which the names of Reading (Marconi) and Montagu (Samuel Montagu & Co. Indian silver transactions) had been associated. See G.D. Searle, *Corruption in British Politics 1895-1930*, Oxford, 1987, pp. 333-4.

⁸ V to S/S, ptel. 330, 28 Apr. 1921, R10.

⁹ *Idem.*

operation, but it was not long before he seemed to have settled comfortably into the policy of tactical non-interference with the leaders of the movement, which had been the preferred policy of his predecessor.¹⁰ Where Reading did differ from Chelmsford was in his background as a professional politician. Having dealt at the highest level with the growth of nationalism in areas like Ireland and the Middle East, Reading had a better appreciation of the forces behind the growth of nationalist feeling. Unlike Chelmsford he did not determine to keep Indian nationalists at arm's length, even if they were considered by the official establishment to be 'extremists'. Reading showed a willingness in his early months in office to speak to men like Malaviya, Lajpat Rai and Jinnah, people well outside the accepted circle of Moderate politicians. Eventually, Reading even agreed to meet with Gandhi: indeed, he believed that it was inevitable sooner or later that the British should parley with the leaders of the nationalist movement, if only to understand what their aims really were. Personal contact, face to face negotiation, offered Reading the prospect also of using his famous debating skills and perhaps winning over some converts or making cracks in the unity of the nationalist movement. With his background in international affairs Reading also had a broader perspective on the significance of the Khilafat movement and the possibilities that presented themselves of dividing the Muslims away from the non-co-operation movement and bringing them back to what many Britons saw as their rightful role as loyalists.¹¹ Reading's political skills provided Montagu with just the sort of colleague that he had desired: it was ironic that it was not long before the Secretary of State was actually trying to restrain the political activities of the new Viceroy.

¹⁰ For the policy of Chelmsford's Government, see Robb, *Government of India*, ch. 8.

¹¹ See V to S/S, 21 Sept. 1922, R5

The Ali Brothers' Apology

The first chance Reading had to use his political skills came with the question of whether to prosecute the Muslim leaders, Mohammed and Shaukat Ali, for speeches they had made in the United Provinces in April 1921 in which they advocated violence. The matter was referred to the local Government, which, with one dissenting voice, was prepared to support a prosecution.¹² The Viceroy's Council, however, was divided on the question. The British members favoured prosecution, but the three Indian members, and Sapru in particular, favoured caution.¹³ It is interesting, in view of the fact that the Home Member Sir William Vincent is generally associated with masterminding the policy of tactical non-intervention, that Vincent, in this particular case, argued for immediate arrest of the Ali brothers, and was against prior talks with Gandhi.¹⁴

It was generally recognised that a danger in prosecuting the Ali brothers was that Gandhi would almost certainly seek prosecution as well, in order to maintain Hindu-Muslim solidarity in the movement. If Gandhi was arrested who could tell what trouble might ensue? Sapru argued for a delay, in which period it might be seen if Gandhi could be won over.¹⁵ Butler was persuaded to delay the prosecution until after the middle of May. In the meantime Malaviya and C.F. Andrews urged upon the Viceroy the benefits to be gained from seeing Gandhi.¹⁶ Reading was doubtful but agreed on condition that Gandhi should request the interview. Thus, there began a remarkable series of six interviews between Viceroy and Mahatma, talks which were to presage the more famous talks with Irwin in 1931. Like Irwin, Reading seems to

¹² Pandit Jagat Narayan opposed the prosecution, see Butler to H. Erle Richards, 26 April 1921, B21.

¹³ H. Butler to G. Butler, 9 May 1921, B25.

¹⁴ For the traditional view, see Low, 'First Non-Co-operation Movement', pp. 302-305. For an important record of the meeting of the Viceroy's Council in Simla, May 1921, see the note recorded by Sir G. Lloyd, Lloyd MSS, GL10/20.

¹⁵ H. Butler to G. Butler, 9 May 1921, B25.

¹⁶ Reading to Willingdon, 6 May 1921, W5.

have been impressed with the moral stature of Gandhi, and although the interviews proved to be hard-going, Reading did manage to get Gandhi to see the contradiction between his non-violent professions and the incitements to violence of some who called themselves his supporters. Gandhi offered to intercede with the Ali brothers and to try and obtain an apology for their speeches and a promise that they would not advocate violence again. Good lawyer that he was, Reading made sure that the terms of the agreement and even the draft of the apology letter were clearly understood and accepted by Gandhi. Significantly, in view of Gandhi's later claims, Reading made it quite clear that, whilst he was in this case distinguishing between violent and non-violent nationalist activities, he was not in any way promising to turn a blind eye to some of the activities which Congress described as non-violent, for instance the drilling of volunteers and picketing of liquor shops. Despite some doubts expressed in his Council, Reading got agreement to go ahead with the attempt to get an apology from the Ali brothers.¹⁷ Gandhi successfully obtained the apology, which was published on 30 May, and there is no doubt that this was a triumph for Reading and a political embarrassment for both Gandhi and the Ali brothers. Montagu congratulated his colleague and commented that,

The prosecution would, after all, have been political and it is much better, after all, from an internal point of view in particular, and so long as you can, to secure order in India with and through the help of Indians who are non-official.¹⁸

In fact, confrontation with the leaders of the Khilafat movement had only been delayed. In July at a meeting of the All-India Khilafat Committee at Karachi, the Ali brothers were held to be responsible for a resolution being passed which endorsed a *fatwa*, issued by Muslim religious leaders, which called on Muslims to stop serving in

¹⁷ See the note recorded by Lloyd, GL10/20.

¹⁸ S/S to V, ptel. 702, 30 May 1921, R10.

the army.¹⁹ Prompted by the Commander-in-Chief, the Government determined upon prosecution, although, as Rumbold points out, the grounds for taking action against Gandhi if he repeated the offence were not as morally strong as they would have been back in May.²⁰ After long delays, the brothers were eventually arrested in September and given a sentence of two years' rigorous imprisonment in October 1921. Not long after, Gandhi and others repeated the statement for which the Ali brothers had been arrested, but Reading refused to take the bait. Reading could still think of the way he had handled the Ali brothers issue as a success, for he was essentially manoeuvring for the support of the Indians in his Council and more broadly for moderate opinion in India. Reading's willingness to talk with Indian political leaders had met the first requirement of the Indians in his Council, who had seen the Government becoming increasingly more isolated under Chelmsford. Reading had also been careful not to become involved in making political concessions to the Extremists rather than the Moderates, which would have antagonised the latter.²¹ He skilfully played on the fact that moderate Hindu politicians did not like the links that the non-co-operation movement had forged with more militant Islamic elements. Reading reported that Malaviya, for instance, was clearly worried by the Ali brothers' talk of an Afghan invasion.²²

¹⁹ For the response of the Bombay Government see pp. 286-287 below.

²⁰ Rumbold, *Watershed*, p. 261.

²¹ In fact Reading had nearly fallen into this trap when he considered telling Gandhi during his talks with him that the government was going to repeal the Rowlatt Acts. Montagu reminded him, however, that the Bill was going to be considered by a committee of the Indian Legislative Assembly and it was important that any concession should be made through constitutional channels and not as a concession to non-cooperators. See V to S/S, ptel. 386, 11 May 1921; S/S to V, ptel. 625, 13 May 1921, R10.

²² See V to S/S, ptel. 362, 5 May 1921, R10.

Malaviya and the Decision to Go Ahead with the Prince's Visit

Madan Mohan Malaviya seemed the perfect choice as an intermediary for Reading's purposes: he straddled the Moderate and Extremist camps and had good relations with fellow Allahabadis, Motilal Nehru and Tej Bahadur Sapru. Malaviya was reputed to have said that, while his head was with the Moderates, his heart was with the Extremists.²³ As an educationalist with a special interest in improving the standard of Hindu literacy and culture, Malaviya was alienated by the Gandhian boycott of educational institutions.²⁴ He also had grave doubts about the efficacy of the boycott of the Councils but remained on close terms with Gandhi. Reading was impressed with Malaviya and described him as '... as thoughtful a politician as I know here.'²⁵ For his part Malaviya, a rather vain man who was temperamentally inclined to see all sides of an issue (a typical Moderate in other words), seems to have enjoyed the role of Reading's non-official Indian advisor and go-between.

Malaviya urged upon Reading the importance of going ahead with the Prince of Wales's visit, which had been postponed in the previous year. It seems that Malaviya was confident that the British would follow tradition and announce a boon to mark the visit, and that this dramatic gesture might end the non-co-operation movement. In this instance he misjudged Reading, who felt that whatever boons were to be given had already been proffered at the time of the Duke of Connaught's visit when inaugurating the reforms. Malaviya was able to impress upon Reading the strength of feeling about the Punjab grievances and Reading agreed to review personally the cases of Indians still in prison for offences committed relating to the events in the Punjab in April 1919.²⁶ However, Reading did not see any chance

²³ H. Butler to Chelmsford, 14 Aug. 1917, B49.

²⁴ See R. Gordon, 'The Hindu Mahasabha and the Indian National Congress 1915-1920', *Modern Asian Studies*, 9, 2 (1975), p. 164.

²⁵ V to S/S, ptel. 581, 6 July 1921, R10.

²⁶ Rumbold, *Watershed*, p. 247.

of offering constitutional advances or a round table conference, and shrewdly doubted whether Malaviya held the most potent influence with Gandhi. Still, Reading took what he considered to be a bold move in associating Malaviya with a Committee which he established to look after the arrangements for the Prince's visit. As it turned out it was this visit that offered Malaviya his role as an intermediary.

The decision to accept the visit of the Prince of Wales, which was announced on 22 June, was a very difficult one for Reading to make and in some ways it reflected some of the worst aspects of Reading's tendency to indecision, resulting from his desire to predict all eventualities. The problems ahead seemed pretty foreboding; there was, for instance, the possibility of a poor monsoon which would not only exacerbate economic difficulties but also make the expenses of the *tamasha* seem obscene. There was a distinct possibility also that Gandhi might repeat the tactic of *hartal* or shutdown of premises as a means of boycotting the visit. Reading was determined not to let the threat of a boycott stop the visit and he agreed with Montagu that it would look as if India was rife with disloyalty if the tour had to be abandoned a second time.²⁷ The pressures on Montagu and Chelmsford were increased by the fact that the Prince himself came to have nervous doubts about the visit.²⁸ Whilst Reading had the support of his Executive Council in the decision, Willingdon, the Governor of Madras, was adamantly against it.²⁹ As Rumbold asserts, the decision to go ahead with the visit was a serious mistake.³⁰ It was to place the Government of India on the defensive in dealing with non-co-operation throughout the winter months in which the tour took place. It must also have absorbed a great deal of Reading's time and energy, when it was already clear that he was overwhelmed with the burdens of his office. Perhaps Reading shared the general

²⁷ V to S/S, U cypher tel., 15 July 1921, R63c(i).

²⁸ See S/S to V, U cypher tel., 13 July 1921, R63c(i).

²⁹ Rumbold, *Watershed*, p. 260.

³⁰ *Idem*.

British view that all Indians loved a spectacle and would therefore ensure the success of the visit and show the world that the majority of Indians were loyal. It does seem, however, that Montagu and Reading, cornered by critics of the Government's inability to put down the non-co-operation movement, took an unnecessary gamble.

2. The Debate about Gandhi's Arrest

Within the nationalist movement, the Mapilla rising which took place in August 1921, alienated many Hindu supporters of the non-co-operation movement and made Gandhi more dependent on Khilafatist support.³¹ One means of re-establishing the link with the Khilafatists was for Gandhi to repeat the offence for which they had been sent to jail; this he did at the end of September, and called on others to do the same. Reading's immediate reaction was that now Gandhi would have to be arrested. 'We could not arrest small fry and leave Gandhi the inciter, free', he told Montagu.³² Montagu agreed, but re-iterated his opinion that it was up to the Viceroy to decide such matters and he assured him of his support, whatever his decision. Montagu did, however, ask Reading to take into account longer-term considerations, such as what he would do if Gandhi started a hunger-strike in prison or if there were pressures from 'well-disposed people who want to make some sort of peace'.³³ Perhaps Montagu had psychic powers, for only three days later, on 9 October, Malaviya called on Reading and asked him not to cancel the Prince of Wales' visit and also tried to persuade him to call a round table conference. Reading admitted to Montagu that he had been thinking of some sort of a conference 'to enquire into the causes of discontent and to make recommendations for their remedy',

³¹ Rumbold, *Watershed*, p. 264.

³² V to S/S, U cypher tel., 3 Oct. 1921, R63C(i).

³³ *Idem*.

however, he doubted whether Gandhi would come without the Ali brothers being released. At the same time Reading was turning against the idea of arresting Gandhi. On the same day that he saw Malaviya, Sapru had sent a long note to Vincent indicating his opposition to the arrest of Gandhi and permitting him to inform Reading of his views. Vincent agreed with Sapru's opinion and supported his arguments in the meeting of the Executive Council that followed.³⁴ For Sapru the matter was 'not so much a question of law as it is one of political expediency.'³⁵ It was a matter of choosing between two evils: delaying prosecution seemed the lesser evil. It was vital to choose one's ground carefully so as to have public opinion on one's side and Sapru feared that the present prosecution based upon words and not deeds, would not be sure of gaining moderate support. People would inevitably interpret the Government's change of policy as 'calculated repression'. 'Speaking frankly', he said, 'I do not expect that even the Moderate Party as a whole will approve of the prosecution of Mr. Gandhi...I have also grave doubts as to whether we would be able even to carry the Assembly with us in regard to this matter.'³⁶ However, Sapru did see signs that some influential men in India were coming to oppose Gandhi and he cited the criticisms made by Rabindranath Tagore and also by the Tilakites in the Deccan. He also sensed a growing alienation of Hindus from the Khilafat agitation. The Government needed to look ahead to the potential swarm of non-co-operators who would willingly fill the jails by repeating Gandhi's offence. Gandhi's arrest would inevitably coincide with and mar the Prince of Wales' visit. Furthermore, once Gandhi was imprisoned Government would always be on the defensive and whatever concessions it made to India, whether it be the release of the Mahatma or offers of constitutional progress, would always be seen as a triumph for agitational methods.

³⁴ Sinha, *Reading*, pp. 50-1.

³⁵ Sapru to Vincent, 9 Oct. 1921, *SAP/V7*, 1st. series.

³⁶ *Idem*.

Sapru concluded,

We have waited so long, I think we may yet wait a little longer and I should like to wait for Mr Gandhi to put himself palpably in the wrong so as to make it impossible for anyone to say that the Government should ignore what he was doing. We may either reach a stage when Mr. Gandhi by some overt act will place himself so much in the wrong that we should be doing the right thing in prosecuting him then or we may reach a stage when a considerable body of opinion will have detached itself from Mr Gandhi and the situation then will have become much easier.³⁷

It is difficult to know whether Reading was influenced by either Malaviya or Sapru in deciding not to arrest Gandhi immediately. It must have been enormously helpful to have such frank statements of the predicament as seen from the position of the Moderate Indian politician, the very sort of person Reading's policy was designed to assuage. Malaviya's visit provided a useful indication of the fact that there were moderates in the Gandhi camp who were preparing to return to constitutional politics—the inference was obvious, the arrest of Gandhi would completely undermine this movement. Sapru, on the other hand, provided a valuable antidote to officials who told Reading that the Moderates were enthusiastically supporting Gandhi's arrest. Sapru was effectively warning Reading not to be misled as to the views of genuine Moderates but also not to overestimate Moderate influence in the country over a matter like the arrest of Gandhi. He frankly admitted that Gandhi had won over nearly all classes in India except the landowners and 'Even those who differ from him among the Moderate party respect him for his personal character.'³⁸ What Sapru and Malaviya provided was an Indian political dimension to the Viceroy's considerations, but they were probably helping to re-enforce views the latter already held. Reading seems to have been worried that the sedition charges might not be watertight, as the

³⁷ *Idem.*

³⁸ *Idem.*

manifesto on which the prosecution would be based had been produced in a number of different versions.³⁹ Secondly, he was naturally worried what impact Gandhi's arrest would have on the Prince of Wales' visit which was due to begin in Bombay on 17 November.⁴⁰ Thirdly, he wondered whether the prosecution was really necessary; in his view the non-co-operation movement was fizzling out and the call to the troops to resign had no significant impact.⁴¹ The danger he foresaw was that by arresting Gandhi it would make him into a martyr and revive the movement.⁴² Reading cabled his Government's decision on 10 October and, after Montagu had put the matter to Cabinet two days later, he informed Reading of the Cabinet's clear conviction that Gandhi should be arrested immediately.

Montagu had been considering deporting Gandhi but consulted Sastri, who was in London at that time. Sastri supported the arrest but was opposed to deportation, which he argued would be seen as a breach of faith in view of the fact that the Government had accepted the report of the Repressive Laws Committee. The majority of the Cabinet agreed with this view, but there were clear signs of a loss of patience with Reading. Montagu evidently didn't like Reading's talk with Malaviya and the idea of the round table conference. He agreed with Reading that constitutional change might come well in advance of the ten year interval laid down in the 1919 Act, but stressed that it must come as a result of proven experience of working the reforms and not from external pressure. Montagu stressed that it was wrong to bypass the elected legislatures.⁴³ Although Montagu emphasised that there was no desire to force Reading's hand, there could not have been any clearer form of Cabinet instruction than that sent on 13 October, and yet Reading ignored it and decided not to arrest

³⁹ V to S/S, U cypher tel. 10 Oct. 1921, R 63C(i).

⁴⁰ *Idem.*

⁴¹ V to S/S, U cypher tel., 9 Oct. 1921, R63C(i).

⁴² V to S/S, U cypher tel., 17 Oct. 1921, R63C(i).

⁴³ S/S to V, U cypher tel., 13 Oct. 1921, R63C(i).

Gandhi, though he accepted the objections to a conference as in accord 'in principle' with his own thinking. Montagu further clarified the reasons for arrest; one of the most telling being that if Gandhi was not prosecuted it would make it very difficult to charge anyone else who committed the same offence.⁴⁴

An extraordinary situation had now been created by Reading's refusal to comply with the wishes of the Cabinet. As Rumbold indicates, Montagu had been given a fairly free hand on Indian matters by his Cabinet colleagues for some time and now there were signs that this freedom was coming to an end. At a meeting of Ministers on 21 October, at which Montagu was not present, it was agreed that the Prime Minister should send a personal telegram to Reading to indicate the wider imperial view.⁴⁵ Lloyd George wired,

I am convinced the time has passed for patience and toleration towards direct incentives to the assault upon the very foundations of government...The majority of Indians are co-operating loyally in working the Reforms, and it is essential that they should not be allowed to doubt which is the stronger, Gandhi or the British Raj. Our course in India is being watched in many quarters, and we cannot afford to be misunderstood. The British Empire is passing through a very critical phase, and it will not survive unless it shows now in the most unmistakable fashion that it has the will and the power to stand by its policies and to deal conclusively with any who challenge its authority.⁴⁶

With a final twist of the dagger, Lloyd George added 'I know you will not permit notorious Indian methods of red-tape and circumlocution to create delays in dealing with a situation demanding promptitude.' A Viceroy of any less political standing than Reading would have buckled under this pressure, but he stuck doggedly to his guns.⁴⁷ Reading was taking grave risks if, as he assured the Cabinet, he was

⁴⁴ S/S to V, U cypher tel., 20 Oct. 1921, R63C(i).

⁴⁵ Cabinet Conclusion 82 (21) App. 2, 21 Oct. 1921, (Cab. 23).

⁴⁶ P.M. to V, U cypher tel., 21 Oct. 1921, R63C(i).

⁴⁷ V to S/S, U cypher tel., 22 Oct. 1921, R63C(i).

only expecting a delay of a matter of days before arresting Gandhi. The appearance of indecision which he gave, and the willingness to adapt to the views of Indian politicians, seriously undermined Montagu's already precarious standing in the Cabinet. It was not so much the decisions that Reading made but rather the way in which they were made and the impression that was created that counted against him. In the telegrams which he sent to Montagu, which the latter had inevitably to pass on to the Cabinet, Reading confused issues of law and order, as they would have been seen to be in England, with wider political considerations, such as the possibility of convening a round table conference.⁴⁸ This was bound to antagonise many members of the British Cabinet who felt that they had already gone as far, if not further than they wanted, in agreeing to the Montford reforms in the first place; they were certainly not going to consider further political concessions in the light of the short and far from satisfactory experience of the working of the reforms. One of the ironies is that Reading probably shared the view that constitutional concessions were out of the question but, unfortunately, he gave the impression that he was, at the very least, willing to consider such an idea. One difficulty was that the good relationship between Montagu and Reading encouraged a very free expression of views between them, but there was always the danger that such opinions, sometimes only 'thinking aloud', might be misconstrued. An example of this is provided by the telegram in which Reading informed Montagu of his Government's decision not to arrest Gandhi, Reading foolishly admitted that it was Gandhi who had in his power to determine when he should actually be arrested! This was actually true, as Reading was only waiting for Gandhi to take up civil disobedience to effect his arrest, but the implication that Gandhi could choose his time and could provoke a crisis at any point in the Prince of Wales' tour that suited him was very damaging to Reading's

⁴⁸ V to S/S, U cypher tel., 9 Oct. 1921, R63C(i).

reputation. Montagu did all in his power to support the Viceroy, ensuring that the Cabinet ultimately deferred to the Viceroy and that a debate in the House of Commons on the issue was avoided. However, he must have known that the damage to the Indian administration had already been done and that, despite the fact that he had urged a tougher policy on Reading, he was now associated with a policy stigmatised as weakness in the face of the threat of non-co-operation. Montagu's position in the Cabinet had been irreparably undermined and the events of the winter of 1921-22 served only to emphasise his isolation.

The Prince of Wales' Visit

At the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee at Delhi on 4 November 1922, Gandhi laid the basis for provincial Congress committees to institute civil disobedience if certain prerequisites were met, and he himself prepared to inaugurate a campaign in Bardoli taluka in Gujarat on the 23rd. of the month. With only a fortnight before the Prince of Wales arrived in Bombay the situation looked bad for the Government- it seemed likely that they would have to arrest Gandhi shortly after the Prince's tour began on 17 November.⁴⁹

Dr. Sapru, the Law Member, was, however, looking for a way of avoiding the forthcoming clash between Government and the leaders of the non-co-operation movement. He had suggested in November the idea of a conference of Indian leaders as a prelude to a meeting with Government but, although Malaviya and Jinnah had both supported the idea, nothing had yet come of it.⁵⁰ Jinnah, who had seen the Viceroy on 1 November, may have been put off by the latter's rather negative attitude.⁵¹

⁴⁹ V to S/S, U cypher tel., 12 Nov. 1921, R63C(i).

⁵⁰ J. Dwarkadas to A. Besant, 10 Dec. 1921, Besant MSS, file AS/12.

⁵¹ For Reading's views, see V to S/S, ptel. 1061, 2 Nov. 1921, R10.

The issue was brought up again in the Viceroy's Council and by Malaviya in an interview with Reading on 14 November.⁵² By now Reading was more willing to consider the matter and asked Malaviya to come forward with more definite proposals. At this point the storm broke. On the day of the arrival of the Prince in Bombay a *hartal* was declared across India and, though the Prince received a tumultuous welcome from a crowd of tens of thousands in Bombay, there was an outbreak of serious rioting lasting several days in the city.⁵³ In other parts of India the strike was more effective. In Calcutta, for instance, the whole city closed down and Government lost control of the centre of the city to Congress and Khilafat volunteers.⁵⁴ In other cities in Northern India the *hartal* was highly successful.⁵⁵ Gandhi, however, was horrified by the violence displayed, saw it as a sign of the unpreparedness of many Indians for a more activist campaign and therefore postponed the beginning of the civil disobedience campaign.

Reading's Government saw the events of 17 November as a signal for a change of tactics and, following a telegram from Montagu which urged tougher action, it sent instructions to local Governments that 'a stage has now been reached at which action on a more drastic and comprehensive scale than has hitherto been attempted is now required.'⁵⁶ Instructions were issued to declare volunteer organisations illegal and to prosecute anyone they wished to, without reference to Delhi. The result was probably more drastic than the Government intended.⁵⁷ In Bengal volunteer movements were proscribed, political meetings banned and numerous arrests were

⁵² V to S/S, U cypher tel., 12 Nov. 1921, R63C(i); V to S/S ptel. 1129, 14 Nov. 1921, R10.

⁵³ See also p. 287 below.

⁵⁴ Ray, *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal, 1875-1927*, pp. 292-3.

⁵⁵ Low, 'First Non-Co-operation Movement', p. 307.

⁵⁶ S/S to V, ptel. 1680, 23 Nov. 1921, R10; Home Poll. 415/1921, cited in D.A. Low, 'First Non-Co-operation Movement', p. 308.

⁵⁷ Certainly Sapru thought so. See Sapru to Reading, 22 Dec. 1921, SAP/R292, 1st. series.

made, including leaders such as C.R. Das and members of his family.⁵⁸ In the United Provinces eminent Congress figures such as Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru were arrested and the latter received a prison sentence of six months duration and a fine of Rs. 100.⁵⁹

The drastic nature of the action taken was counter-productive as it created a turnaround in the opinions of many of the moderate Indians whom the Government aimed to keep on their side. The Indian Association in Calcutta, the worst affected area, complained of indiscriminate arrests, including the arrest of ladies, the maltreatment of arrested prisoners and assaults and rude behaviour of officers against innocent persons. They objected to the use of Part Two of the Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Seditious Meetings Act and complained of a 'state of terrorism'. The Association concluded by asking whether the Bengal Ministers were consulted and whether they agreed to these actions?⁶⁰ In the United Provinces there were protests from the Lucknow Liberal League and from Moderates in Allahabad.⁶¹ There was a sense of outrage across India that respectable educated leaders could be arrested and imprisoned. Reading later admitted that there probably were cases in which officers had been over-zealous and that young men had been arrested when they probably could have been just reprimanded.⁶² The problem was that now non-co-operators were actively seeking arrest and the numbers of people

⁵⁸ More than 3000 people had gone to jail in Calcutta by the end of the year. See S. Sarkar, *Modern India*, Delhi, 1983 p. 219.

⁵⁹ S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 1, London, 1975, p. 63.

⁶⁰ Indian Association minute, 14 Dec. 1921, Indian Association Files. The answer was that the Ministers had been consulted and that they had successfully objected to certain actions such as externments which Ronaldshay wished to use. However, at the end of the day the Ministers were not responsible for law and order in the Bengal Government. See below, pp. 264-266.

⁶¹ *IAR*, 1922, entries for 15 & 20 Dec. 1922.

⁶² See, e.g., V to S/S, ptel. 111-C, 18 Dec. 1921, R10.

in jail were becoming an embarrassment to Government. Reading told Montagu that,

It cannot be denied that there is a general feeling that the Government policy is now purely repressive, and the effect is to make many moderates and others who are not non-cooperators place themselves in criticism of, or in opposition to, Government. I am myself of opinion that the tendency is to swing the pendulum too far in the direction of enforcing law although it is extremely difficult to take action which would limit it without discouraging the police and local authorities.⁶³

Reading searched for a way out of the impasse by negotiating a truce with the non-co-operators. He had received telegrams from Members of the Legislative Assembly, the Bengal Assembly and others suggesting a round table conference or a Royal Commission to enquire into the discontent.⁶⁴ He was increasingly worried by the forthcoming visit of the Prince of Wales to Calcutta, the heart of the recent disturbances. There were indications that the large European community in Calcutta was thoroughly alarmed.⁶⁵ Any repetition of the loss of Government control which had happened on 17 November would seriously undermine the support of the European community in India and would transmit itself to the authorities at home. Reading seemed to be badly affected by the fact that the Calcutta Bar had cancelled their invitation to him to attend their dinner due to the opposition of a minority of vakils and pleaders.⁶⁶ The Viceroy became almost obsessed with the need to obtain a truce in time for the Calcutta visit on 24 December. He authorised Sapru to act as his secret intermediary to help bring about a round table conference.⁶⁷ It was a difficult role as everything had to be completed by 21 December, the last date

⁶³ V to S/S, ptel. 106-C, 17 Dec. 1921, R10.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ray, *Social Conflict*, p. 293.

⁶⁶ V to S/S, ptel. 106-C, 17 Dec. 1921, R10; H. Butler to Lord Hardinge et al., 22 Dec. 1921, B29.

⁶⁷ V to S/S, ptel. 106-C, 17 Dec. 1921, R10.

on which the Viceroy was available in Calcutta to meet a deputation requesting a conference. Sapru's position was particularly delicate as he had to stress to those with whom he spoke that he was acting privately and could not commit the Government in any way.⁶⁸ Even as Sapru talked to nationalist politicians, more arrests were taking place, thus making his task more difficult. He was assured by Malaviya, who also played a leading role in arranging the deputation to the Viceroy, that Gandhi would accept an invitation to the conference. Sapru sent two Liberals, Jamnadas Dwarkadas and H.N. Kunzru, to Ahmedabad to see Gandhi and make sure that he was really prepared to attend.⁶⁹ M.R. Jayakar was present at Ahmedabad when Gandhi received the emissaries and sent them away with an affirmative answer. Jayakar recalls in his autobiography that the offer that was made to Gandhi was that if the agitation was called off Reading would convene a round table conference and at that conference Reading 'would, on behalf of the British Government offer full Provincial Autonomy, dyarchy in Central Government would be negotiated.'⁷⁰ Perhaps Kunzru and Dwarkadas overstated what was on offer in order to tempt Gandhi, but it must be stressed that at no time did Reading either commit himself to, or apparently even consider, entering a conference with the purpose of making major constitutional concessions of this kind. Even if he had, he must have known that he would have been repudiated by the authorities in London.⁷¹ It is a very important point to establish because, if it were true that the British were prepared to concede full provincial autonomy after only one year of the working of the new reforms, it would indicate a remarkable rapidity of political concession, amounting to panic in

⁶⁸ Sapru to Reading, 16 Dec. 1921, SAP/R290, 1st. series.

⁶⁹ Sapru to Hignell, 16 Dec. 1921, SAP/R291.

⁷⁰ M.R. Jayakar, *The Story of My Life*, vol. 1, Bombay 1959, p. 504 ff.

⁷¹ This myth has found its way into a number of accounts, e.g., K. Dwarkadas, *India's Fight for Freedom, 1913-1937*, Bombay 1966, p. 189; Sinha, *Reading*, p. 55, repeats it, and the point is left somewhat unclear in the account by Low, 'First Non-Co-operation Movement', pp. 309-10. Rumbold, however, dismisses the idea, *Watershed*, p. 274, n. 107.

government circles.⁷²

In any case, it appears that Gandhi, after consultation with his advisers (predominantly moulvis), and after reflection, changed his mind about accepting Reading's invitation without any prior conditions. He sent a telegram to C.R. Das and Abul Kalam Azad, who were both keen to have a conference, that his pre-conditions included the release of the *fatwa* prisoners, i.e. including the Ali brothers and those involved in the Karachi resolution.⁷³ Gandhi was now imprisoned by his Khilafat allies, the very men that had helped to give him leadership of Congress in the autumn of 1920.

Unaware of Gandhi's pre-conditions, Sapru met with other moderate leaders to bring about a deputation to the Viceroy. He met with two local Ministers, Ibrahim Rahimtulla from Bombay and Lala Harkishen Lal from the Punjab, at Cawnpore on 16 December. He also encouraged Besant and her followers to go to Calcutta to join in the deputation.⁷⁴ Malaviya persuaded Jinnah to agree to join in the deputation.⁷⁵ Everything seemed to augur well and Reading sent telegrams to the local Governors informing them of what was taking place and then wired Montagu to try to achieve Cabinet approval.⁷⁶ This last telegram was to be a fateful one for it led to a Cabinet repudiation of the idea of a round table conference, at least for the immediate future. One of the reasons for this may have been that Reading only gave the Cabinet some 24 hours to reply to his request and this in itself was not likely to have been well-received at home. Furthermore the Cabinet also saw the request very much in the context of the Irish negotiations that had recently concluded and felt that

⁷² The argument stated here tends to support the argument of John Darwin that there was no panic in British governing circles in this post-war period, but rather a policy of planned reduction of imperial commitments. See J. Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, Cambridge, 1981, p. 241.

⁷³ Jayakar, *My Life*, p. 506.

⁷⁴ J. Dwarkadas to Besant, 10 Dec. 1921; Sapru to Besant, ptels., 13 Dec. 1922, Besant MSS, file AS 12.

⁷⁵ Sapru to Reading, 16 Dec 1921, *SAP/R.291*, 1st. series.

⁷⁶ V to S/S, ptel. 111-C, 18 Dec. 1921. R10

the experience of these negotiations tended to show that once Government participated in them it was difficult not to be drawn much further along the path of political concession than was originally intended.⁷⁷ The Cabinet was right to the extent that Indian nationalists did see the Irish negotiations as a hopeful precedent. Thirdly, it must be said that the way in which Reading phrased the request made it sound as if he was looking for a bargain to meet the immediate crisis caused by the Prince of Wales' forthcoming visit to Calcutta.⁷⁸ It is not surprising that the Cabinet, chaired by Austen Chamberlain in Lloyd George's absence, wanted nothing to do with anything that smacked of a bargain to achieve a successful Royal visit. Reading was very vague as to what the purpose of the Conference was. At one point he made it sound as if it was merely for an airing of opinions: 'I have all along been anxious to meet agitators and to strive to understand their practical propositions...What is meant by swaraj when used by various leaders has never yet been defined.'⁷⁹ On the other hand, he seemed to see the Conference as providing practical political remedies, an alternative to the negative policy of maintaining law and order and talked of the possibilities of an earlier revision of the 1919 Act, adding that,

At this moment I am not myself prepared to go further than say that I can conceive proposals for amendment of the present Act with the object of improving the constitutional machinery and advancing on the road to the ultimate goal of Dominion Status. But I am not prepared to advise this step at present or even so far as I can gather, the immediate future.⁸⁰

Reading's indications that he had the support of the Governor of Bengal for his policy and hoped soon to have the support of his own Council could only have added

⁷⁷ S/S to V, ptel. 4, 31 Dec. 1921, R10.

⁷⁸ S/S to V, ptel. 1838, 20 Dec. 1921, R10.

⁷⁹ V to S/S, ptel. 111-C, 18 Dec. 1921, R10.

⁸⁰ *Idem*.

to the Cabinet's impression of his scheme as being hastily constructed and ill thought out. Reading even admitted that he was not sure that all the local governments would approve the truce and the release of those recently arrested, but he thought that some such truce was inevitable: 'Indeed it would be absurd if Governments continue to enforce a law which rouses such strong opposition when the immediate object of the proclamation can be attained by agreement making for peace.' Reading concluded by arguing that if he refused the requests for a conference 'the effect would be to break down the whole Reform Scheme, for I think the various Councils and the Legislative Assembly would undoubtedly pass resolutions to this effect. Please also bear in mind the position of my Indian colleagues in the Council.'⁸¹

This telegram has been quoted extensively in order to try to indicate Reading's political assumptions at this stage, but also so as to appreciate the impact which the telegram would have had on the Conservative-dominated Cabinet in London. It must have completely undermined the Cabinet's confidence in the running of the Government of India, and convinced them that with such woolly-minded Liberals in charge, the Raj was nearing its end. Not surprisingly the Cabinet refused to sanction a conference at the present time, preferring H.A.L. Fisher's advice that the Viceroy should 'hold on and wait'. It also conveyed the 'definite view that Parliament will not sanction the extension of the 1919 Act- there can be no political bargaining.'⁸² Montagu spelt out the Cabinet's message more fully, but the repudiation was just as clear. Concessions must first come from Congress. Cabinet members were not happy with the idea of negotiations with those 'who have refused or failed to secure election to the Legislature' and, more importantly, were worried that the conference was bound to lead to impossible demands to overturn the 1919 Act which had been in

⁸¹ *Idem.*

⁸² Cabinet conclusion 93 (21), 20 Dec. 1921 (Cab. 23).

operation for less than a year.⁸³ Reading's telegram to the Local Governors was not one of his better pieces of writing; Harcourt Butler commented that he 'had never read such a production. It took five hours to decypher and could all have been put in a few lines.'⁸⁴ As with his corresponding telegram to Montagu, Reading had failed to explain his reasons for being prepared to enter a round table conference with Congress with any persuasiveness or clarity.⁸⁵

The replies of the Local Governors made depressing reading for Reading. Only the Governors of Bengal, neighbouring Bihar and Orissa, and the Central Provinces gave full support to Reading.⁸⁶ Madras was against any conference 'designed to produce a temporary arrangement to tide over the Prince's visit', which Willingdon had in any case opposed all along.⁸⁷ Assam opposed the release of prisoners but felt that a conference might help to expose the paucity of nationalist thinking about India's future. Marris regarded the proposals 'as an endeavour to relieve the position in Calcutta itself at the expense of other places.'⁸⁸ Whilst Marris was sceptical of Reading's argument about the need to assuage Moderate Indian opinion because he felt the Moderates were unreliable, Lloyd, Governor of Bombay, argued vehemently against a conference, precisely because he felt that such a conference would undermine the Moderates. Lloyd felt that Moderate criticism of recent Government

⁸³ S/S to V, ptel. 1838, 20 Dec. 1921, R10.

⁸⁴ Butler to Hardinge et al., 22 Dec. 1921, B29. : Reading to Governors, ptel., 19 Dec. 1921, R23.

⁸⁵ Indeed Reading's behaviour at this juncture seems to require explanation, for the confused thinking which marks his communications at this time was quite in contrast to the usual clarity of legal mind. It may be that he was suffering from some form of nervous breakdown, brought on by the pressures of office and, in particular, the responsibility which he had taken on himself for the success of the Prince of Wales' visit. The only evidence we have, however, is secondhand, in that Sapru is reported as telling Kanji Dwarkadas at a later date that this was the case. See K. Dwarkadas, *India's Fight*, pp. 188-9.

⁸⁶ Ronaldshay's support had already been indicated by personal discussion; Haviland Le Mesurier, Acting Governor, Bihar & Orissa to Reading, ptel. 1843, 20 Dec. 1921, R23; F. Sly (Governor of C.P.) to Reading ptel. 1835, 20 Dec. 1921; the U.P. was totally against a release of prisoners. Butler to Reading, ptel. 1833, 20 Dec. 1921, R23.

⁸⁷ Willingdon to Reading, ptel. 1842, 20 Dec. 1921, R23.

⁸⁸ Marris (Assam) to Reading, ptel. 1844, 20 Dec. 1921, R23.

policy was a temporary phenomenon, 'due more to timidity than conviction'. He argued that Bombay Moderates were united against any conference with Gandhi which would 'involve practically the annihilation of their party. Lloyd was concerned that in any conference in which Moderates and Extremists participated, the former must be influenced by the latter and 'would soon surrender to the pressure and adopt an attitude in which continued co-operation with Government would be impossible.' Lloyd concluded that the Government should continue to look to the moderate party which 'still remains in my judgment the soundest and most consistent course in which Government can direct its policy.'⁸⁹

The majority of Local Governors, therefore, opposed Reading's scheme and many saw it, just as the Cabinet had done, as much too large a concession to make in order to win a temporary truce.⁹⁰ When Reading received the deputation led by Malaviya in Calcutta on 21 December, he had to speak entirely on his own responsibility. He had not yet received the Cabinet's views nor those of the local Governors. Fortunately, however, he was aware that Gandhi had not provided the necessary assurances relating to the cessation of non-co-operation activities which would allow the conference to be convened, and thus avoided committing the Government in any way.⁹¹ Despite the fact that Reading was unable to convene a conference, he made a sympathetic speech which recognised the good intentions of those who had worked for a conference and deliberately left the door open to a conference at a future date if his conditions should be met.⁹² He confessed that he hated 'this making of numerous arrests and prosecutions' and admitted that some excesses may have been committed on the government side. However, he promised to

⁸⁹ Lloyd to Reading, ptels. 1834 & 1846, 20 Dec. 1921, R23.

⁹⁰ Craddock (Burma) was not surprisingly against Reading's proposals: Craddock to Reading, ptel. 1858, 21 Dec. 1921, R23.

⁹¹ Low, 'First Non-Co-operation Movement', p. 311.

⁹² Earl of Reading, *Speeches*, vol. 1, Government of India Press, Simla, 1926, pp. 177-86.

try to prevent any recurrence and to ensure that existing cases were looked into and rectified if necessary. Sympathetic as the general tenor of the speech was, Reading reminded his audience that it could not be said that the reforms had yet been properly tested and, in any case, any advances in the constitutional system could only come from Parliament and that body was bound to be influenced by the way in which the Prince of Wales was received in India. The speech was well-received and Sapru wanted it widely distributed in the vernaculars as well as in English.⁹³ Once Reading received Gāndhi's pre-conditions for the conference, he was able to tell Malaviya that discussion about a conference was at an end, and that he could not accept the sort of truce that Das was putting forward based on the calling off of the *hartals* in return for the release of those imprisoned in the recent wave. Malaviya was obviously very discouraged. Another disappointed man was Lord Ronaldshay, who had already indicated to his legislature the possibility of a truce, whilst in Bihar and Orissa the Acting Governor had jumped the gun by immediately releasing prisoners in the belief that a truce was imminent.

Reading felt bitter at his repudiation by the Cabinet and felt that he had been misunderstood. He tried to stress that he was not just looking to a calling off of the boycott of the Prince of Wales but of all illegal non-co-operation activity. The urgency of his request stemmed from his belief that if the Prince's visit to Calcutta went badly it would so sour British-Indian relations at all levels that any talk of negotiation would be placed out of court for some considerable time. He insisted that he detested the policy of 'repression' and did not regard the refusal of a conference as final.⁹⁴

As it turned out the visit of the Prince of Wales to Calcutta passed off reasonably well, Ronaldshay confiding to his diary that the 'Prince's reception was

⁹³ Sapru to Reading, 22 Dec. 1921, SAP/R292, 1st. series.

⁹⁴ V to S/S, U Cypher tel., 22 Dec. 1921, R63c(i); V to S/S, ptel. 131-C, 24 Dec. 1921, R10.

better than I ever dared hope.⁹⁵ But the problems remained. On 20 December, 70 volunteers were arrested at Allahabad whilst picketing a school. Amongst those arrested were the son and a nephew of Pandit Malaviya. Motilal Nehru's son and two nephews were sentenced to six months imprisonment. Moderates remained very unhappy at these signs of continuing repression. Sapru wrote to the Viceroy that the 'wholesale arrest and prosecution of a large number of young men and boys particularly in Bengal and the United Provinces' was causing him great anxiety because of the bitterness that it would generate. He felt that the sentences were often 'quite out of proportion to the situation or the character of the offence' and in some cases the legal procedure doubtful. He concluded that the Moderate Party would not support this policy and it was unreasonable to expect it to do so. It was not lacking in courage, in fact it had shown great courage in breaking away from Congress and working the reforms, at the cost of facing the odium of public attack. In answer to the arguments of men like Lloyd or Harcourt Butler that in fact the Moderates were supporting the Government's policy, Sapru retorted that 'we should not make mistake [sic] of attaching too much weight to the support of some of the older leaders or even of some of the Ministers in a matter of this character.'⁹⁶ The fact that the majority of the Moderate Party was alienated by the actions of local Governments was borne out by the proceedings of the annual Liberal Conference which took place in Allahabad between 28 and 30 December.⁹⁷ But it is significant that the Bombay Liberals were not happy with this criticism of government policy in upholding law and order.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Diary entry, 25 Dec. 1921, *RON2*. Perhaps in celebration, he recorded that 1,155 bottles of champagne had been consumed at Government House during December, more than for the whole year, 1919-1920!

⁹⁶ Sapru to Reading, 22 Dec. 1921, *SAP/R292*, 1st. series.

⁹⁷ *IAR*, 1922, vol. 1, pp. 439-440. A resolution from Besant, which was generally supportive of Government action against the non-cooperators, was defeated by a margin of 2:1. The delegates from U.P., Madras and Punjab voted solidly against. A much more balanced resolution was adopted.

⁹⁸ See D. Wacha to P.S.S. Aiyer, 21 and 24 Dec. 1921, Aiyer MSS.

It was Gandhi's intransigence that finally played into Government hands. C.R. Das later stated that Gandhi made a number of crucial blunders after September 1921, which undermined the non-co-operation movement. The most serious error in his view was the rejection of Reading's offer of a round table conference in December 1921.⁹⁹ But the failure of the all party leaders' conference in Bombay in January 1922 was also very important and Gandhi bears a considerable responsibility for that failure too. Gandhi seems to have recognised that he was locked in battle for the support of moderate opinion in India, but he was not able to show the necessary flexibility to win this support and simultaneously keep his more militant supporters happy. At the annual Congress session in Ahmedabad in December 1922 Gandhi had managed to see off attempts to tie Congress to a goal of complete independence. However, he was under greater pressure now that his promise of *swaraj* in one year was unfulfilled, and he announced that he would start civil disobedience in Bardoli in the new year. Lloyd regarded the speeches and policy declared at Ahmedabad were 'very serious indeed' and pressed Reading to allow him to prosecute Gandhi.¹⁰⁰ Reading refused, explaining to Montagu that any prosecution should be based not on speeches made but on actions taken. He argued that the public response to Gandhi's arrest 'will be far less serious if arrest is made for an act which threatens the whole social fabric and security of life and property, such as civil disobedience by non-payment of taxes.'¹⁰¹

All-Party Leaders' Conference, Bombay.

Malaviya and other 'independent' politicians felt that the door was not yet closed on the possibility of a round table conference. After all, there seemed some

⁹⁹ See Jayakar, *My Life*, vol. 1, pp. 509-517; Reading to Peel, 19 Apr. 1923, R6 ; S.C. Bose, *The Indian Struggle 1920-42*, Bombay, 1964, p. 68.

¹⁰⁰ Lloyd to Montagu, 13 Jan. 1922, M26.

¹⁰¹ V to S/S, ptel. 33, 15 Jan. 1922, R16.

hope of shared ground in the nationalist movement; the Liberal Conference had been highly critical of recent Government policy, whilst Congress had remained committed to national development within the British Commonwealth. On 3 January 1922 they sent letters to a number of leaders from across the political spectrum inviting them to a representative conference to try to find a way out of present difficulties.¹⁰²

The Conference met in Bombay on 14 and 15 January and over 200 people were present, including some Liberals.¹⁰³ Gandhi and other non-co-operators attended as observers and did not vote on the resolutions. The Conference was chaired by Sir Sankaran Nair, but he resigned and left the Conference on the second day, being unable to impose his will on the meeting. The main resolutions showed far more willingness to meet the views of the non-co-operators than the Liberals were prepared to accept, and the pre-conditions laid down for a round table conference still included the release of the *fatwa* prisoners, which was known to be unacceptable to Reading.¹⁰⁴ A committee of twenty was established to implement the resolutions of the Conference, but recognised Liberals were noticeably absent from this Committee. Indeed the Bombay conference served to highlight the continuing rift between the Liberals and other Indian politicians. Sir Sankaran Nair's letter to the newspapers on 17 January, explaining why he resigned the chair at the conference, was a devastating critique of what he saw as Gandhian intransigence about pre-conditions, which he said amounted to an unwillingness to work for a round table

¹⁰² See Jayakar, *My Life*, vol.1, pp. 519-545 for the history of the Bombay conference. The letter of invitation was signed by M.M. Malaviya, M.A. Jinnah, M.R. Jayakar, P. Thakurdas, A. Sarabhai, K. Natarajan, G.M. Bhurgri. See also the account in the letter sent by the Secretaries of the Conference to Reading, 28 Jan. 1922, R24.

¹⁰³ Besant did not attend as she did not approve of the conference and felt that Gandhi was playing to gain time. See Besant annotation to Ratansi & K. Dwarkadas, ptel., 13 Jan. 1922; Besant to 'Hansu' [R.D. Morarji ?] ptel., n.d., Besant MSS. See also K. Dwarkadas, *India's Fight*, p. 192.

¹⁰⁴ Jayakar, *My Life*, pp. 525-527. Lloyd reported that the resolutions were only carried by about twenty people, all the rest abstaining. See Lloyd to Reading, ptel. 79, 17 Jan. 1922, R24.

conference.¹⁰⁵ Reading's whole attitude had by now hardened towards any compromise and he was pleased that the conference had failed and that Gandhi had made another tactical error in alienating moderate opinion.¹⁰⁶ Reading's pleasure was increased when both the Indian Legislative Assembly and the Council of State turned down resolutions calling for a conference. Reading told Montagu that 'the tactical advantage Gandhi gained in December...had been lost by his latest action' and it now resided with the Government.¹⁰⁷ Government action of the last two months had restored the confidence of British officials and the police in the Government's authority.¹⁰⁸ Within the next fortnight, however, that confidence was to be shattered by Reading's indecision regarding Gandhi's arrest.

Reading was under mounting pressure from the British Government and also from some of the Local Governors to arrest Gandhi but he still wished to defer action until active civil disobedience had been started.¹⁰⁹

Gandhi had delayed the start of civil disobedience at Bardoli until the beginning of February in order to allow negotiations for a round table conference to have a chance of succeeding.¹¹⁰ On 1 February Gandhi sent an ultimatum to the Viceroy calling upon him to undo Government's repressive actions within seven days or face civil disobedience.¹¹¹ Reading felt aggrieved not only by the tone of Gandhi's demands but also by the misrepresentation of his agreement with Gandhi at

¹⁰⁵ Jayakar, *My Life*, pp. 528-532. Nair's stand would have been all the more effective because he had a reputation of independence, having resigned from Chelmsford's government over the issue of the continuance of martial law in the Punjab in May 1919. See Chelmsford to Montagu, 28 May 1919, M8.

¹⁰⁶ V to S/S, ptel. 46, 18 Jan. 1922, R16. As far as he was concerned there was no point in prolonging negotiations for a conference. V to S/S, ptel. 112, 1 Feb. 1922, R16.

¹⁰⁷ V to S/S, ptel. 49, 20 Jan. 1922, R16.

¹⁰⁸ V to S/S. ptel. 112, 1 Feb. 1922, R16.

¹⁰⁹ Montagu reported that Churchill, following the example of action taken against Zaghlul, the Egyptian nationalist leader, wanted Gandhi deported and that he believed that Austen Chamberlain thought the same way. S/S to V, U Cypher tel., 19 Jan. 1922, R63C(i). See also S/S to V (HD), ptels. 177 & 198, 2 & 6 Feb. 1922, R11. Lloyd pressed for Gandhi's arrest on several occasions, see Lloyd to Reading ptels. 12, 28 79; 5, 7, & 17 Jan. 1922, R24. Butler also wanted Gandhi arrested, Butler to Reading, 12 Jan. 1922, R24.

¹¹⁰ Low, 'First Non-Co-operation Movement', pp. 312-14.

¹¹¹ See Jayakar, *My Life*, vol. 1, pp. 546-8.

the end of May 1921, and, following news of the murder of policemen at Chauri Chaura, Gorakhpur District, U.P., on 4 February, agreed to sanction Gandhi's arrest.¹¹² Soon afterwards, Reading asked Lloyd to delay the arrest until after the Prince of Wales' visit to Delhi which took place on 14 February.¹¹³ On 11-12 February 1922 the Congress Working Committee at Bardoli endorsed Gandhi's decision to suspend civil disobedience in view of what had happened at Chauri-Chaura. Reading's Council, meeting on 13 February, was now divided along racial lines as to whether to arrest Gandhi. The Britons in the majority, however, decided that the arrest should go ahead. Sapru was very unhappy with the decision and after re-reading the Bardoli resolutions, wrote Reading a long letter calling for the arrest to be postponed. Sapru saw the resolutions as 'the biggest climbdown for Mr. Gandhi' and a recognition at last of the dangers inherent in the non-co-operation movement. Sapru argued that arresting Gandhi at this stage might well mean losing the moral advantage just gained and 'should he go back on these Resolutions...we would be in a much stronger position to deal with him effectively.'¹¹⁴

It must have been a very difficult decision for Reading to take, especially in view of the fact that the House of Commons was due to debate the Indian situation the very next day and Montagu was expecting to announce that Gandhi had been arrested. Yet Reading felt that he could not afford to risk the resignation of Sapru and possibly the two other Indian Councillors, especially if it was only a matter of waiting a few

¹¹² Gandhi seemed now to argue that Reading had promised not to interfere with non-cooperation activities 'so long as they remained non-violent in word and deed'. Reading to Lloyd, ptels., 4 & 7 Feb. 1922 R24.

¹¹³ Reading to Lloyd, ptel. 174, 11 Feb. 1922, R24. Reading had asked local officials to report on the safety of the Prince on his visit to northern India. The Chief Commissioner in Delhi, C.A. Barron, had asked that if Gandhi was to be arrested it should not be just before the Prince was due to reach Delhi. Barron to Reading, 29 Jan. 1922, R63C(i). These considerations must have weighed heavily with Reading-particularly when Montagu told him of the King's 'great anxiety' about the situation in India. See S/S to V, U Cypher tel. 172, 1 Feb 1922, R63C(i).

¹¹⁴ Sapru to Reading, 13. Feb. 1922, SAP/R295 (draft), 1st. series.

days to see the true import of the Bardoli resolutions.¹¹⁵ Lloyd received the decision with horror and amazement, particularly as he had received a telegram on 11 February in which Reading said that the arrest should go ahead even if Gandhi postponed civil disobedience. Lloyd told Montagu that Reading 'has made a fool of me and my Government in face of both the Indian and British publics.'¹¹⁶ As a result, Lloyd's Home Member offered his resignation and his Ministers complained of being placed in an embarrassing situation.¹¹⁷ D.A. Low sees Reading's decision as a wise one, allowing time for the impact of Gandhi's climb-down to be appreciated by the Moderates, so that by the time Gandhi was finally arrested in March, the non-co-operation movement had effectively collapsed.¹¹⁸ This may be so, but the cost of Reading's indecision needs also to be considered. Reading completely lost the confidence of two of his Presidency Governors, Willingdon and Lloyd, men whose hostility or resignation could make Reading's position extremely difficult.¹¹⁹ He also contributed to a much wider feeling that those in charge of Indian affairs were unable to take firm action to maintain British rule and that they were too much influenced by Indian advisors for their own good.¹²⁰ Ironically it was Montagu who took the blame for what had happened, despite the fact that he had argued for Gandhi's arrest.

Reading realised at the time of postponing the arrest that he would have to explain himself in person to the Presidency Governors and he invited them to Delhi for a conference at the end of the month.¹²¹ As it happened, Ronaldshay was

¹¹⁵ V to S/S. 13 Feb. 1922, U Cypher tel., R63C(i).

¹¹⁶ Lloyd to Montagu, 17 Feb. 1922, M26.

¹¹⁷ Idem.

¹¹⁸ Low, 'First Non-Co-operation Movement' p. 316.

¹¹⁹ Willingdon talked of he and Lloyd resigning. Willingdon to Montagu, 22 Feb. 1922, W4.

¹²⁰ Butler wrote that 'The Viceroy's evil geniuses are Sapru, the Law Member, who hates the British more than anyone in India, and Madan Mohan Malaviya who is the most double dealing man in India.' H. Butler to Lord Hardinge et. al., 22 Dec. 1921, B29.

¹²¹ V to S/S, U cypher tel., 13 Feb. 1922, R63C(i).

unable to attend, -so Willingdon and Lloyd had the Viceroy to themselves. The issues discussed included the crisis before the Prince of Wales' visit to Calcutta, about which Lloyd complained of the lack of time allowed for consultation with Local Governors, and the fact that Reading had countenanced 'secret negotiations' with Gandhi and Malaviya, using the clear the line state telegraph 'under my very nose in my own Presidency'.¹²² The main issue brought up by Lloyd, however, was the vacillation regarding Gandhi's arrest in February. Lloyd was particularly aggrieved that, just as in December, he had not been given a chance to put his views in time for him to influence any decision. Lloyd threatened resignation and the power of his arguments and the support he received from Willingdon forced Reading into a corner out of which he extricated himself only by giving written assurances so that Lloyd could assure mollify his Council. Lloyd still remained unsatisfied and wrote that 'I left Delhi sick at heart and with my confidence in Reading much impaired.'¹²³ In view of this conference and all the other pressures brought on Reading, Gandhi's arrest was only a matter of time and it finally took place with minimum fuss on 10 March 1922. It came just one day after Montagu's resignation.

3. Montagu's Resignation

The incident that led to Montagu's resignation was his decision, without Cabinet permission, to publish a telegram on the Turkish settlement which the Viceroy was very keen to have published before the arrest of Gandhi took place.¹²⁴ This telegram called for changes in the Treaty of Sevres to meet some of the demands of Muslims in India. Since he arrived as Viceroy, Reading had been convinced that if he

¹²² Lloyd to Montagu, 3 March 1922, *M26*.

¹²³ *Idem*.

¹²⁴ The details of Montagu's resignation have been well covered in Waley, *Montagu*, ch xix; and Rumbold, *Watershed*, ch. xvi.

could help to find some resolution of the Khilafat grievances it would bring Indian Muslims back to their more normal role as loyalists. He was constantly aware that the Khilafat movement provided the real cutting edge of Gandhi's non-co-operation movement, and if it could be dulled his task would be much easier.¹²⁵ Montagu agreed entirely, but felt that Lloyd George was obsessed with a pro-Greek policy and remained fervently committed to antiquated and prejudiced views of the Turkish nation.¹²⁶ The spirited military resistance of the Turkish nationalist leader, Mustapha Kemal, made a nonsense of the British policy of supporting the large-scale takeover by the Greeks of territory on the Turkish mainland. The Treaty of Sevres was no longer enforceable. The French were playing a wily game of ditching their British imperial rivals and preparing to come to terms with the Turkish regime, and the impression created in India was that it was only British stubbornness that stopped a resolution of the problem. Reading had tried on numerous occasions to have the Indian point of view recognised and Montagu had previously argued, but in vain, that India's place on the Paris Peace Conference, allowed her the right to make a separate representation of her views.¹²⁷ Montagu admitted that his constant carping on the subject had antagonised the Prime Minister and that this had lost him any influence he might have had on other subjects.¹²⁸ Montagu had also antagonised Curzon, the Foreign Secretary, with whom he constantly battled in Cabinet. The situation was fairly hopeless, therefore, when Reading cabled to Montagu asking whether it would be helpful if the Government of India and the Provincial Governments made a joint representation about the modification of the Treaty of Sevres in a way that would meet the reasonable aspirations of Indian Muslims, i.e. by the Allies evacuating

¹²⁵ See e.g., Reading to Lloyd George, 21 Feb. 1921, cited in Hyde, *Reading*, pp. 331-2 ; V to S/S, 13 July 1922, R5 ; V to S/S, 21 Sept. 1922 R5.

¹²⁶ S/S to V, U Cypher tel., 25 Dec. 1921, R63d(i).

¹²⁷ See Rumbold, *Watershed*, p. 303.

¹²⁸ S/S to V, U cypher tel., 25 Dec. 1921, R63d(i).

Constantinople, restoring Thrace and Smyrna to Turkey, and ensuring Turkish suzerainty over the Holy Places. Reading indicated that this was less drastic than a suggestion that had been made to him by Willingdon which involved the resignations of those responsible for governing India but he thought it would strengthen Montagu's hands and 'would amount to the final act that the Viceroy and Governors could take short of actual resignations to enforce a policy which they consider imperative.'¹²⁹ Montagu replied encouragingly and the die was cast.¹³⁰

Reading's ploy would not have had its fateful consequences except for a series of rather fortuitous occurrences which led to Montagu taking the decision on the weekend of 4-5 March to allow Reading's telegram of 28 February to be published without obtaining prior Cabinet approval. Montagu had in fact circulated the telegram to the Cabinet.¹³¹ Although Curzon was clearly annoyed by what Montagu had done and wrote to him to say so, the matter did not look as if it would lead further, until, on Thursday 9 March, Curzon indicated that the matter was too serious to be allowed to stand as it did. On the same day the newspapers carried comment on the Government of India's telegram. Lloyd George summoned Montagu and asked for his resignation. The resignation that reluctantly followed was a messy affair with a good deal of public recrimination and bitterness. Montagu was a broken man; his political career was ruined and his central purpose in life destroyed.¹³² Most historians agree that although Montagu had breached Cabinet etiquette it was not a very serious offence in view of the fact that the Government of India had made public very similar views in the past and was, indeed, soon to publish a White Paper on the subject.¹³³ The timing was, however, inopportune as Curzon was just about to

¹²⁹ V to S/S, ptel. 162, 9 Feb. 1922, R16.

¹³⁰ S/S to V, ptel. 245, 15 Feb. 1922, R16.

¹³¹ For details of the incident see Rumbold, *Watershed*, pp. 300-5.

¹³² Waley, *Montagu*, p. 277.

¹³³ Rumbold, *Watershed*, p. 303.

participate in negotiations in Paris with the Turks. Rumbold, an historian not generally sympathetic to Montagu, concludes that 'It would have been difficult, but not impossible, for Chamberlain and Lloyd George to deal in Parliament with Montagu's error in a way which satisfied Curzon without forcing Montagu's resignation. But they did not wish to try.'¹³⁴ Collective cabinet responsibility had been breached so often in the Lloyd George regime that it seemed to Montagu hypocritical to focus on this particular incident.¹³⁵

The fact that Montagu's resignation coincided with the arrest of Gandhi suggested to many Indians that Montagu had been sacrificed for reasons of differences with the Cabinet over how to deal with the non-co-operation movement. In fact they were wrong, in that Montagu had been pressing for Gandhi's arrest for several months.¹³⁶ However, they were right to the extent that they realised that there were deeper reasons for Montagu's resignation than the apparent one of the publication of the Viceroy's message calling for revision of the Treaty of Sevres. Montagu's resignation, as he himself remarked, owed a good deal to the swing to the right in British politics that had been taking place since the War.¹³⁷ It was Lloyd George's authority that kept what was, after all, a Conservative majority Government, in power. Yet Lloyd George's hold on power was slipping as the domestic economy faltered and crises mounted in Ireland, Egypt, Turkey the Middle East and India. In each of these areas the Government was forced to make major concessions to mounting nationalism and there was a feeling amongst some Conservatives that a line

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 304.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 277.

¹³⁶ For Montagu's views on the establishment of this myth, see Montagu to Lytton, 30 Sept. 1922, L25.

¹³⁷ The position of Montagu and the few Asquithian Liberals who were in the Coalition Government became increasingly less certain. Chelmsford argued that Montagu '...is not master in his own house...He dare not resign because there is no political group to which he can go, and they cannot get rid of him because his name still counts in India.' Chelmsford to Reading, 1 Mar. 1922, R21.

had to be drawn somewhere.¹³⁸ India, the most valuable British possession, seemed the obvious place to draw it. Montagu was made the sacrificial victim to appease the right-wing critics of Lloyd George's regime. The Conservatives had never liked Montagu and the die-hard element had never forgiven him for his strident performance in the debate on General Dyer and the Amritsar Massacre in July 1920.¹³⁹

The hardening of attitudes towards India can be seen in a series of Cabinet meetings which took place in February 1922, shortly before Gandhi was due to be arrested. The first meeting focused on Reading's delay in arresting Gandhi and Montagu took the lead in calling for stronger action against the non-co-operation movement, arguing that 'Gandhi's organ should be suppressed, its meetings, prohibited its leaders imprisoned or deported.'¹⁴⁰ On 9 February the Cabinet was convened on Chamberlain's request to discuss the military/political situation.¹⁴¹ Once again, Reading's policies were under criticism and once again Montagu sided with the Cabinet's view rather than that of his counterpart in Delhi. Reading's request for a reduction of the number of British troops in India and for the acceptance of a scheme for the total Indianisation of the Indian army over a period of between 30 and 42 years was rejected by the Cabinet. It felt it could not commit itself to such a scheme, particularly in view of the serious political situation which might require additional British troops at any time. But it was the arguments used by Ministers that were most significant. Curzon objected to what he saw as a response to political agitation in India and 'a sop to the Councils to secure the passage of the Budget.' Churchill, attacking the Indianisation proposals, believed 'an idea was

¹³⁸ Montagu reported, following the debate in the House of Commons that, 'there is an uneasy feeling that our Empire is slipping away'. S/S to V, U cypher tel., 15 Feb. 1922, R63c(i).

¹³⁹ Sir Charles Petrie, *The Life and Letters of the Right Hon. Sir Austen Chamberlain*, vol.2, p. 153. Chamberlain saw this debate as the beginning of the end for the Lloyd George coalition.

¹⁴⁰ Cab. Conclusion 8 (22), 4, 6 Feb. 1922 (Cab. 23).

¹⁴¹ Cabinet Conclusion 12 (22), App. 1, Conference of Ministers, 9 Feb. 1922 (Cab. 23).

prevalent among many people, both in India and at home that we were fighting a rearguard action in India and that the British Raj was doomed and that India would gradually be handed over to Indians'.¹⁴² Up to now, he said, he had supported the constitutional reforms in India but they had received a great setback and he believed 'that opinion would change soon as to the expediency of granting democratic institutions to backward races which had no capacity for self-government.' He believed 'that a way out of our difficulties might be found by extending the system of native states, with their influential aristocracies and landed proprietors. That system would be in harmony with the ideas of Indians to whom European democratic institutions were generally repugnant.' Churchill had put his finger on the very heart of the issue: some Ministers had, in the wake of the non-co-operation movement, turned against the spirit of the Montford reforms which were predicated upon the basis of transferring western political institutions to India, Indianising the Services, and leading India towards self-government. Churchill was, in effect, questioning each one of these policies. The Prime Minister, though, did not share these views, but did lend his support to the call for a firmer approach in governing India. He endorsed the need to contradict the prevalent view 'that His Majesty's Government contemplated withdrawal from India'. When the meeting resumed on the next day he told his colleagues that,

It must be made clear that the Government had no intention of leaving India or of allowing British supremacy there to be challenged. A considerable measure of self-government had been granted to India; but any further extension in that direction must depend on whether the Indians showed that they were capable of making proper use of the constitution that had been granted to them. There must be a master in India... We were now masters in India and we should let it be

¹⁴² Ibid.

understood that we meant to remain so.¹⁴³

On 14 February Montagu replied to what amounted to a censure motion put down by the die-hard M.P., Sir W. Joynson-Hicks, who claimed that 'The right hon. gentleman has used his position as a Liberal Minister in a Coalition Government to govern India in accordance with Liberal and Home Rule ideas', and that he was guilty of betraying 'every white man and white woman in India all through 1919, 1920 and 1921.'¹⁴⁴ Montagu made a brave attempt to justify the Liberal position and cited Lord Macaulay's famous speech of 1833 in which he said that if Indians were in the future to demand European institutions, it would be the proudest day in English history. However, the main thrust of his speech was an attempt to re-affirm the Government's determination to maintain law and order. However, because of Reading's failure to arrest Gandhi as instructed, Montagu had no concrete proof of the Government's intentions. This, as Rumbold argues, sealed Montagu's fate; 'the Viceroy did not seem to carry out his orders. Montagu's past performance, his known preference for soft government, his personality and whole style, made him an untrustworthy instrument for the application of the tighter rein from London that was now essential.'¹⁴⁵ The knife was turned by the Northcliffe Press. On the day after the debate the *Times* editorial called for Montagu's resignation in ringing terms:

After a trial lasting many months it has now become obvious that the combination of Lord Reading and Mr. Montagu at the head of Indian affairs is not working well. The public are alarmed and with good reason. There must be a separation. No one suggests a change of

¹⁴³ Cabinet Conclusion 12 (22), App.3, Meeting of conference of ministers , 10 Feb. 1922 (Cab. 23).

¹⁴⁴ Waley, *Edwin Montagu*, p. 269. Montagu's reply had been rehearsed in Cabinet the previous day and it followed the recent hard line on India. He was on the defensive as over ninety members of the House had signed a petition calling for his dismissal.

¹⁴⁵ Rumbold, *Watershed*, p. 297.

Viceroy and the necessary alternative is to appoint a new head of the India Office, preferably a statesman of stronger fibre.¹⁴⁶

Northcliffe had himself recently returned from a visit to India and was known to be shocked by the change of attitude he had found amongst Indians. Reading had made a point of seeing him whilst he was in India and had obviously felt that he had recruited him as a useful publicist for explaining the Indian situation in England.¹⁴⁷

However, Northcliffe, like Joynson-Hicks, another recent visitor to India, seems to have used his new knowledge to attack the Montagu-Reading administration.

Valentine Chirol, who had written extensively for the *Times*, believed that Northcliffe was behind the *Times* editorial attacking Montagu, but also argued that Montagu had contributed to his own downfall. 'He seems', he told Butler, 'to be temperamentally unable to steer a straight course...he has always tried at the same time to run with the Moderate hare and the Extremist hound'.¹⁴⁸

Montagu's fate had really been sealed well before he allowed Reading's telegram on the Turkish settlement to be published. He was the victim of a right-wing backlash on imperial affairs which resulted from the combination of outrage at the boycott of the Prince of Wales' visit and also from fears in the Conservative Party that matters were going too fast with regard to Egypt and Ireland.¹⁴⁹ As Rumbold argues, it was ironic that Montagu did not disagree with the Cabinet on many of the issues under controversy with the Government of India. But, as the *Times* argued, there was no question of recalling the Viceroy, so the Secretary of State had

¹⁴⁶ *Times*, 15 Feb. 1922.

¹⁴⁷ Hyde, *Reading*, p. 367.

¹⁴⁸ V. Chirol to H. Butler, 22 Feb. 1922, Butler MSS, vol. 37, *HB41*. Montagu thought that his speech in the debate had been a success (indeed Joynson-Hick's resolution was defeated by 248 votes to 64) and was surprised to find the attack in the *Times* which he attributed to orders from Northcliffe. S/S to V, U Cypher tel., 15 Feb. 1922, *R63c(i)*.

¹⁴⁹ See Chirol to Sivaswamy Aiyer, 26 Apr. 1922, Aiyer MSS.

to go.¹⁵⁰

Reading survived; though he thought of offering his resignation, London notified him that it was not warranted as Montagu held the entire responsibility and Reading sensibly decided that two resignations would be more than the reforms could survive.¹⁵¹ Later he reflected that the publication of his telegram for all its fateful consequences for Montagu had had the desired effect on Muslim opinion and Reading dated the collapse of the non-co-operation movement from that event.¹⁵²

For Montagu, the irony was that he was forced out of office just as the situation was beginning to improve, and he later wrote to Lloyd that he 'never felt much doubt but that when the Government of India asserted itself against Gandhi and his followers actual law-breaking with all its attendant perils would cease.'¹⁵³

Montagu seems to have suffered in many respects for the mistakes of Reading. Montagu quoted Lloyd George's words to him when he asked for his resignation and, although denied by Lloyd George, they have a ring of truth about them and do suggest a much deeper dissatisfaction with the Indian policy. 'You and Reading', Lloyd George is alleged to have said, 'have muddled India in a way that it was almost impossible it should be muddled. You have not the courage to carry through any decision'.¹⁵⁴ The underlying issues that led to Montagu's downfall, the indecisiveness about dealing more effectively with the leaders of the non-co-operation movement, and the failure to do more to protect the interests of the British in the army and civil service in India, were ones where Reading pursued a policy contrary to that advised by Montagu. Yet as the *Times* editorial recognised, to recall the Viceroy

¹⁵⁰ There was additionally an element of anti-semitism involved in the attacks on Montagu and Reading. See e.g. Sir Walter Lawrence to Curzon, 14 Mar. 1922, Curzon MSS, EUR F112/226 a/16, cited in D. Judd, *Lord Reading*, pp. 213-14.

¹⁵¹ See Hyde, *Reading*, pp. 374-5.

¹⁵² V to S/S, 13 July 1922, R5.

¹⁵³ Montagu to Lloyd, 8 June 1922, AS1/6/11.

¹⁵⁴ Montagu to Lloyd George, 9 Mar. 1922, AS 2/11/10.

would be extremely damaging to Britain's image, quite apart from the fact that Reading was a close personal friend of the Prime Minister.

Shortly after his resignation, Montagu assured his constituents that his resignation did not signify a change in the Government of India's policy and Reading quickly tried to reassure Moderate Indians.¹⁵⁵ However, as Mehrotra argues, Montagu's resignation 'struck the Liberals like a thunderbolt for they had placed all their hopes in him...His departure made them feel like waifs and they feared that the forces which had contrived to bring about his downfall would attempt a policy of reaction or at least of stagnation in Indian affairs.'¹⁵⁶ Sapru complained that 'Montagu's departure from office has robbed us of the support of the only English statesman who genuinely believed in our destiny.'¹⁵⁷ Reading tried to play down Indian arguments that British reaction dated from the resignation of Montagu and the appointment of his successor, the Conservative Lord Peel. He rightly pointed out that Indians had begun to complain of a change in attitude before Montagu's resignation, in February 1922 in fact, and had pointed to the speeches of Montagu and Lloyd George as evidence of a reaction against any early expansion of the reforms.¹⁵⁸ Those Moderates who had noticed the new tone Montagu used in the House of Commons on 14 February, believed that Montagu was a prisoner of the Cabinet in expressing these views. They failed to understand the extent to which Montagu's views had hardened as a result of the non-co-operation movement. Montagu clearly felt that Congress, by boycotting the Councils had deprived themselves of a perfect chance to prove themselves and gain further concessions. By boycotting the Prince of Wales' visit they had forfeited any sympathy they might have received from British public opinion and had made his position impossible. He wrote to Reading as a

¹⁵⁵ Waley, *Edwin Montagu*, pp. 277-9.

¹⁵⁶ Mehrotra, *India and the Commonwealth*, p. 163.

¹⁵⁷ Sapru to Sivaswamy Aiyer, 14 May 1922, Aiyer MSS.

¹⁵⁸ V to S/S, 29 June & 6 July 1922, R5.

disillusioned man:

The fact of the matter is, Rufus, that people here are fed up with India, and it is all I can do to keep my colleagues steady on the accepted policy, let alone new instalments of it. The Indians are so unreasonable, so slow to compromise, so raw in their resentments, and the insults to the Prince of Wales have made fierce feeling in this country.¹⁵⁹

It was not just the Extremists whom Montagu blamed; the Moderates had also made the situation more difficult by failing to support the Governments's attempts to maintain law and order.¹⁶⁰ Montagu was bitterly disappointed that Indians had not played their part in making the reforms as successful as he hoped. He believed that if only they had shown another year or two of solid achievement, the British Government would have found it hard to refuse their request for constitutional advance.¹⁶¹ It should also be remembered that it was not unusual in the Indian context for statesmen to hold progressive political views whilst also believing that unacceptable political demands and pressures should be firmly dealt with.¹⁶²

Though Montagu's attitudes towards progress in India appear to have genuinely hardened in the winter of 1921-22, there was also an element of the politician swimming with the tide and hoping for a change in the current. He told Reading only a fortnight before his departure that 'if we are not to have a reversal of the policy in India, which to my mind would mean the end of the Indian Empire, we must try and avoid, until things get brighter, presenting to the Government or Parliament proposals that they would reject'.¹⁶³ That Montagu still maintained progressive views on India's constitutional future can be seen from his letter to Lytton six months after his

¹⁵⁹ S/S to V, 1 Feb. 1922, R4.

¹⁶⁰ See Montagu's speech to the 1920 Club, 9 Feb. 1922, as reported in the *Times*, 10 Feb. 1922. See also S/S to V, 1 Mar. 1922, R4.

¹⁶¹ S/S to V, U cypher tel., 29 Dec. 1921, R63C(i).

¹⁶² John Morley is the prime example of this phenomenon. See Moore, *Liberalism*, ch. 6.

¹⁶³ S/S to V, 23 Feb 1922, cited in Hyde, *Reading*, pp. 370-1.

resignation in which he talked of getting away from dyarchy and establishing a unified ministry, responsible to the Legislature, carrying on with British assistance.¹⁶⁴

Reading wanted to establish the consistency and coherence of Government policy by emphasising that Montagu and he shared the basic belief that further reforms could only be justified on the evidence of the successful operation of the new councils and could not be forced by agitation. It was Reading's belief that the prime cause of Moderate disappointment was the failure to make further constitutional advances.¹⁶⁵ But he displayed a blindspot in ignoring a whole range of other issues that the Moderates felt dissatisfied with, and, of course, he could not reveal the extent to which Montagu and he differed on some of these issues.

With the appointment of Lord Peel as Montagu's successor there was a much more conservative flavour to British policy in India. Peel had no background in Indian affairs and was clearly appointed to appease Conservative opinion. He defended Indian interests to the best of his ability and got on reasonably well with Reading. There was, however, no easy rapport between the two men as there had been between Reading and Montagu, and Reading could no longer act as he had done in the past on the understanding that the Secretary of State was likely to sympathise with a liberal line of approach.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Montagu to Lytton, 30 Sept. 1922, *L25*.

¹⁶⁵ V to S/S, 6 July 1922, *R5*; Reading to A. Chamberlain, 6 July 1922, *R21*.

¹⁶⁶ In any case, as we have seen, this assumption of Montagu's liberalism was being proved less and less reliable in his last months in office.

CHAPTER V : POLITICS AT THE CENTRE

There were, besides the problem of dealing with non-co-operation, four main issues that created tension in the relationship between the British and the Indian Liberal Party at the all-India level: the demand for constitutional progress, which was closely linked to differences over finances, the future of the Indian services, the repeal of repressive and discriminatory legislation, and the treatment of Indians overseas.

1. Financial and Constitutional Issues

The new Legislative Assembly, which was elected in November 1920 and began its sittings in February 1921, was full of members who were particularly eager to prove to their compatriots that real power could be obtained from within the new constitutional system.¹ They were keen not only to work the reforms but to expand the powers of the elected members if possible. The Government, for its part, also saw the importance of encouraging the new legislature so as to point up the futility of non-co-operation. The Duke of Connaught, in inaugurating the new legislature, promised that:

It is the clear intention of the Act of 1919 that the policy and decisions of the Government of India should be influenced, to an extent incomparably greater than they have been in the past by the views of the Indian legislature'.²

¹ The new central legislature now comprised two chambers, the Council of State, consisting of 59 members (33 elected, 26 nominated) and the Imperial Legislative Assembly, which had 143 members (103 elected, 40 nominated). There were about 20 Liberals in the Legislative Assembly, but they did not form any party grouping until 1922, and even then the so-called National Party was not an exclusively Liberal organisation. In this early phase, therefore, the Liberals were influential as individual legislators rather than as a group. See pp. 203-204 below.

² Robb, *Government of India*, p. 233.

Later in the month the Government accepted a resolution of the Liberal, B.S. Kamat, which had the effect of promising that no action would be taken on reports or committees without first consulting the legislature.³ When the new Viceroy Lord Reading arrived in April 1921 there were high hopes in Liberal circles that he would make an offer of a further advance in the reforms. Sapru seems, even at this early stage, to have hoped for a round table conference to discuss India's future. He tried to organise a Liberal deputation to wait on Reading, but some of the Bombay Liberals, including Wacha and Samarth were against the idea, feeling that it was premature to press Reading.⁴ In the end Sapru got up a Liberal deputation from his home province, the United Provinces.⁵ The deputation was to be somewhat disappointed by the non-committal attitude of the Viceroy's reply, but Sapru mollified them by explaining that it was too early for the Viceroy to commit himself to any new line of policy.⁶

In September 1921 a Liberal member, J.N. Majumdar, moved a resolution in the Legislative Assembly calling for steps to be taken to ensure full provincial autonomy by 1924 and 'full Dominion Self-Government' by 1930.⁷ The Government's response was generally sympathetic but, of course, it could not entertain any request for constitutional advance when the new councils had only been operating for a few months. A compromise resolution was accepted which recommended the Governor-General in Council to forward to the Secretary of State the view of the Assembly that the progress made by India on the path to responsible government warranted a re-examination and revision of the constitution at an earlier

³ Ibid, p. 280.

⁴ Wacha to Sapru, 10 May 1921, SAP/W2.

⁵ See Sapru to Vincent, 8 June 1921 & annotations, SAP/V32, 2nd. series; Sapru to H.N. Kunzru, 13 June 1921 SAP/K193, 2nd. series ; N.P. Asthana to Sapru, 20 June 1921, SAP/A154, 2nd. series.

⁶ For Reading's speech, see Earl of Reading, *Speeches*, vol. 1, pp. 47-58.

⁷ Legislative Assembly Debates, 1921, vol.ii, p. 956, cited in Mehrotra, *India and the Commonwealth*, p.162.

date than 1929.⁸

The issue that offered the elected members of the Legislative Assembly the greatest scope for a practical increase in their powers in the interim was the annual debate on the budget. Although the power of the purse was kept firmly within government hands, the Assembly had much greater rights of debating the budget than ever before and could, by refusing additional taxation, force the Viceroy to certify certain financial measures as necessary in the national interest. Although military expenditure did not come within the purview of the Assembly, it could use the above power to force the Viceroy to intervene. Reading was extremely reluctant to use his powers of certification, action which he believed would amount to a breakdown of the new constitution.⁹ Malcolm Hailey, the Finance Member wrote that,

I have always felt that it is the budget sections of the Government of India Act which now make all the difference in our position in regard to the legislature. In other respects they can refuse to pass legislation and can pass resolutions against us but there the matter rests. It is in respect of their power on the budget that they acquire the real hold over us. It was all very well for the Joint Parliamentary Committee to say that the power of restoration should be genuine but as you will see yourself no Governor-General would exercise it save with great reluctance even in cases where the proposed expenditure fell within the estimated revenue receipts of the year, and that when it comes to a question of restoring a taxation bill the matter is additionally difficult.¹⁰

The post-war economic situation made such a conflict more likely, however, because the Government faced a series of deficit budgets and had either to make retrenchments or to raise taxation. The former course was difficult because the obvious area for cutting costs was on military expenditure, which had come to form about one half of government outgoings. Yet it was difficult to persuade London that

⁸ Mehrotra, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-3.

⁹ See, e.g., V to S/S [Peel], ptel. 310, 23 March 1922, R16.

¹⁰ Hailey to Howard (IO), 24 March 1921, WH4A.

major reductions should be made in the army in India whilst there were major operations being undertaken on the Frontier in Waziristan and whilst the peace that had been recently established with Afghanistan had not yet proved itself secure. In addition, the home government still looked to use Indian troops to help cover their enlarged imperial obligations, especially in the Middle East. One solution might be to take British troops, who cost about four or five times as much as Indian soldiers, from internal security duties and replace them with Indian troops.¹¹ However, the worsening political situation during the first non-co-operation movement made the British Cabinet balk at such suggestions; the Secretary of State, for one, fearing that Indian troops would not prove as reliable as British troops in dealing with the nationalist movement.¹² If, on the other hand, the Government looked to meet their deficits from raising new taxation they faced equally serious political problems. For one thing it placed them at the mercy of a legislature in which the official and nominated members were in a permanent minority. The range of taxes available to the Government was also very limited. The process of devolution of power to the provinces, of which the 1919 Act was the culmination, had denuded the centre of many of its taxes, until it was left essentially with customs duties and revenues from imposts such as the taxes on salt and opium.¹³ In the post-war trade slump, which coincided with a number of poor harvests, the Government found its revenue sources failing to expand to meet fast-growing commitments. Taxation became a highly sensitive issue. If it decided to raise income-tax it threatened to alienate those very groups whose support it relied upon in the new legislatures.¹⁴ India's commercial and industrial interests were already seriously concerned that the growth

¹¹ See Hailey to Hilton Young M.P., 28 March 1921, *WH4a*.

¹² S/S to V, ptel. 1664, 21 Nov. 1921, *R10*.

¹³ Tomlinson, *Political Economy of the Raj*, pp. 111-2.

¹⁴ For much fuller information on this economic trap which the British created for themselves, see B.R. Tomlinson, 'India and the British Empire, 1880-1935', *IESHR*, vol. xii, no.4, (Oct.-Dec. 1975), pp. 337-80.

in their internal market which had taken place during the war might be sacrificed to imperial economic interests. Some Indian economic interests such as the Gujarati banias and the Marwaris were showing sympathy with Gandhian ethics and a stronger nationalist economic stand. There was a feeling that the British were manipulating the rupee exchange rate in their own interests. It was increasingly important for the British, therefore, not to alienate the 'middle-ground' of Indian economic interests, represented by industrialists like Purshottamdas Thakurdas and others.

Fiscal Autonomy

One way of meeting the needs of Indian industrialists, whilst at the same time tapping sources of revenue, was to raise tariffs so as to offer Indian industries a certain degree of protection from foreign competition. As a result of the so-called fiscal autonomy convention, Delhi now had the right to set Indian tariffs in agreement with the legislature, without interference from London or, more realistically, from Manchester. The convention, which was won as the price of India's contribution to the war effort, was, however, only that, an agreement, not a binding law.¹⁵ It rested on the recommendations of the Joint Select Committee on the 1919 Act and on a Committee set up by Montagu to reform the role of the India Office, but more importantly it relied upon the custom and usage given it in the years after the

¹⁵ For details of the convention see T.E. Rider, 'The Tariff Policy of the Government of India and its Development Strategy, 1894-1924', University of Minnesota, Ph.D., 1971, pp. 282-90. See also C. Dewey, 'The End of the Imperialism of Free Trade: The Eclipse of the Lancashire Lobby and the Concession of Fiscal Autonomy to India', in C. Dewey & A.G. Hopkins (eds.), *Imperial Impact: Studies in the Economic History of Africa and India*, London, 1978.

war.¹⁶ The wording of the Joint Select Committee recommendation left some room for the Secretary of State to intervene:

In the opinion of the Committee...the Secretary of State should as far as possible avoid interference on this subject when the Government of India and its Legislature are in agreement, and they think that his intervention when it does take place, should be limited to safeguarding the international obligations of the Empire or any fiscal arrangements within the Empire to which His Majesty's Government is a party.¹⁷

Fortunately Montagu was determined to see the convention maintained and whilst he was Secretary of State he fought off any interference of Lancashire interests as the cotton duty was raised substantially, from 3.5% at the beginning of the war to 11% in 1921.

In 1921 a Fiscal Commission was established to examine tariff policy including the question of whether India should follow the Dominions in adopting measures of imperial preference. There had been an expectation in Britain since the First World War that India would, once she was given fiscal autonomy, reciprocate with a policy of giving preferential allowances to the Empire. Montagu was particularly keen that India should accept imperial preference, particularly as the post-war slump in world trade took place and large numbers of Britons were unable to find employment.¹⁸ But, as Indian politicians pointed out, it was the Government of India and not the Legislative Council that had been given the power to initiate tariff measures, and there was a strong feeling that, until the Indian legislature had the same powers as those of a Dominion legislature, imperial preference was not acceptable to India. Indeed,

¹⁶ Crewe Committee Report, Cmd. 207, 1919.

¹⁷ Rider, thesis, p. 287.

¹⁸ Montagu saw an Indian agreement to Imperial Preference as a sort of quid pro quo for the tariff increases the Government of India was making, and a way of staving off pressure on him to violate India's fiscal autonomy. See S/S to V, ptel., 15 Aug. 1921, M12, cited in Rider, thesis, pp. 337-8.

Indian politicians tended to be strongly protectionist, believing that India's nascent industries needed protecting from foreign competition if they were ever to get off the ground.¹⁹ Perhaps because Montagu saw the appointment of the Fiscal Commission as a means of securing public Indian assent to imperial preference he insisted that the Commission have an Indian president and an Indian majority, whereas Reading preferred an English president and an equal number of Indians and Europeans as members.²⁰ In the end, Sir Ibrahim Rahimtullah was selected as president, and the committee had a protectionist majority.²¹ The commission met in November 1921 and presented its report in July 1922.²² The report represented a successful compromise between Indian protectionist needs and British beliefs in the efficacy of free trade. In many respects, the recommended policy of 'discriminating protection' represented the sort of line that the Government of India preferred and which followed the kind of mildly interventionist policy towards encouragement of Indian industry that Chelmsford had favoured. A tariff board was to be set up which would recommend selected Indian industries which might receive protection. It was assumed that these industries would fulfil certain quite definite criteria. Imperial preference was effectively postponed, but Montagu was no longer around to bemoan the fact. His successor, Lord Peel, continued to press the issue, but in vain, for 'preferences for British imports were not within the realm of possibilities, given the state of Indian opinion on the subject.'²³ The whole issue of fiscal autonomy was therefore a good example of the new powers that India was winning, powers that involved the sacrifice of long-held British privileges. If there is any doubt as to the reality of the

¹⁹ V to S/S ptel. 1003, 11 Dec. 1922, R16.

²⁰ Rider, thesis, p. 348.

²¹ *Idem*. Additional members were: G.D. Birla, T.V. Seshagiri Aiyar, Sir Maneckjee B. Dadabhoy, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Sir Edgar Holberton, Narottam Morarjee, J.M. Keynes (in fact did not take up his place), J.C. Coyajee, Campbell Rhodes, R.A. Mant and Sir Montagu de P. Webb.

²² There was a minority report appended later, signed by 5 members including Rahimtullah. This report demanded a somewhat stronger adherence to Indian economic interests.

²³ Rider, thesis, p. 394.

blow to certain British economic interests one need only look at the vehemence of the Lancashire protests.²⁴ But the new constitutional power of India can be seen in the fact that, this time, Lancashire's protests went unheard.

The Budget, 1921

The first budget of the new legislature was also the last of Chelmsford's regime, being presented in February-March 1921. Malcolm Hailey, the Finance Member, admitted that he came before the legislature with some trepidation due to the difficult financial situation in the country. 'Europeans and Indians alike', he told his counterpart H.F. Howard at the India Office, 'have been deeply affected by the heavy falls in exchange and the unsettlement due to the instability of the rupee. The whole of the bazaar is against us on account of their exchange losses over imports. And finally the deficit was one which might well terrify even a quiet and well-disposed citizen.'²⁵

The Government tried to make substantial cuts in expenditure, especially in the military budget. The Government of India shared the resentment of many Indians at the Esher Report on army organisation, which was seen as having treated the Indian army as an imperial force and having shown little consideration for Indian concerns. Hailey feared that the extra expenditure resulting from the Report would 'go far to kill the growing moderate party on whose strength the future of the reformed constitution depends.'²⁶ Chelmsford clashed with Montagu when he put forward proposals for the reduction of British troops in India. The Viceroy was aware that this was a key

²⁴ See Hilton Young M.P. to Hailey, 12 March 1921, *WH4a*. Also Howard (IO) to Hailey, 27 March 1921, *ibid.*, & S/S to V, 5 Aug. 1921, *M12*.

²⁵ Hailey to Howard (IO), (copy), 24 March 1921 *WH4a*. The sterling-rupee exchange had fallen from a high of 2s 4d per rupee in December 1919 to below 1s 4d in February 1921. This fall contributed to an increase in debt payments and other transfers payable in London in sterling. The deficit for 1921-1922 was Rs. 277 million. Rider, thesis, p. 293.

²⁶ Esher Committee, Cmd. 943, 1920. Hailey to Duke (IO), 1 Dec 1920, *WH2*.

issue for the Moderates and would be seen by them as a test of British sincerity in working the reforms; he stressed that if he was forced to restore taxation it might well drive the Moderates to walk out of the Assembly or even to join with the non-co-operators. This would be disastrous as

the ultimate success or failure of the non-co-operation movement depends now upon the success of the moderate party in consolidating its position and winning sufficient popular support to maintain its hold over the Imperial and Provincial legislatures. To try the moderates too far will be to make their and our position impossible.²⁷

Chelmsford had chosen arguments which were likely to convince Montagu, but the latter maintained his position, which was that it was not a propitious time to make reductions in the British strength in India. In Montagu's view the savings (of £2 million) were not worth the risks involved: non-co-operation was reaching the Indian masses, the Afghans were hostile, Pan-Islamism and Bolshevism were threatening, and the Turkish question remained unresolved.²⁸ Montagu got his way and the matter was referred to a sub-committee of the Imperial Defence Committee. In view of the failure to offer these military reductions, Hailey felt that the Government was lucky in getting the budget through the legislature virtually unscathed.²⁹ Additional taxes were raised, including a rise in the customs duty from 7.5% to 11% ad valorem. He attributed the passing of the taxes partly to the inexperience of the new council and their lack of cohesion, and partly to Government use of the new skills of lobbying, gentle persuasion and parliamentary manoeuvre.³⁰ Hailey knew that members were keen on further raising the cotton duty from 11% to 12.5% for protectionist

²⁷ V (FD) to S/S, ptel. 114, 30 Jan. 1921, C14.

²⁸ See S/S to V (FD), ptels., 21 & 22 Jan., 1 & 4 Feb. 1921, C14.

²⁹ Hailey to Howard (IO), 24 March 1921, WH4a.

³⁰ *Idem.*

reasons, but he was able to avoid this by leaving this matter till last and then showing that there was no need for any additional impost. He also knew, however, that it would not be so easy to win approval in the future and that part of the Government's success was due to the fact that they had shown a willingness to make substantial retrenchments in both military and civil departments before they ever went to the legislature. A programme of retrenchment was vital for the future.³¹

Political Parties in the Legislative Assembly

Reading was only too aware of the limitations in the Government's position vis-a-vis the legislature. As a parliamentarian he must have felt frustrated at not being able to participate in debates and also in lacking any sort of party support to have government measures passed.³² It was not until the September 1921 session at Simla that any attempt was made to establish parties in the Legislative Assembly and then it was the 'opposition' not the Liberals who took the lead. The Report on Lord Reading's Administration states that the Democratic Party came into existence and whips, office-bearers and leaders were appointed. 'Of course', Coatman, its author, somewhat condescendingly adds, 'measured by English standards, the "Democrats" lacked many of the marks of a true party. There was hardly any discipline among them and they had little or no support outside the walls of the Chamber.'³³ The party, which claimed over 50 adherents seems to have been formed as a result of its leader Dr. Gour canvassing for support for his candidature as Deputy President.³⁴ Something of a two-party system was established in the Delhi session in the early

³¹ Idem.

³² V to S/S, 28 June 1923, R6.

³³ J. Coatman, 'Confidential Report on the Administration of Lord Reading Viceroy and Governor-General of India 1921-1926', Government of India Press, Simla, 1927, p. 5, R33a.

³⁴ 'The Legislative Assembly 1921-22' by A.F. Whyte, 18.4.1922. Enclosure to V to S/S, 20 April 1922 R5. Other leading figures were named as Messrs. Seshagiri Aiyar, Rangachariar, Ginwala, Subrahmanyam and Sir V. Thackersey.

months of 1922 when the National Party was formed.³⁵ The leadership of the party came from Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer and N.M. Samarth, whilst the core of the party was formed from Liberals such as B.S. Kamat, J. Dwarkadas, Maulvi Abul Kasem and Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy. However, there were also members who were outside of the Liberal Party.³⁶ The National Party was smaller in number than the Democratic Party, having some twenty-five supporters, but, according to the President of the Assembly, A.F. Whyte, the former group made up for this in terms of quality, having the better parliamentary contributors. The National Party tended to be composed of older and more sober politicians who had a better sense of constitutional realities.³⁷ The differences between the two groups seem to have been highlighted during the debates on the Government's policy of 'repression' at the time of Prince of Wales' visit; the Democratic Party showed unity in attacking government policy in a condemnatory resolution on 18 January 1922, whilst the National Party showed some sympathy with the government and attacked the activities of the non-co-operators. Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer, though criticising the large number of arrests that had taken place, went so far as to 'acknowledge with gratitude the patience and forbearance which the Government have exercised towards this movement of Mr. Gandhi.' He went on to profess that he did not 'believe that we shall ever enjoy the same liberty of speech that we enjoy under the present Government, not even under the Gandhi regime, of which we have had an ample foretaste already.'³⁸ The

³⁵ It was formally announced on 10 March 1922.

³⁶ The following were office-holders of the National Party: Sivaswamy Aiyer was its leader, Samarth its chief whip, Dwarkadas its secretary, Khan Bahadur Sayed Muhammed Ismail its treasurer, and Cotelingam & Maulvi Abul Kasem were junior whips. The party's aims were entirely along Liberal lines being 'The attainment by constitutional methods of full responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. See the *Citizen*, 16 March 1922, vol. 2, no. 52, p. 1386. See also J. Dwarkadas to A. Besant, printed circular letter, 23 March 1922, Besant MSS. Dwarkadas saw the new party system as a preparation for the day when India had responsible government, and he appealed for local organisations of the National Party to be established at provincial, district and taluk level.

³⁷ *Idem*.

³⁸ The text of this speech may be found in K.A.N. Sastri (ed.), *A Great Liberal. Speeches and Writings of Sir P.S. Sivaswami Aiyer*, Allied Publishers, Bombay, pp. 352-7.

support of the National Party was enough to ensure that the Democratic resolution was defeated by a majority of 20 votes.³⁹ In the context of Reading's need to maintain Moderate support when the Round Table Conference had failed to get off the ground and Gandhi was likely to be arrested in the near future, this support of the Legislature was particularly important.

The Budget, 1922, and the Debate on Army Retrenchment

In March the Assembly discussed the budget for 1922-23. The budget forecasts of the previous year had proved to be over-optimistic and there had been a deficit left over of Rs. 34 crores. Just as Hailey had predicted the year before, the Assembly gave this budget a much tougher passage than the previous one. The Government proposed a package of tax increases, including increases in income tax and super tax, an increase in tariffs, and on the duties on sugar, machinery, salt and articles of luxury. They still had to leave an uncovered deficit of nearly Rs. 3 crores. Reading had hoped to be able to announce substantial reductions in British troop numbers in India which would take place in the following year, and the implementation of a programme of phased Indianisation of the Army. However, the Cabinet refused to sanction these measures and Reading's colleagues had to face an Assembly in which both European and Indian members were angered at the failure to reduce military expenditure sufficiently.

In November 1921, the sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence, had reported and had accepted the view of the Indian legislature that the function of the army was the defence of India and the maintenance of internal security rather than a wider imperial purpose.⁴⁰ It had also agreed that, generally, Indian troops

³⁹ J. Coatman, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁴⁰ For the views of the legislature on army reforms see L.F. Rushbrook Williams, *India in 1921-22*, pp. 14-16. For an excellent summary of the views of the Liberal Party, see Mehrotra, *India and the Commonwealth*, pp. 168-73.

should not be used outside of the country, except after consultation with the Government of India and that, if they were used, the Indian taxpayer should not have to meet the expense.⁴¹ However, the committee could not agree to any reduction in the immediate future in the size of the army in India and this meant that the budget problems of 1921 would inevitably be repeated in 1922.

It was a sign of the hardening of attitudes in Britain brought about by the non-co-operation movement, and by the boycott of the Prince of Wales' visit especially, that whereas Montagu had shown himself sympathetic to a programme that would lead to the ultimate Indianisation of the army when Reading first broached the subject, by February 1921 he was tending to swim with the tide of opinion in Britain and argued that the time was inopportune.⁴²

Reading had agreed during 1921 to meet the request of the Legislative Assembly for a Military Requirements Committee which would look at the military situation in view of India's new constitutional position. When Reading tried to implement the findings of the Committee,⁴³ the Cabinet took a very firm line in rejecting the Government of India's requests both for a reduction of British troops in 1923 and for Indianisation, arguing that 'the acceptance of such proposals would not only in itself lend colour to the dangerous belief in a policy of retreat, but must directly hamper us in exercising the functions with which we are entrusted.'⁴⁴ As Rumbold comments: 'The lion had at last found its roar.'⁴⁵ As a result, however, Reading's Government was in a much more difficult position in presenting their budget, which included a programme of tax increases to meet an estimated deficit of

⁴¹ See Rumbold, *Watershed*, p. 289, citing Report of Indian Military Requirements committee, no. 125D, 18 Nov. 1921, Cab 16/38/1.

⁴² See S/S to V, ptel. 246, 15 Feb. 1922, R16. Also see S/S to V, ptel. 1664, 21 Nov. 1921, R10.

⁴³ V (Army Dept.) to S/S, ptel., 5 Feb. 1922, R11.

⁴⁴ S/S to V (Army Dept.), ptel. 239, 14 Feb. 1922, R11. See also ptel. 240, sent on same day.

⁴⁵ *Watershed*, p. 297.

Rs. 34 crores. Reading's displeasure at the Cabinet response was evident. 'We would ask His Majesty's Government to realise that as a Government we are no longer in a position in which we can act as we could when we had an official majority in our Legislature', he telegraphed home.⁴⁶ It was pointed out what an invidious position the members of the Viceroy's Government had been placed in: they were forced to support a view in which neither they nor their colleagues believed and many members of the Assembly were aware of this.

Hailey had the unfortunate duty of having to put before the legislature proposals to increase tariffs from 11 % to 15 % and to raise the cotton excise duty from 3.5% to 7.5%. In addition there were to be increases in railway fares, postal rates, income tax and on the duties on a number of items, including salt. Both European and Indian members were very critical of the budget and the Government's failure to make sufficient retrenchments.⁴⁷ They showed their displeasure by making cuts in various civil departments and by refusing to raise the salt duty, the cotton excise duty and the import duty on machinery and cotton goods. The result was that there was an uncovered deficit of Rs. 9 crores, rather than the Rs. 2.75 crores deficit that Hailey had planned for.⁴⁸ The acting Secretary of State, Worthington-Evans, obviously felt that this was too large a deficit and expected Reading to use his powers of restoration. Peel also agreed with this line when he took up office.⁴⁹ Reading was most reluctant to use his powers of certification and skilfully sidestepped the views of his London colleagues. Peel was worried partly by the economic consequences of running a large deficit but also by the fear that Reading was creating a presumption in India that the Government would never use its

⁴⁶ V (Army Dept.) to S/S, ptel. 262, 18 Feb. 1922, R11.

⁴⁷ See V(FD) to S/S ptel. 752-F, 9 March 1922, R11.

⁴⁸ Rushbrook Williams (ed.), *India in 1922-23*, p. 96.

⁴⁹ Rumbold, *Watershed*, pp. 308-9.

certification powers.⁵⁰ The *Times* took the legislature's actions on the budget as further evidence that the new Indian assemblies were not fulfilling British expectations.⁵¹

There was a strong feeling in the Legislative Assembly that London was dictating policy to Delhi and that this was particularly so since Montagu's resignation. In this sensitive situation, it was unfortunate that Lord Rawlinson, the Commander-in-Chief, in explaining during the debate why army estimates could not be further reduced, said that he did not think that the British element in either the army or the civil service could be completely eliminated for several generations. Sapru, was only one of the voices raised in protest at this apparent change of policy, which strangely foreshadowed the Prime Minister's speech in August 1922.⁵²

In the end, a much-watered down programme of Indianisation of the army was drawn up in 1922, which provided for eight units of the Indian army (out of a total of 132) to be selected for Indianisation. All Indian officers holding the King's commission were to be posted to these units. Liberals found this scheme 'wholly inadequate' in that it would take two hundred years to completely Indianise the officer corps of the entire army.⁵³

The Retrenchment Committee

The collapse of the non-co-operation movement in 1922 coincided with an economic upturn in India, partly due to a much improved harvest. From March 1922 onwards, Reading and Peel debated the terms of reference and personnel of a

⁵⁰ S/S to V, 30 March. 1922, R5.

⁵¹ S/S to V(FD), ptel. 1260, 22 March 1922, R11. Interestingly, Sir William Duke at the India Office felt that the Legislative Assembly had acted very astutely in rejecting the increase in the customs duty on cotton as well as the excise. They thereby disarmed Lancashire criticisms. See Duke to Lytton, 22 March 1922, L24.

⁵² See Sapru to Reading, draft pl., 8 March 1922, SAP/R296, 1st. series.

⁵³ See Mehrotra, *India and the Commonwealth*, pp. 171-2.

retrenchment committee which would parallel the work done by Geddes' committee in Britain. The main area of difference between Delhi and Whitehall was whether the committee should be able to deal with military matters. Reading was convinced they should, as this was by far the largest area of expenditure.⁵⁴ Peel did not want all the matters that had been argued over during the last year to be raked over again.⁵⁵

As Aruna Sinha remarks, 'the differences between the two Governments were becoming so pronounced that the London press was full of rumours of Reading's resignation.'⁵⁶ A committee was eventually appointed with Lord Inchcape as chairman and it met during the winter months of 1922-1923.⁵⁷ Reading got his way in that the committee was not excluded from examining military as well as civil expenditure. The committee came up with recommendations for reductions in expenditures of departments of over Rs. 19 crores, over half of which came from military expenditure. There were reductions in the armed forces: 5,000 British infantry, 6,000 Indian infantry, 3 British cavalry regiments and 10% of the artillery establishment were cut.

The Budget of 1923 and the Certification of the Increase in Salt Tax

Remarkably, the Government managed to include most of the reductions recommended by Inchcape in the 1923-24 budget. Even so, the budget could not be balanced and the new Finance Member, Sir Basil Blackett, had to plan for a deficit of nearly Rs. 6 crores. He was determined, after four years of deficits, however, that the

⁵⁴ V to S/S, 3. Aug. 1922, cited in Sinha, *Reading*, pp. 111-12.

⁵⁵ See S/S to V, ptel. 1360, 21 Nov. 1922. R16.

⁵⁶ Sinha, *Reading*, p. 112.

⁵⁷ The committee was made up of: Lord Inchcape (President) Sir Thomas Catto, Mr. Dadiba Dalal, Mr. Purshottamdas Thakurdas, Sir Rajendra Mookerjee and Sir Alexander Murray. Details of the committee's recommendations etc. may be found in L.F. Rushbrook Williams (ed.), *India in 1922-23*, pp. 109-14 & Appendix III.

books should now be balanced and India's credit restored in the financial markets. He proposed, therefore, to double the salt tax, so as to cover the deficit. The Legislative Assembly, however, refused to agree to the increase and this put Reading in a serious dilemma. For one thing, Reading disliked the idea of raising the salt tax, although he could console himself that its impact on an Indian family would be limited in practice and offset by falling prices generally.⁵⁸ In addition, taxes on the more well-to-do had been raised in the past and had reached their limit; furthermore the increased salt tax would have to come up before the assembly on an annual basis, so that body could be assured it would be revised downwards, if at all possible. What worried Reading was the political impact of certification on the Government's Indian supporters. He wrote to Peel that whatever decision was reached on the salt tax,

it will seriously injure the prospects of the Moderates when the general election comes towards the end of the year. If they vote the tax, it will of course be used against them and they will be pilloried as men who supported the taxing of the poor for the benefit of the highly paid bureaucracy. If they do not vote for it, but yet the tax is imposed by certification, all the arguments in favour of constitutional agitation would be seriously prejudiced and the opponents of the reforms and the British will point to the futility of the Legislature and the overriding control of British authorities.⁵⁹

Reading confided to Peel that 'there is no step I have taken as Viceroy that I have disliked more than this.'⁶⁰ His three Indian Members of Council were against certification and he believed that such action would lead to a defection from Moderate ranks and would hit them badly just when they were gaining in strength.⁶¹ He wrote to the provincial governors, asking them what they thought the political reaction

⁵⁸ The Government estimated that the cost of the increase for each Indian would be 3 annas p.a. or 1s. per family p.a.. V to S/S, 22 March 1923, R6.

⁵⁹ V to S/S, 8 March 1923, R6.

⁶⁰ V to S/S, 22 March 1923, R6.

⁶¹ V to S/S, ptel. 242, 24 March 1923, R17.

to certification of the salt tax would be, and most of them replied that, though the effect would not be good, they felt that any storm that resulted could be weathered and that the impact on the Moderates would have been dispelled by the time of the elections.⁶² Lloyd, however, thought that the impact on the Moderates would be more serious and wrote that it was 'of the utmost importance to maintain the very decided political supremacy which the moderate party have now gained and to do nothing which might injure that supremacy at any rate until after the elections.'⁶³ Reading looked for every means of compromise he could find, but the Assembly could not agree on alternative sources of revenue and on 26 March they rejected the increased salt tax by 58 votes to 47.⁶⁴ Consequently, Peel was forced to certify the increase. Privately he admitted that it would have been much more difficult to certify the increase if the non-co-operation movement had been as active as one year previously, and there had been a real prospect of a campaign to refuse payment of taxes.⁶⁵ Reading calculated that the political consequences of the certification were likely to be limited to 'certain journalistic and political elements and will not extend to the general population.'⁶⁶ However, he did expect that it would have a deleterious effect on the electoral prospects of the Moderates and 'will probably result in the return of a larger number of non-co-operators than we should otherwise have expected.'⁶⁷ This did not greatly worry the Government, partly because they expected that the Swarajists would only be in a minority in any of the re-elected

⁶² V to S/S, ptel. 247, 26 March 1923, R17.

⁶³ Idem & Lloyd to Reading, ptel. 348, 25 March 1923, R25. A little later he sent Reading a telegram informing him of the views of his Liberal Minister Setalvad that certification would make the position of the Moderates impossible at the election. Lloyd to Reading, ptel. 366, 29 March 1923, R25.

⁶⁴ The Council of State passed the budget by a majority of 18, which gave the Government some minor satisfaction as it represented (marginally) a non-official majority in favour of increasing the salt tax. See V(HD) to S/S, ptel. 240, 24 March 1923, R12.

⁶⁵ Idem.

⁶⁶ Idem. His prediction was proved correct on the whole; the agitation was confined largely to the legislatures and the newspapers. See V(HD) to S/S, tel. D-128-Pol., 14 May 1923, R12.

⁶⁷ Idem.

Councils, and partly because they felt that the return of some Swarajists would have a beneficial effect in forcing the Moderates into a role that was more supportive of the Government. The issue was now a constitutional one rather than an economic one, as Reading recognised; it was a matter of determining where the ultimate financial power lay in the new constitution, with the Governor-General in Council or with the legislature.⁶⁸

The matter was raised again in the next session of the Legislative Assembly when a motion was moved to amend the Government of India Act (section 67-B) with the effect that the power of certification would be taken away.⁶⁹ Hailey countered the resolution by stating his own genuine belief that the Assembly had already got more power to influence policy, for instance by using the Standing Committees which had been established from members of the Legislature to advise on Finance and most of the other government departments.⁷⁰ There was much to be said in favour of Hailey's argument, for the Legislative Assembly had indeed won major concessions in the battle for influence over government policy.⁷¹ But this was little consolation to the Liberals, who were looking for more solid signs of constitutional achievement. In February 1923 they met in Delhi under the presidency of Sapru, now no longer a member of government, to discuss a programme for attaining self-governing status within the Empire. This was to lead eventually in November 1924 to an all-parties convention and in 1925 the Commonwealth of India Bill which had a first reading in the House of Commons.⁷²

⁶⁸ V to S/S ptel. 345, 11 May 1923, R17; V(HD) to S/S, tel. 348, 14 May 1923, R12.

⁶⁹ Sinha, *Reading*, p. 116.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-17.

⁷¹ For instance, in January 1922 the Assembly's financial powers were increased by the Income Tax Bill which laid down the lines on which the collection of income tax should be carried out, but left the imposition of any particular tax as a matter to come before the legislature every year. See *Report on Reading's Administration*, p.3, R33b.

⁷² For details of the history of the Bill see A. Besant, *India: Bond or Free?*, Madras, 1939, pp. 225-46.

From the British point of view, relations with the first Assembly had been relatively good and Reading pointed out that,

apart from the Budget, the Legislature has not done so badly. Among the very important items it passed the Racial Distinctions Bill and accepted our resolutions on the Fiscal problem. It easily gets out of hand from our point of view when it becomes suspicious- as alas it does too easily- of the reasons for speeches and actions at home.

Reading cited Lloyd George's 'steel frame' speech and the appointment of the Royal Commission on the Services as examples.⁷³ Reading had put his finger on a key point in relations between the British administration and Indian constitutionalists under the new reforms. Whereas, under Chelmsford, Indians had seen the Secretary of State as their defence against an unsympathetic Viceroy, now the situation was reversed. Under the reforms it was the Viceroy who was seen to be defending Indian interests on a range of issues, including the setting of tariffs, reductions in military expenditure, Indianisation of the services, the status of Indians overseas, and 'repressive' legislation. This was not just a matter of changing personnel, as Montagu, the most liberal of Secretaries of State, had come to see himself in the role of last-line of defence of British and imperial interests on a number of these issues. Yet Montagu had been aware of the need for the further devolution of power if the reforms were to evolve successfully. If the Secretary of State intervened too much to maintain British interests it would restrict the freedom of manoeuvre of the Government of India and thereby provoke the sort of deadlock and consequent frustration on the part of the Assembly as had been the case with the legislature under the Morley-Minto reforms. Lytton pointed this problem out to Peel, and argued that, except in matters of the first importance, it was easier for the Secretary of State to give way in any dispute with the

⁷³ V to S/S, 22 March 1923, R6.

Government of India than for the reverse to take place. According to Lytton ' now the Viceroy has not only to accept the policy of the Secretary of State but he has to defend it as his own in the Indian legislature.'⁷⁴ Hailey had recognised this when he wrote of the sense of frustration in the Assembly in February 1922. He argued that

they have got practically everything they could out of Government. That is to say, they have a promise of the cancellation of the repressive laws and the Press Act; they have established the convention that our major taxation should be annual; and they have realized that they can, if they like, definitely refuse supply on any head of civil expenditure. But they are being brought up to a short turn when they try to do any of the things which Parliament could do, namely, to force the executive to action which it does not like or resign in the alternative; they cannot touch the Army and they cannot really touch the pay of the all-India services. They are in consequence suffering from a kind of ennui. If they had complete powers, it is quite possible that they might really identify themselves with us, but we are getting back to the old state when the existence of restrictions drive them into fructuous [sic] opposition. I really believe that the present state of things can[not] continue for the ten years provided by the Government of India Act. We have given them either too much or too little.⁷⁵

Willingdon was coming to similar conclusions in Madras and wanted to go over completely to provincial autonomy. He was sure that in some provinces the British had given too little and that the only way to win the support of Indian politicians was to give them real power at the provincial level and allow the local Governor to use his skills to keep the system running smoothly. Montagu had foreseen that the transitional constitutional system was bound to create frustrations as all transitional systems do, but dyarchy proved to be a particularly frustrating half-way house and the financial problems that beset governments in the first councils exacerbated the difficulties. The financial problems of the central government

⁷⁴ Lytton to Peel, 20 April 1922, L10.

⁷⁵ Hailey to Howard (IO), 4 Feb. 1922, WH5A.

emphasised the crises over Indianisation of the services, the role of the Indian army and over fiscal autonomy. In the provinces, the financial difficulties meant that the nation-building departments which had been transferred to Indian control had been starved of additional funds and this in turn meant that ministers had less to show for their term in office than would have been the case in time of prosperity.

2. The Indian Civil Service Under the Reforms

Their every word is a command, every sentence a decree, accepted by the people, accepted willingly with trust in their judgement and fairness which might be the pride of our race. I can see no period when the Indians can dispense with the guidance and assistance of the small nucleus of the British Civil Service of British officials in India- this twelve hundred in a population of three hundred and fifteen million. They are the steel frame of the whole structure. I do not care what you build on to it- if you take that steel frame out the fabric will collapse.

*Lloyd George, House of Commons, 2 Aug. 1922.*⁷⁶

Lloyd George's famous peroration in defence of the British Services in India (known thereafter as the 'steel-frame' speech) caused a furore in India, especially amongst Moderate Indian politicians. Reading reported that his three Indian Members 'expressed their profound feeling of mistrust and dissatisfaction caused by the speech.'⁷⁷ Sapru felt particularly strongly and threatened to resign unless satisfactory clarification was received. Reading received a deputation on 22 August to seek reassurance that the speech did not mark a reversal of the previous reforms policy, for the promise of Indianisation of the Services had been as important a part of the August 1917 declaration as the promise of constitutional reforms.⁷⁸ Indeed

⁷⁶ 157 H.C. Deb. 5s., col. 1513.

⁷⁷ V to S/S, ptel. 642, 12 Aug. 1922, R16.

⁷⁸ A copy of the draft text of leading passages of the Viceroy's reply may be found, with other material relating to the British response to the outcry created by the Prime Minister's speech, in L/P&J/6/1819.

Lloyd George had touched on the latter issue in his speech as well and reminded his listeners that the reforms were in the nature of an experiment and that to prove the success of the experiment Indians must 'show themselves mastering not only the legislatures but also the more humdrum tasks of administration if they are to increase their role.'⁷⁹

It was not only Indians who were dismayed by Lloyd George's rare public intervention in Indian affairs.⁸⁰ Reading was caught by surprise in that he had only just completed writing his views on a draft of the speech which Lord Peel had sent him and was caught off balance by the earliness of its delivery. He pointed out to Peel that the speech had the dual effect of antagonising the Moderates, who were particularly confused by the hints of extra expenditure, e.g. on enlarging the Viceroy's Council and Secretariat, at a time when they were facing a large budget deficit, whilst not providing the Services with the concrete reassurances as to their pay and conditions for which they were looking.⁸¹ The Presidency Governors unanimously condemned the impact of the speech; Lytton reporting that it had 'done incalculable mischief out here.'⁸²

Peel hastily reassured Reading that no change of policy was intended by the speech. In fact Peel had drafted the speech himself and was obviously rather annoyed that, in his oratorical fervour, Lloyd George had departed from the set text.⁸³ Peel rather sheepishly tried to explain to Reading what had gone wrong:

He [Lloyd George] was making a dramatic point in contrasting the small number of civil servants with the vast population of India. In

⁷⁹ 157 H.C. Deb. 5s., col. 1513.

⁸⁰ During the making of the Montford reforms Lloyd George seems to have shown little interest in Indian affairs. See Danzig, 'The Announcement of August 20th., 1917', p. 23.

⁸¹ V to S/S, ptel. 632, 8 Aug. 1922, R16.

⁸² Lytton to Peel, 24 Aug. 1922, L10. See also Willingdon to Peel, 15 Aug. 1922 & 22 Aug. 1922, W4.

⁸³ Peel to Lytton, 31 Aug. 1922, L7.

talking about the nucleus he intended to suggest that for some time to come, as most reasonable Indians agree, a complete Indianisation would not be possible, and that the retention of a British element would be necessary. Perhaps he gave rather a long extension to the date in order to reassure intending candidates here. But unfortunately he spoke of 'this nucleus' instead of 'a nucleus' and seemed, therefore, to suggest that the nucleus was to be the whole existing British service.⁸⁴

Lloyd George had two main audiences in mind when he made his speech.

Firstly, he was, as Peel indicated, looking to reassure intending British candidates for the Indian Services and those already working in India. Secondly, he was looking to re-establish his leadership of what was a predominantly Conservative administration. There was growing disquiet within the Conservative Party at their being led by a radical Liberal. Furthermore, Lloyd George had weakened his position by the 'honours for sale' scandal and in the eyes of many Conservatives had pursued a reckless policy with regard to Empire.⁸⁵ Many believed that his policies were leading to the loss of Ireland and Egypt, and that, in India, the Government had been very slow to deal firmly with non-co-operation and had consequently undermined British morale.⁸⁶ Perhaps the clearest indication of the problem had been posed by the Prince of Wales when he returned home after his much-troubled winter tour of India. The Prince had clearly been hurt by the bad reception that he had received in parts of India especially from students in the United Provinces. He seems to have carried home the firm conviction that the Government of India needed strengthening in more ways than one. So seriously did Lloyd George take the Prince's opinions that he invited him to a meeting at Downing Street on 6 July 1922, along with Lords Peel and Winterton from the India Office and Sir Malcolm Hailey of the Viceroy's Council, who was on home leave. A number of items were on the agenda of this

⁸⁴ Peel to Reading, 10 Aug. 1922, R5.

⁸⁵ Peel to Lytton, 27 July 1922, L17. For more details on the fall of the Lloyd George coalition, see M. Kinnear, *The Fall of Lloyd George. The Political Crisis of 1922*, London, 1973.

⁸⁶ V. Chirol to H. Butler, 22 Feb. 1922, B37.

meeting, but the problem of future recruitment of the services was one of the most important issues. Peel and Hailey were agreed that recruitment of Britons to the Services was going very badly in the years since the war. Peel said that he had made enquiries from headmasters of schools at Oxford and Cambridge, and among parents and he found that there was 'a feeling that in eight years' time more of the higher posts would be open to Indians, and the British entrants would run the risk if being turned out at the age of thirty-five or forty without a pension.'⁸⁷ The Downing Street meeting led to further enquiries being mounted into possible reforms but no concrete action. The significance of the meeting lay partly in the fact that it led directly to the 'steel-frame' speech which provided a minimum-cost interim sop to the Services, but also in the marked shift which it signified in the relationship between London and Delhi in the governing of India.⁸⁸

During 1922 Lloyd George was attempting to assert Whitehall's ultimate authority in the governing of India, especially in matters concerning the All-India Services. This partly resulted from a lack of confidence in Reading's administration, certainly a belief that Reading had not treated the problem of the Services with sufficient urgency.⁸⁹ But also there was a widespread feeling that Reading was too sensitive to the opinions of the Indian Members of his Council and to the Legislative Assembly⁹⁰ Unquestionably this was held to be the case in the slowness with which he undertook the arrest of Gandhi, a caution which seemed unnecessary with hindsight. But there were other examples as well, where the Viceroy seemed to defend Indian interests as against those of the mother country: in the matters of tariff reform, imperial preference and also the treatment of Indians

⁸⁷ Note of a conversation held at 10 Downing Street, on 6 July 1922. Secret no. 51, *WH5a*.

⁸⁸ A similar argument is made by Ann Ewing, 'The Indian Civil Service 1919-1924: Service Discontent and the Response in London and Delhi.' *Modern Asian Studies*, 18,1 (1984), pp. 33-53.

⁸⁹ This is well detailed in Ewing, *op. cit.*, especially pp. 39-46.

⁹⁰ F.W. Duke to Lytton, 1 March 1923, *L24*.

overseas, for instance. In an important letter to Reading, in which he conveyed the results of his Downing Street meeting and notified Reading that he would speak in the Commons in a week's time on the matter of the Services, Lloyd George had argued that,

as the Government of India becomes more Parliamentary in character, the Viceroy and his Advisers must tend to speak and act more and more as representatives of Indian opinion, and the duties of arbiter must by that very fact in future fall less upon the Government of India and more upon the Government at home.⁹¹

Lloyd George had put his finger on an important anomaly in the Montford reforms. Conservatives, like Curzon, had been persuaded at the time the reforms were being passed through Parliament that there was to be an administrative devolution of power to the provinces and that the process of democratisation would be focused on this level of government and would largely leave the central government untouched. Consequently they agreed to reduce the interference of Parliament and the India Office in certain Indian affairs. The most important example of this devolution of power was the fiscal autonomy convention but there were many other examples of the reduction of the role of the India Office. In fact what happened in the working of the reforms, as men like Montagu must have expected, was that the Imperial Legislative Assembly, with an elected Indian majority, attempting to work in co-operation with Provincial Governments with elected Indian Ministers, inevitably had to respond to democratic pressures.⁹² The constant use of the Viceroy's powers of certification was, as Reading quickly realised, a practical impossibility if the reforms were to survive. Reading's personal commitment to working with his Indian Councillors and the Legislative Assembly as far as possible only brought the true nature of the reforms to

⁹¹ Lloyd George to Reading, 26 July 1922, R21.

⁹² For Montagu's position at the time of the making of the Reforms, see Danzig, 'Many-Layered Cake', pp. 67-8.

the surface quicker than might otherwise have been the case.

Reading, of course, resisted Lloyd George's interference and possessed all the power of the man on the spot to do so successfully. Most of the ideas for reform that had been spawned at the Downing Street conference fell by the wayside. However, the differences between Whitehall and Delhi over the future of the British Services highlights a crucial problem in the working of the Montford reforms. For Indians, it was the most concrete indication of the reality of Britain's promises that India was being prepared for self-government in the not too distant future; for Britons serving in India, or intending to do so, it was indicative of whether the Raj had a long-term future, and more immediately, whether they had a decent career in prospect. Thus the position of the Viceroy had become a difficult one; it was not a matter of his holding the balance between British and Indian interests, but rather his holding the balance between traditional British interests and the newer interests, which required a satisfactory working relationship with the Indian Legislatures.

The differences between the Viceroy and Secretary of State are epitomised by the fact that in early 1922 the two sides of government were pulling in entirely different directions. Reading, having failed to respond to pressures to do something for the Services, now wanted to make an announcement about Indianisation policy.⁹³ As Ann Ewing argues, the Government of India's responses were being shaped by the demands of the Legislative Assembly, where the Government faced a resolution tabled by Jamnadas Dwarkadas in the forthcoming session calling for future recruitment to the All-India Services (excepting the technical services) to be made, as far as possible in India.⁹⁴ The India Office was horrified at the proposed

⁹³ V(HD) to S/S, ptel. 1, 1 Jan. 1922, R11.

⁹⁴ See Ewing, 'The Indian Civil Service', p. 45. The debate, which took place on 11 Feb. 1922 may be found with India Office comments in L/P&J/6/1783. The Indian Liberal case on the Services was ably put by the mover, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, and the Government response was equally effectively argued by Sir William Vincent.

statement and Montagu sent a telegram to Reading virtually instructing him not to make any pronouncement and to stand by previous Government declarations relating to a policy of gradual Indianisation only.⁹⁵ Faced with an effective demand in the Assembly for faster Indianisation, which it was all the more difficult to deny in view of the lack of British candidates, the Government of India agreed with the Assembly to make enquiries of the local governments as to their views on increased Indianisation. The resulting circular to local governments seemed to take a very pessimistic view of the prospects of the European element in the Services and asked if the 'recruitment of Europeans for the appointments now included in the all-India Services should be discontinued or largely reduced'.⁹⁶ Unfortunately this circular, which seriously worried the India Office as it seemed to go against Montagu's telegraphed instructions earlier in the year, was leaked to the *Morning Post* and added to the feeling amongst the Services in India that the Government of India was selling them down the river.

This was the situation then when Lloyd George made the 'steel frame' speech. It seemed that the Home Government had to intervene to protect the stability of the Services in India and future recruitment as well. Of course, if there was one area where the Secretary of State had traditionally maintained control over policy it was in relation to the European Services and this continued to be specifically written into the 1919 Act. The problem of the Services in the post-war years was a very real one.⁹⁷ Within the existing cadre there were worries about their pay and conditions which seemed to be deteriorating in the post-war inflation and the decline

⁹⁵ S/S to V(HD), 7 Jan. 1922, L/P&J/6/1819.

⁹⁶ Letter from GI to all local governments and administrations, no. 120-ESTS, 30, May 1922, J & P/422 in L/P&J/6/1783.

⁹⁷ See Ewing, 'The Indian Civil Service'; R. Hunt & J. Harrison, *The District Officer in India 1930-1947*, London, 1982, pp. 2-4; T.H. Beaglehole, 'From Rulers to Servants: the I.C.S. and the British Demission of Power in India', *Modern Asian Studies*, II, 12, (1977), pp. 237-55; David C. Potter, 'Manpower Shortage and the End of Colonialism. The Case of the Indian Civil Service', *Modern Asian Studies*, 7, 1, (1973), pp. 47-73.

in the value of the rupee. In addition, there were uncertainties and dissatisfaction created by the new reforms. If there was to be large-scale Indianisation as envisaged in the reforms, what were the long-term prospects for officers currently serving? Some officers objected to the change in circumstances which they faced as a result of the reforms: civil servants found themselves working under the orders of Indian Ministers, some of whom seemed to prefer to make Indian appointments in the Services wherever they had the power to do so. One way or another, there seemed to be fewer and fewer of the 'plum' jobs for Britons to look forward to.⁹⁸ Montagu and Chelmsford had been worried that a reaction in the Services would damage their reforms and made allowance for officers who did not wish to work the new system to take their pensions early. All these factors worked their way though to a decline in the number of suitable British candidates for the Indian Services in the post-war years.⁹⁹ Montagu was well aware of the seriousness of the situation,¹⁰⁰ and forwarded to Reading, shortly after the latter's arrival in India, a note from an I.C.S. officer regarding his detailed income and expenditure, in order to show the reality of the Services' grievances.¹⁰¹

Shortly before Montagu was forced to resign from office, he had taken steps to appoint an informal committee to investigate the problems in recruiting Britons to the Services in India. Peel, Montagu's successor, went ahead with the committee and appointed Lord MacDonnell to chair it. The Committee reported in June 1922, confirming that the problem was a real one and offered a series of palliatives,

⁹⁸ Willingdon to Reading, 27 Sept. 1921, *R(P)75*.

⁹⁹ It was estimated by the Lee Commission that there was a shortfall of 125 European recruits for the I.C.S. in the years 1915 to 1923, whilst 12 Indians had been recruited over and above the numbers stipulated in the regulations. Report of Royal Commission on the Superior Civil Services in India, Cmd. 2128, 1924, p. 17, cited in Potter, 'Manpower Shortage...', p. 52.

¹⁰⁰ Potter points out that the India Office had first known of the problem in the winter of 1920-1921 when they received letters from Oxbridge colleges telling them of the decline in interest amongst students in an Indian career. *Idem*.

¹⁰¹ Montagu to Reading, 11 May 1921, *R3*.

including the subsidising of sea passages and housing for the European services.¹⁰² These sort of changes could be authorised without a Royal Commission, which the report felt would only exacerbate racial feeling, and also without reference to the Indian legislatures.¹⁰³

Relations between the two halves of Government seemed to reach another low point in January 1923 when Peel merely informed Delhi that he was going to implement allowances in pay to the European services to cover home travel and was only consulting the Viceroy about the timing of the announcement. The problem was compounded by the fact that the original difficulty over recruitment of Britons to the Services was now confused with the whole question of Indianisation and even more broadly with the call for a further instalment of constitutional reforms. Willingdon argued, with his usual vehemence, for a Royal Commission to be appointed to consider moves to provincial autonomy (which he was calling for in Madras) and, linked with this, the whole question of the future of the Services.¹⁰⁴ The latter was now quite out of the question in view of the dominance of conservative attitudes in Britain. However, as Sir F.W. Duke recognised, the question of Indianisation of the services should really have been dealt with at the same time as the reforms. Now the maintenance of All-India Services, which were being rapidly Indianised, was 'extravagant and unsatisfactory.' Duke believed that the answer might lie in re-examining the functions of the Services and seeing whether they couldn't be divided

¹⁰² That the report offered only palliatives was frankly acknowledged in a supplementary note, signed by all except the chairman (who thought it outside the terms of reference of his committee) which called for a far more fundamental review of the organisation of the Services in the light of the Reforms and increased Indianisation. Enclosure, W. Johnston (secretary to MacDonnell committee) to Peel, 21 June 1922. Documents relating to the MacDonnell Committee may be found together in L/P&J/6/1800.

¹⁰³ The Committee felt it was important to avoid the 'legislatures continually intervening in such questions as officers' allowances.' Ibid, p. 7. The report throws interesting light on the serious differences between Whitehall and Delhi, claiming at one point that, 'the Governments in India...have tended in certain cases to postpone the maintenance of law and order to political considerations.' Ibid, p. 4, para 14.

¹⁰⁴ Willingdon to Peel, 7 Jan. 1923, W4.

more effectively into a predominantly English, but much slimmed-down, All-India Service, and a set of enlarged and Indianised provincial Services.¹⁰⁵

Peel had conflicting advice as to how to proceed from many quarters and in the end chose the truly British path of appointing a Royal Commission with an impartial (i.e. ignorant of India) chairman, Viscount Lee of Fareham.¹⁰⁶ F.W. Duke, advising Peel at the India Office, obviously felt that the failure of the Government of India to come up with constructive solutions, or even to appear to take the problem seriously enough, left the Secretary of State with no alternative.¹⁰⁷ The Royal Commission would partly serve as a public relations exercise to convince Indian opinion of the necessity of improving the pay and conditions of the services. The establishment of the Commission was popular with few people in India, whether from the European or Indian community.¹⁰⁸ However, both Lytton and Lloyd came to agree that it was better to have a Commission than to keep waiting for London or Delhi to come up with a solution.¹⁰⁹

Reading naturally did not like the appointment of the Commission but was particularly angry that, after the Committee was announced, Peel tried unilaterally to

¹⁰⁵ F.W. Duke to Lytton, 18 Jan. 1923, L24.

¹⁰⁶ Peel advised Delhi of his decision to go ahead with a commission in January 1923. He stressed that it did not bring into question the constitutional reforms but was a necessary corollary to them. The main question, he insisted, was to be that of the functions that the European element of the service should perform in future. The question of pay and conditions was an integral but subsidiary part of the enquiry. See S/S to V(HD), ptel. 55, 18 Jan. 1923, R12.

¹⁰⁷ F.W. Duke to Lytton, 1 Mar. 1923, L24.

¹⁰⁸ For the doubts of provincial governors, see Hailey to Sapru, 28 Jan. 1923, SAP, 2nd. series ; Lytton to Peel, 1 Feb. 1923, L10. In the Legislative Assembly an adjournment motion was successfully passed which protested at the appointment of a Royal Commission. The National Party and the Democratic Party were joined in the vote by the European members. However, whilst the Democratic favoured boycotting the commission, the National Party favoured giving evidence to it. See V(HD) to S/S, ptel. S-2220-Ests., 30 Jan. 1923. R12. The U.P. Liberal Conference meeting at Benares on 23 & 25 Aug. 1923 recorded its opinion that the appointment of the commission was an 'unnecessary and unjustified' new expense on a hard-pressed Indian budget, and that the composition of the Commission was 'unsatisfactory to India'. Enclosure with covering letter to Lee Commission, Q/SCS/5/174.

¹⁰⁹ Lytton to Peel, 4 April 1923, L10.

increase the pay of the European Services to take account of increased travel costs.¹¹⁰ However, he tried to limit the inevitable damage caused by the setting up the Commission, by ensuring that Indians did not see it merely as an exercise in justifying large pay increases to the white *sahibs*.¹¹¹ Originally Peel proposed to have an English chairman, four English members and three Indian members, but Reading insisted on equality between Indians and Britons among the ordinary membership.¹¹² Reading worked hard to find Indian representatives who would be acceptable to Indian opinion but not hostile to the continuation of the European element in the Services. Peel had wanted to avoid Indians who were 'too political' and gave as examples Sapru, Aiyer and Sastri.¹¹³ Reading was not to be steamrollered and suggested the Liberal politician Chimanlal Setalwad, who was a member of the Bombay Executive Council and he would have served but for the fact that the Commission turned out to require the presence of its members in England at the start of their proceedings.¹¹⁴ Setalwad was reluctant to leave India just when the Indian Liberal Party needed working into shape for the forthcoming elections.¹¹⁵ Another Liberal, N.M. Samarth, filled the vacancy and was accompanied by Bhupendra Nath Basu in addition to Kaul and Sir Muhammed Habibullah. Peel to some extent got his way though by appointing the arch-reactionary, Sir Reginald Craddock, to the Committee, in addition to a not very

¹¹⁰ See S/S to Viceroy (H.D.), ptel., 16 Jan. 1923, L/P&J/6/1800. In reply Reading wrote that such a decision '...would attract universal and unfavourable attention not only in the Legislative Assembly but amongst politically minded Indians generally'. Viceroy (H.D.) to S/S, ptel., 26 Jan. 1923, *idem*.

¹¹¹ Reading was sensitive to the needs of the Moderate Party just after the certification of the Salt Tax and before the preparations for the second elections in November 1923. V to S/S, ptel. 8-C, 2 April 1923, R17.

¹¹² Reading to Lytton, 7 Aug 1923, L2.

¹¹³ S/S to V, ptel. 280, 9 March 1923, R17.

¹¹⁴ Peel was worried about Setalvad because he had been a contributor to the Minority Report on the Hunter Committee. S/S to V, ptel. 27 April 1923, R17. He was reassured by George Lloyd who assured the Secretary of State that though Setalvad wanted Indianisation a great deal faster than Lloyd thought wise, he would treat the issue fairly. Lloyd to Reading, ptel., 2 May 1923, R25.

¹¹⁵ Setalvad to C.F. Adam (P.S. Governor of Bombay), 24 June 1923 R25.

strong team of Petrie, Jackson and Reginald Coupland, with Arthur Lee, a Tory politician who was keen to be of public service, as chairman.¹¹⁶ Reading also ensured that the terms of reference were limited so that only administrative and not political considerations were dealt with.¹¹⁷

The Lee Commission, as Ann Ewing argues, was 'disfigured by internal dissent.'¹¹⁸ In the end a unanimous report was, by some miracle, achieved. This had great significance in raising the pay and conditions of the Services and turning the tide which had been so set against the prospects of continuing European recruitment. The Commission also planned a phased programme of equal recruitment of Indian and Britons until parity in the total cadre was reached by 1939. The Lee Report, which was estimated to cost nearly Rs.125 million p.a. to implement, was met by a furore in India and the benefits to Britons described as 'Lee Loot' by Indian Liberals.¹¹⁹ But by that time, the Liberals no longer formed the key to the Indian response. During 1922 and 1923 they had, however, been an important consideration in the thinking of the Government of India. Reading's treatment of the Services issue was dominated by his belief that Indianisation was inevitable, not only because of the promises of the reforms, but also because it offered one important path through the financial problems the Government was facing. Reading therefore recognised the limits to British action set by the need to keep the support of Indian moderate opinion.¹²⁰ It was the Secretaries of State, Montagu and Peel, who fought for

¹¹⁶ For revealing comments on the English component of the Commission see the comments of Ruth Lee, the wife of the chairman, in A. Clark, *A Good Innings. The Private Papers of Viscount Lee of Fareham*, London, 1974, p. 250. For Lytton's apprehensions re. the influence of Craddock, see Lytton to Peel, 19 June 1923, L10.

¹¹⁷ Ewing, 'The Indian Civil Service...', p. 50.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 49.

¹¹⁹ Potter, 'Manpower Shortage...', p. 54.

¹²⁰ The extent to which Reading was influenced by the Indian political situation tends to undermine Potter's argument that the decolonisation process stemmed essentially from problems in the mother country relating to recruitment. British decisions about the ratio of Europeans to Indians were decided in this crucial period not by any shortage of recruits, but by the need for the successful implementation
(continued...)

the Services and as Ewing argues, highlighted important anomalies in the reforms: the ICS 'stood outside the Constitution', answerable neither to the Government of India nor to the elected Provincial Assemblies.¹²¹

3. Repeal of 'Repressive' and Discriminatory Legislation

Reading, whose appointment nearly coincided with the start of the reformed councils, was as keen as his predecessor that the reforms should be a success. It was particularly important in view of mounting non-co-operation to show Indians that the reforms were not a sham, but that they offered real power and influence over government decision-making. One key area for implementing this policy was with regard to so-called 'repressive legislation'. Both Montagu and Reading shared an instinctive dislike of measures against the press or against individuals which allowed for Government officers to make arbitrary decisions without reference to ordinary legal procedure, for instance the power under the Press Act of 1910 to demand financial deposits as security from newspapers to ensure their future good behaviour.¹²² Montagu had pressed Chelmsford for a long time to repeal repressive legislation.¹²³ However, whilst some members of Government felt that the laws were a cumbersome and unpopular weapon in Government hands, a number of local Governments were hostile to repeal and the events in the Punjab in

¹²⁰ (...continued)

of the Reforms. It was need to work with moderate Indian nationalism that set the limits to the sort of protection that successive Secretaries of State argued for. See Potter, 'Manpower Shortage...', especially p. 73.

¹²¹ Ewing, 'The Indian Civil Service...', p. 52.

¹²² Rumbold points out that a Privy Council decision in 1919 overturned the previous interpretation of the Act, namely that it did not allow judicial appeal against demands for a deposit or their forfeiture. *Watershed*, p. 234.

¹²³ B. Ramusack, *The Princes of India in the Twilight of Empire*, Ohio, 1978, p. 123.

1919 seemed to justify caution.¹²⁴ Chelmsford took no decision on the matter until near the end of his term of office. Even at that point, he was keen not to tie the hands of his successor and therefore promised the Legislature on 22 February 1921 that the Government would establish bodies with non-official majorities to enquire into the Press Act and repressive legislation.¹²⁵ There were in fact two committees established, both chaired by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. Reading and his Council indicated to the two official members of the Press Act Committee, Sapru and Vincent, that the Government could accept a decision to repeal the Press Act, provided that certain powers were maintained by incorporation in other acts.¹²⁶

In June 1921 the Committee presented its report, which recommended repeal of the 1908 and 1910 Acts, to Government. Certain parts of the old Acts which were to be retained would now form part of the penal code. The Government of India was keen to implement the recommendations of the committee but came into conflict with Whitehall over one issue in particular: the fact that the committee decided not to make special provision to protect Princely States which were attacked in the press of British India.¹²⁷ Initially, the Government of India had regarded such protection as a *sine qua non* of an acceptable report.¹²⁸ However, Reading's basic belief was that 'we should not endeavour to get [the] Committee to agree to recommendations which would not have the support of the Assembly', and he noted that none of the Indian Princes would give evidence before the Committee, so that their case tended to

¹²⁴ See, for example, the views of W. Marris, as cited in N.G. Barrier, *Banned. Controversial Literature and Political Control in British India, 1907-1947*, Missouri, 1974, p.80.

¹²⁵ Rumbold states that Reading's decision marked a great victory for the Moderates, because any committee of Indian politicians would inevitably recommend repeal of these enactments and it was predictable that the government, in their anxiety to keep on terms with the legislature would then not resist their disappearance.' Rumbold, *Watershed*, pp. 234-5. Robb also argues that Chelmsford expected the committees to lead to the repeal of a wide-range of repressive Acts. See Robb, *Government of India*, pp. 281-3.

¹²⁶ Reading was clearly aware of the potential electoral advantage to the Moderates of being seen to have been responsible for repealing the Press Act. V to S/S(HD), ptel. 426, 22 May 1921, R10.

¹²⁷ V to S/S, ptels. 489 & 571, 11 June & 5 July 1921, R10.

¹²⁸ *Idem*.

go by default.¹²⁹ Montagu felt bound to press for reconsideration of this issue in view of 'the past history of the matter and the notorious frequency of blackmail by disreputable papers.'¹³⁰ He warned that if there was any general demand for protection voiced by the Council of Princes, meeting in November 1921, 'I should find it difficult to approve of a bill for repeal of the Press laws unless it contained a provision dealing with the question of protection of the Ruling Princes.'¹³¹ Not surprisingly, the Princes who were represented in the Council of Princes, were virtually unanimous in deploring the loss of their protection, but, just as predictably, Indian politicians remained opposed to any special measures to protect the princes.¹³² In the new year Reading took advice from local governments and political officers and found that they were generally in favour of the necessity of special measures to protect the princes.¹³³ He determined to pass the bill repealing the Press Act and then to return to the Assembly later in the year with another Bill affording the Princes special protection. The repeal went through the Legislative Assembly on 25 March and on the same day the new Secretary of State, Lord Peel, sent an urgent telegram saying that he would use his powers under the 1919 Government of India Act (section 69) to disallow the new legislation unless provision for protection of the princes was made.¹³⁴ This was a most unfortunate start to relations between Reading and Peel. Reading protested that the Legislature would see

¹²⁹ Ramusack argues that John Wood, the political secretary, who was responsible for presenting the princes' case before the committee, was not very effective in doing so. See Ramusack, *Princes*, pp. 123-4.

¹³⁰ S/S to V(HD), ptel. 1050, 4 Aug. 1921, R10.

¹³¹ S/S to V, ptel. 1617, 14 Nov. 1921, R10.

¹³² Ramusack, *Princes*, pp. 124-5. Reading had brought the matter up in his Council and found that 'strong opinions were expressed that the Assembly would not pass any law giving the protection to Ruling Princes, and it is obvious that dissatisfaction with the administration of States by ruling Princes prevails.' V to S/S, ptel. 727, 6 Aug. 1921, R10.

¹³³ V (Leg. Dept.) to S/S, ptel. 6380, 14 Oct. 1922, R11. The more dynamic figure of J.P. Thompson replaced Wood as Political Secretary in March 1922 and statistics were discovered that there had in fact been some 170 hostile criticisms and attacks on the states in the twelve months ending May 1921 and nearly 20 instances of action taken under the Press Act (including warnings) concerning the princes and not just 3 cases as the Press Act Committee was told.

¹³⁴ Ramusack, *Princes*, p. 126.

Peel's refusal to allow the legislation to be implemented as 'a serious blow to their independence'.¹³⁵ Reading had no choice though but to comply with Peel's wishes. Vincent now argued that circumstances had changed since he had participated in the Press Act Committee and rather than 'leave the Princes with a real grievance' he would reluctantly agree to special legislation.¹³⁶ Sapru, however, opposed the measure strongly as he 'was not convinced that we are specifically bound by engagement or honour to grant this protection, and on general grounds of his dissatisfaction with autocratic rule of Princes and the want of redress to oppressed subjects by appeal to the Government of India'.¹³⁷ Sapru's views were overruled, however, and the new bill was introduced to the Legislative Assembly on 23 September 1922 where it was defeated by 45 votes to 41. As a result Reading was forced to certify the bill, though he indicated that he would use it only in the most extreme cases.¹³⁸ The debate had aired issues of great importance for the future, but had also served to show serious rifts between Peel and Reading, and also between Reading and the legislature. It was the first time that Reading had had to certify a measure and Peel's comment that it was a good thing that certification was first used on a matter between Indians was not likely to have been well-received by the Viceroy.¹³⁹

As soon as the Press Act Committee completed its work, Sapru took the chair of the Committee dealing with Repressive Laws. The Committee began its meetings

¹³⁵ V(HD) to S/S, ptel. 534, 7 July 1922, R11.

¹³⁶ Note by W. Vincent, 1 Aug. 1922, Home Poll 258, 1923, cited in Ramusack, *Princes*, p. 127.

¹³⁷ V to S/S, ptel. 644, 12 Aug. 1922, R16. It speaks a great deal for Sapru's integrity that he stuck to his guns on this issue even at the cost of alienating himself from the princes, a number of whom were, and would be in the future, his legal clients. See Ramusack, *Princes*, p. 127.

¹³⁸ Reading salvaged his conscience by arguing that his Government had refused to give the princes greater protection than that afforded by the now repealed Press Act, whilst they discarded the unpopular method of demanding securities from papers in favour of taking the matter to judicial trial. They had safeguarded legitimate criticism and required the sanction of the Governor-General in Council to prosecutions. See V(Leg. Dept.) to S/S ptel., 14 Oct. 1922, R11.

¹³⁹ G.R. Isaacs, *Rufus Isaacs*, vol. 2, p. 262., cited in Ramusack, *Princes*, p. 128.

in July and completed its report by September. As with the Press Acts, some of the group of laws conferring special powers on the executive to imprison or deport without trial had fallen into disuse as the Montford reforms came into operation. However, as the effects of the non-co-operation movement became more widespread, British policy-makers must have wondered whether the decision to review the repressive laws was a wise one. The wartime Defence of India Act was due to expire soon, whilst the Rowlatt Act had never been used after the furore that accompanied its introduction. Regulation III of 1818 was an antique measure but was still useful to retain in the Government armoury whilst Congress turned to new methods of agitation. Sapru realised that, to a large extent, he was swimming against the official tide in looking to repeal measures like the Seditious Meetings Act, and he sought to achieve a workable compromise between official caution and Indian desires for the Government to confine itself to using powers approved of by the legislature.¹⁴⁰

When the report was received by Reading's administration they decided to accept it. As with the Press Acts, the Executive Council had agreed on policy with Sapru and Vincent before the committee began its deliberations and it was felt that, even if political circumstances had since changed, it was unwise to undermine the position of the two Government representatives.¹⁴¹ Additionally Reading recognised that if the Government refused to repeal any of the recommended acts it was likely that private members would bring bills to the Assembly with the same purpose and thus embarrass the government.¹⁴² Montagu was worried about the Government losing some of its most effective powers at a time when the non-co-operation movement seemed to be entering a lawless phase, especially in Bengal. He was particularly concerned that Reading's government had accepted the report without

¹⁴⁰ Sapru to Chintamani, 28 July 1921, *SAP/C49*, 2nd. series.

¹⁴¹ V to S/S, ptel. 1096, 9 Nov. 1921, *R10*.

¹⁴² *Idem*.

consulting him.¹⁴³ After arguing for so many years against the use of these laws against political figures, he now found himself arguing for caution, particularly in repealing Regulation III of 1818 as the committee recommended. 'The substitution of legal process for executive action, on which I have set my heart, must be gradual', he told Reading, '...there is no harm in letting India know that the silly antics of the non-co-operationists are delaying the progress in that as in other matters.'¹⁴⁴

Reading, who had, of course, allowed local governments to use a number of repressive laws in his letter of 24 November 1921, was willing to allow Regulation III to remain on the statute books for the time being, and so a workable compromise was found.¹⁴⁵

Racial Distinctions Committee

One issue which Reading was very keen to come to grips with during his Viceroyalty was that of the discrimination that existed in law between whites and Indians. The latter strongly resented the fact that the law seemed to give protection to those whites, often planters and soldiers who physically attacked natives. This had been a long-standing problem, but it was one that threatened to become more serious as whites sometimes lashed out when they found that the newly-politicised Indian classes would not be cowed any longer. There was a large gap between the new theory of greater racial equality which formed the basis of the Montford reforms and the reality, particularly at the local level, of racial friction. Reading, like many of his predecessors, felt this was a crucial issue, and wrote to Montagu that, though he did not believe the instances of inequality or unjust treatment had become more frequent, he was 'convinced that we shall never persuade the Indians of the justice of our rule

¹⁴³ S/S to V, 10 Nov. 1921, M13 & R3.

¹⁴⁴ *Idem.*

¹⁴⁵ See V(HD) to S/S, ptel. 1227, 28 Dec. 1921, R10.

until we have overcome racial difficulties.¹⁴⁶ Reading reported that he was having the law examined and his interim belief was that the fault lay with the system of allowing Europeans to opt for jury trial and to be secure in the knowledge that at least half of the jury must be composed of Europeans. However, he admitted that the solution of the problem was not easy to find.¹⁴⁷

In the autumn session of the Legislative Assembly, Reading's Government was given the chance to initiate an enquiry into Racial Distinctions in the Criminal Procedure Code by a resolution on the matter by N.M. Samarth which was put forward on 15 September 1921.¹⁴⁸ The process of reform in this sphere was one that took much longer than Reading expected and involved him in dispute with Lord Peel, who was Secretary of State by the time the committee reported in July 1922. The report largely took the line of levelling up the legal standing that Indians had so that they enjoyed the same privileges as those enjoyed by Britons, rather than a levelling down process of taking away white privileges. However, the committee wanted a tighter definition of what constituted a 'European British subject' so that other Europeans, Americans, and Dominion subjects would not be able in future to claim these privileges. Secondly, British soldiers serving in India would only, in future, have the same rights as their civilian counterparts, unless the matter came under the jurisdiction of a military court. These matters were controversial: Peel saw himself acting as the final defence of the interests of the European community in India, whilst the Army Council at home fought to try to maintain the soldiers' privileges. Reading was keen to give legal effect to the report as soon as possible, particularly in view of the fact that the two members of his Government, Sapru and Vincent, who had been responsible for achieving the compromise embodied in the

¹⁴⁶ See V to S/S; 7 July 1921, R3, cited in Hyde, *Reading*, pp.355-6.

¹⁴⁷ *Idem*.

¹⁴⁸ See Sinha, *Reading*, p.89.

report, were due to retire at the end of the year.¹⁴⁹ Once again, Reading warned Peel against obstructing the changes, telling him that if they didn't go ahead non-official bills would be put up in the Legislative Assembly and they would not be so favourable to the European community.¹⁵⁰ Reading was referring the matter to Local Governments but was confident that they would approve in general, and that the European community's approval was to be found in the acceptance of the report's recommendations by their representative body, the European Association.¹⁵¹ Reading's prediction that Local Governments would accept the report proved correct, with the exception of the Bombay Government.¹⁵² Reading fought his case to the bitter end. He felt that the slightly lesser status now given to Dominion subjects, whilst not greatly diminishing their rights in practice, would prove a useful bargaining counter in any negotiations about the status of Indians overseas, whilst the changes relating to British soldiers raised an important principle of legal equity.¹⁵³

Eventually, in September 1923 the new legislation came into effect. In view of the fact that the issue had caused great feeling for at least the last forty years, Reading could feel a pride in reaching a successful compromise. His predecessor, Lord Ripon, had, in the 1880s, found himself forced to give way to the combined pressure of the European community in India when he tried to deal with similar matters, but by the 1920s there was to be no thwarting of the Indian majority legislature whilst it was backed by a sympathetic Viceroy.

¹⁴⁹ See V to S/S, ptel. 577, 25 July 1922, R11. Vincent was due for retirement and Sapru tendered his resignation on grounds of ill-health on 23 May 1922, but stayed in office until 8 Feb. 1923.

¹⁵⁰ *Idem.*

¹⁵¹ *Idem.*

¹⁵² Lloyd to Lytton, 12 Oct. 1922, L13.

¹⁵³ V(HD) to S/S, ptel. 28-C, 20 Dec. 1922, R11.

4. The Indian Liberals and Indians Overseas

The Indian Liberals made the issue of the status of Indians overseas, and particularly in Africa, very much their own. The efforts of the old Moderate school, Gandhi in South Africa and Gokhale in India, had kept the issue alive at the annual meetings of the Indian National Congress in the days when the Moderates dominated that body. Now, when Congress split in 1918, the role of watchdog of Indian interests within the Empire was maintained by the Liberal rump, whilst the Gandhian-dominated majority became embroiled in political struggles closer to home. As Benarsidas Chaturvedi, the champion of Fijian Indian indentured labourers, complained, it became harder and harder to get Congress to discuss, let alone pass, resolutions on the status of Indians overseas.¹⁵⁴ Unlike the Extremists, who saw the British Empire only as a means for India's repression, the Indian Liberals saw the Empire as having unique potential for the improvement of mankind and saw the treatment of fellow Indians in other parts of the Empire as a test case of the *bona fides* of the newly emerging British Commonwealth of Nations. Srinivasa Sastri could move British audiences to envisage Empire ideals of which they had, until then, not even dreamt. In one remarkable speech he told his listeners that,

...this great political organization [the British Commonwealth] stands unique amongst the political institutions of the world for one thing above all others...and that is the reconciliation of the East and the West, the bringing together in happy harmony the people of varied races and varied complexions, the blending together under one law, under one sovereign, under the Imperial Parliament, peoples of adverse nationalities, various cultures, hitherto felt in many other political organizations to be irreconcilable and never to be brought under one

¹⁵⁴ Benarsidas Chaturvedi to V.S.S. Sastri, 23 Dec. 1922, Sastri MSS, NMML. Also see R.G. Gregory, *India and East Africa: A History of Race Relations within the British Empire, 1890-1939*, Oxford, 1971, p. 230.

flag.¹⁵⁵

There were more direct factors behind Liberal interests as well; the Bombay merchants, who were the principal financiers of the Indian Liberal Party, had trade and financial links with the Indian communities in South and East Africa, and were keen to see the Indian communities overseas develop economically, socially and politically.¹⁵⁶

The Liberals were to find their imperial ideals sorely tested by events in East Africa in the years after the First World War. Leading Liberals, like Sastri and Sapru, were to serve India at the Imperial Conferences of 1921 and 1923 respectively, and were, by personal experience, to find both achievement and disillusionment. This disillusionment was an important part of the demise of the Indian Liberal Party, which depended so much on the goodwill of the Raj.

Indians in East Africa

Whereas before the war the main problem that Indians faced overseas was in South Africa, the centre of attention tended to shift after the war to East Africa.¹⁵⁷ The main reason for this was that Indians knew that their power to influence imperial decisions was in inverse relation to the status of the different African colonies. The Union of South Africa now had equivalent status to the white dominions, such as Canada or Australia, and its leader, Smuts, played a central role in war and post-war imperial decision-making. Whilst Indians continued to object to the inferior status of Indians in South Africa, they understood realistically that they

¹⁵⁵ Mehrotra, *India and the Commonwealth*, p. 158, n.5.

¹⁵⁶ E.g. Purshottamdas Thakurdas, the cotton broker, was Vice-President of the Indian Merchants Chamber which took a keen interest in the fate of Indians in East Africa. See, Thakurdas to Sir Thomas Holland, 16 Oct. 1920; Thakurdas to G.I., Commerce & Industry Dept., 20 Oct. 1920 & 22 Oct. 1920 in Thakurdas MSS, NMML. See also Pheroze Sethna to V.S.S. Sastri, 31 July 1923, Sethna MSS, NMML. Sethna was a prominent member of the Indian Merchants' Chamber.

¹⁵⁷ See Gregory, *India and East Africa*, p. 222.

did not have the leverage, moral or political, to ameliorate them. Crown colonies, such as the British protectorate of East Africa, soon to be known as Kenya colony, were ruled directly by Britain and therefore should be expected to maintain imperial principles and standards. Even lower down the rung, captured German territory in East Africa, soon to become the League of Nations Mandate territory of Tanganyika, was considered entirely open to international concern. Indeed, some Indians originally supported Montagu's idea that German East Africa should become a colony for Indians to settle in.¹⁵⁸ In view of all the promises of national self-determination and the talk of trusteeship that was in the air during and after the Great War it is not perhaps surprising that this Indian imperial enterprise should come to nothing. However, Montagu had wanted the ex-German territory for Indian settlement precisely because he foresaw the likelihood that Indians would be excluded from settlement elsewhere by white settlers.¹⁵⁹ This prediction was rapidly proved correct. In the post-war economic depression white settlers looked to safeguard their future from Indian competition. The whites had good reason to feel threatened, they were outnumbered in the East Africa protectorate by Indians by at least two to one, and Indian immigration was proceeding at twice the rate of European immigration.¹⁶⁰ The Governor of Madras, Willingdon, could sympathise with the white man's fear of being swamped and argued in somewhat basic terms that,

This theory on the part of the Indian that Empire citizenship must mean to him the opening of the colonist's door to him in all parts of the British Empire can't be upheld. He breeds so much faster than the

¹⁵⁸ The idea that German East Africa should be acquired for the purposes of Indian settlement is included in Gokhale's 'political testament'. See 'Memo by Gokhale on Provincial Autonomy', n.d., [Feb. 1915?], enclosure to G. Barnes to Chelmsford, 10 Aug 1916, C51.

¹⁵⁹ See Montagu to Chelmsford, 23 Dec. 1918, M2.

¹⁶⁰ Gregory, *India and East Africa*, p.177. The 1921 census gave the following population figures for East Africa Protectorate, which in July 1920 became the Kenya Colony and Protectorate. Kenya: Europeans, 9,651; Indians 25,253; Africans 2,483,500.

white man that he'd swamp the Empire in one hundred years.¹⁶¹

The Issues

There were three main considerations for the white settlers. The first was to restrict Indian immigration, the second to maintain and expand the concept of land segregation which had been applied *de facto* but not *de jure*, third to maintain white political supremacy by keeping Indian political participation at a bare minimum. Immigration restriction did not pose as great a problem as the other issues in that there was no immediate prospect of any large influx of Indians into East Africa. Such restrictions as already existed did not have a racial basis, but required only that immigrants should deposit a certain amount of money on entry.

The problem of land segregation posed more important problems. It was not that Indians particularly wanted to settle the highland areas but they objected to any attempt to treat this as a closed issue, a legal right of the whites. Furthermore, they strongly objected to the spread of land segregation, particularly in the municipalities, which would hit their livelihood. Matters were made worse by the fact that the whites argued for this sort of segregation on grounds of hygiene, an argument calculated to cause grave offence to the Indian community.

The final problem, that of the vote, opened up a plethora of issues of principle. The most interesting issue, but one that both communities tried to play down, was whether the majority community, the Africans, should form part of the democratic process. There was tacit agreement between the whites and Indians that democracy was intended for 'civilised' communities only, so that the blacks would be excluded from the franchise, at least for the present. However, the whites found it increasingly useful to argue their case in terms of 'native paramountcy' and trusteeship. Only the Europeans, it was argued, could hold the ring for the future interests of the Africans.

¹⁶¹ Willingdon to Reading, 21 May 1923, in R25; Willingdon to Peel, 21 Apr. 1923, W4.

Indian representatives, like Sastri, saw through this hypocrisy but have themselves been accused of excluding the Africans from their considerations.¹⁶² On the matter of Indian political representation there was the question of how many representatives the Indians should have (there was some agreement that on practical grounds they could not fill more than half the European number of representatives even if they should be granted it) and whether these representatives should be elected on a communal franchise or on a common electoral roll with the Europeans. Whereas the Indian Liberals insisted on a common electoral roll, their Muslim fellow-delegates in 1922, Jinnah and the Aga Khan, preferred a communal vote. These arguments paralleled those being pursued in the Indian political system and the whites latched on to this fact with glee, pointing out, correctly, that if the Indian Liberals had their way, Indians in Kenya would be far better represented than Indians in their own country.

Behind these Kenyan issues there was a wider imperial consideration and that was whether a segregationist, white-dominated South Africa was to become the pattern for all areas of permanent white settlement in Africa. This raised the worrying question of whether Britain could in future control its settler colonies. There is little doubt that the South African Premier, J.C. Smuts, whether directly as in the 1921

¹⁶² Gregory suggests that Sastri was initially reluctant to give native African interests paramountcy and contrasts this with Gandhi's approach. See *India and East Africa*, p. 237. However, this view is based on a misunderstanding of Sastri's letter to his brother Ramaswami, 10 May 1923, reproduced in Jagadisan (ed.), *Sastri Letters*, p. 101. Sastri was opposed to the European settlers' use of the argument of native paramountcy for their own purposes. He consistently supported the argument that African interests in Kenya should be paramount and when this became official Government policy in 1923 he argued that it was a 'gain of great significance'. Sastri speaking on 22 Aug. 1923, cited in Gregory, *India and East Africa*, p. 250. By this stage, it was very important to maintain this line of argument if support from influential groups like the Anti-Slavery Society was to be continued. It is important to remember the contemporary context of this debate. Edwin Montagu, supporting the Indian case on the basis of racial equality, also argued that the demand for Indian representation differed from that of the native Africans. Whereas the former had been promised Dominion Status, the latter had not. See Montagu to Churchill, 17 June 1921, AS3/5. Discussions at the recent Peace Conference regarding the mandate system had been based on the premise of a hierarchy of preparedness for future self-government in the non-European world. This hierarchy was a thinly-based reworking of old racial hierarchies, and as usual, the African living in tropical regions was thought to be unsuited to self-government in any foreseeable future. Whilst Montagu and Sastri may have shared these ideas, one must also remember that they were trying very hard to make their demands seem reasonable, and not to look as if this was the thin end of the wedge.

Conference or behind the scenes, as in helping the Kenya settlers in 1922 and 1923, was the main adversary that the Indian Liberals faced.

The Imperial Conference of 1921

It was Srinivasa Sastri, the President of the Servants of India Society and a Member of the Council of State, whom the Government of India chose to represent India, along with the obligatory princely representative, the Maharao of Cutch, at the Imperial Conference of 1921. The fact that India was independently represented at the top tables of empire was the result of the recognition of her wartime contribution. Montagu was keen that India should be represented by genuine Indian political leaders and not by figureheads, and Sastri fitted his requirement admirably. Firstly, he was an acceptable nationalist as far as the Government of India was concerned, an ardent constitutionalist and foe of non-co-operation. Secondly, he was knowledgeable and articulate about the issue of Indians overseas: Sastri saw himself as walking in the footsteps of his political guru, Gokhale, who had focused on this issue.

The subject of 'The Position of Indians in the Empire' was raised in the 1921 Conference and a resolution tabled acknowledging 'an incongruity between the position of India as an equal member of the British Empire and the existence of disabilities upon British Indians lawfully domiciled in some other parts of the Empire', and the Conference was asked to establish equality of citizenship. The prospects did not look promising for a successful outcome, for not only was Smuts opposed to the resolution, which required unanimous approval, but Sastri believed that Winston Churchill, the Colonial Secretary, tended to sympathise with Smuts.¹⁶³ Sastri

¹⁶³ Montagu pressed Churchill to persuade Smuts to make concessions on the wording of the relevant Conference resolution but Churchill was able to make virtually no headway. See Montagu to Churchill, 15 & 21 July 1921; Churchill to Montagu, 19 July 1921, AS3/5; for Sastri's views on Churchill's motives see V.S.S. Sastri to his brother, Ramaswami Sastri, 21 July 1921, Sastri MSS, Madras. Sastri believed that Churchill was playing up to the Tories in order to manoeuvre to succeed Lloyd George as Prime Minister.

achieved great success in private talks with the dominion premiers and then made a moving speech in the Conference on 8 July. His secretary, G.S. Bajpai, recorded his words:

To us the Empire stands for equality, for absolute justice. It may be that this is not a legal or a juridical conception. I have no right, not being a lawyer, to lay down anything on that subject, but in the popular conception, there is this element, and we conceive that when this Empire reaches to the fullest extent of her moral greatness it will be open to every subject to receive the fullest expression of which he is capable in any part of the Empire unhampered and unhindered; that he will, to put it more particularly, be entitled to move about freely in any part of the Empire.¹⁶⁴

Whilst Sastri won the support of the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, by his speech, he made little headway in the committee that was set up to examine the question more closely. The Indian resolution was not finally resolved until the last day of the conference when a brilliant speech by Lloyd George won over all the delegates and even moved Smuts to a compromise.

We are trying [said the British premier] to build up a democratic empire on the basis of the consent of all the races that are inside it...It really transfigures, I think, the human story...The British Empire will be a Mount of Transfiguration if it succeeds. If it fails, poor old humanity will fall back again...after all its Calvaries it goes back and it says 'We can do no better' and it throws up its arms in despair...Well, do not let Mr. Sastri go back ...and say 'The British Empire has refused us justice'. It will be an appalling thing to say to the people who sent a million and a quarter volunteers to aid us.¹⁶⁵

Smuts accepted the general principle of equal citizenship in the Dominions for

¹⁶⁴ G.S. Bajpai's secret memo. on Imp. Conf., 9 Aug. 1921, enclosure to Montagu to Reading, 15 Aug. 1921, R3, and also in AS3/5. This document is quoted extensively in H.Tinker, *Separate and Unequal: India and the Indians in the British Commonwealth, 1920-1950*, London, 1976, pp. 45-52.

¹⁶⁵ Idem.

Indians, but excluded South Africa from its implementation.¹⁶⁶ Sastri felt that South Africa had been isolated and an important principle achieved. He quickly ensured that Dominion premiers accepted an Indian deputation to put the principle into practice in the near future. Sastri must have felt at the pinnacle of his powers. He had been taken into the confidence of Montagu at the India Office and Lloyd George at Chequers, he had negotiated with the Dominion Premiers on a basis of equality and had been made a Privy Councillor and a Freeman of the City of London. Montagu made great play of the significance of India's new role, insisting that at the Imperial Conference India 'was granted full Dominion status- Dominion status in its imperial relations, anticipating its domestic Dominion status'¹⁶⁷ He foresaw opportunities at future gatherings to use the principle established to press for further concessions from South Africa.

Sastri's achievements were not, however, recognised by the Indian student population in London who barracked and insulted him and Bajpai doubted whether what his 'Chief' had achieved would be recognized or welcomed in India.¹⁶⁸ There was still a large gap between conference resolutions and actual practice in different parts of the Empire. As G.S. Bajpai recognized, there were grounds still for doubting whether the method of discussion would pay better dividends than the threat of non-co-operation or force.¹⁶⁹ Tinker concludes pessimistically that, on the important contemporary imperial issues, South Africa, Kenya and Fiji, 'The imperial conference had not fundamentally changed anything'.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ For the full resolution and a summary of the proceedings of the Conference, see Cmd. 1474., 1921.

¹⁶⁷ *Daily Telegraph*, 16 Aug. 1921, quoted in Tinker, *Separate and Unequal*, p. 52.

¹⁶⁸ See Bajpai to Sapru 26 May 1921, 4 Aug. 1921, *SAP/B16*, 1st. series; Polak to Sapru, 8 July 1921, *SAP/P62*, 1st. series. Polak explained why he thought Sastri was a special target of the Extremists: 'A Moderate who accepts office is beyond pardon. But why a man should proclaim himself a Moderate and who does not accept office is beyond all understanding.'

¹⁶⁹ Bajpai to Sapru, 22 Aug 1921, *SAP/B18*, 1st. series.

¹⁷⁰ Tinker, *Separate and Unequal*, p. 53.

Churchill at the Colonial Office

Sastri's optimism that the resolution of the Imperial Conference would have to be conformed to in Kenya was not in fact to prove justified. Over the following months Churchill and Montagu and their respective departments were locked in combat on the issue, with the Kenya settlers an ever-present threat. Churchill and the Colonial Office based their policy on Cecil Rhodes's maxim, 'equal rights for civilised men'. The problem was that Churchill's definition of what constituted a 'civilised man' differed profoundly from Montagu's: Churchill wrote that, 'The Indians in East Africa are mainly of a very low class of coolies, and the idea that they should be put on an equality with Europeans is revolting to every white man throughout Africa.'¹⁷¹ Churchill asked Montagu not to push the Indian case too hard in case there should be a white settler backlash.¹⁷² It is quite clear from the correspondence that Montagu and the India Office fought for the Indian case tooth and nail. They were prepared to make temporary concessions on issues like immigration and land purchase rights in the highlands, provided that there was no permanent racial inequality allowed and that other Indian claims were satisfactorily settled.¹⁷³

In February 1922, however, Churchill, seemingly lost patience with the protracted negotiations, and made a speech at a Kenya Dinner in which he played the right-wing card for all it was worth. Churchill started by declaring that, 'The

¹⁷¹ Churchill to Montagu, 8 Oct. 1921, AS1/3.

¹⁷² This threat of a white uprising against any settlement that was too favourable to the Indians was an important background factor in the negotiations. Churchill to Montagu, 8 Oct. 1921, AS1/3; Churchill to Montagu, 25 Aug. 1921, with enclosed telegram from Governor of Kenya to S/S Colonial Office, 20 Aug. 1921, AS3/5.

¹⁷³ See e.g., Montagu to Churchill, 20 Aug. 1921 and 31 Jan. 1922; Lytton note to Montagu 18 Jan. 1922, AS3/5. The full story of the protracted negotiations may be followed in Gregory, *India and East Africa*, pp. 198-213. This section is entitled 'Churchill's Vacillation', and Gregory argues that Churchill was quite sympathetic to the Indian case for the first year after his appointment in February 1921. Churchill seems to have become more hostile to Indian views some time during Autumn 1921, under the threat of a European rising in Kenya, and apparently in conjunction with the growth of non-cooperation in India: see Gregory, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-13, for the outward signs of Churchill's disaffection, and Churchill to Montagu, 8 Oct. 1921, AS1/3, for the possible causes.

democratic principles of Europe are by no means suited to the development of Asiatic and African people.' He continued by stating that 'We consider we are pledged by undertakings given in the past to reserve the highlands of East Africa exclusively for European settlers, and we do not intend to depart from that pledge...We consider that the interests of British settlers and the native population alike require that all future immigration of Indians shall be strictly regulated.' He publicly stated the principle of 'equal rights for all civilised men' and ominously concluded that, ' We do not contemplate any settlement or system which will prevent British East Africa, or Kenya, as it has now become known, becoming a characteristically and distinctively British colony, looking forward in full fruition of time to complete responsible self-government.'¹⁷⁴ Montagu was furious at this attempt to pre-empt a negotiated settlement and also to bypass Cabinet policy-making.¹⁷⁵ He pointed out that the speech had made the likelihood of the Indians being in a mood to compromise much less likely.¹⁷⁶ Indeed protests quickly arrived from the East Africa Indian delegation and from various bodies in India¹⁷⁷ It was later clear that Montagu was fighting for his life in the Cabinet against a right-wing backlash, strengthened by the Government of India's apparent failure to arrest Gandhi and put down the non-co-operation movement.

The new Secretary of State for India

On 9 March 1922 Montagu was forced to resign his office and was replaced by the Conservative, Lord Peel, with Lord Winterton, a Northern Rhodesian landowner,

¹⁷⁴ The speech as reported in *The Times*, 28 Jan. 1922. Montagu's marked copy may be found in AS1/12.

¹⁷⁵ Montagu to Churchill, 31 Jan. 1922, AS1/12.

¹⁷⁶ Montagu to Churchill, 1 Feb. 1922, AS1/12.

¹⁷⁷ See H. Polak to A.J. Sylvester (P.M.'s Private Secretary), 30 Jan. 1922, AS1/12; E.African Indian Deputation to W. Churchill, 9 Feb. 1922, AS3/6; Reading to Montagu, p.tel., 11 Feb. 1922, enclosing resolution passed by the Indian Legislative Assembly on 9 Feb. 1922, AS1/12.

as his undersecretary.¹⁷⁸ Just at the worst possible moment it looked as if India had been deprived of its chief defence in the Government. But Winterton managed to negotiate a compromise deal in July 1922 with his opposite number at the Colonial Office, Edward Wood, later to become Viceroy as Lord Irwin. This compromise, known as the Wood-Winterton agreement, built upon earlier agreements made between the India Office and the Colonial Office, and met most Indian demands, offering Indians a common electoral roll with the whites on a non-discriminatory franchise and rejecting immigration restrictions and segregation in Kenya. However there was to be no change in the highlands policy.¹⁷⁹ If this deal had been adhered to it would not have represented an unacceptable outcome for the Kenyan Indians, but in October the Lloyd George coalition was replaced by a Conservative government and Tinker judges that the Kenya settlers felt that this was an appropriate time to bring pressure to bear to overturn any compromise deals. The Kenya Governor, Coryndon, called for legislation banning further Indian immigration and backed his call with tales of the threat of settler direct action.¹⁸⁰ Public indignation in India was loudly expressed. A deputation was arranged to go to England at their own expense (but with Government of India support) and fight the case along with the Kenyan Indian representatives. Sastri became the effective leader of this delegation, which also included Jamnadas Dwarkadas, B.S. Kamat, M.A. Jinnah, Sir Dinshaw Petit and C.F. Andrews. Despite differences over whether there should be a common or communal franchise, the Indian delegation agreed its basic

¹⁷⁸ Interestingly, Lord Lytton, who had negotiated with the Colonial Office re. Kenya when he was Under-Secretary at the India Office, wrote that he did not trust Winterton to take on the role of negotiating on the Kenya issue. He described Winterton's views as 'very hostile to the Indian point of view'. Lytton to Peel, 10 May 1922, L10.

¹⁷⁹ For details, see Gregory, *India and East Africa*, pp. 219-20.

¹⁸⁰ See C.J.D. Duder, 'The Settler Response to the Indian Crisis of 1923 in Kenya: Brigadier-General Philip Wheatley and "Direct Action"', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, xvii, 3, May 1989, pp. 349-73. Duder points to the important part played in the settler 'revolt' by ex-India Army men and the way in which their die-hard attitudes on the India question coloured their approaches to the Kenya issue.

strategy at a meeting convened in Paris by the Aga Khan on 3 May 1923. Sastri reported the agreement in a letter to the Indian Liberal publicist, G.A. Natesan:

1. We are to stand firm for India's right of emigration to Kenya, no more restriction than there is at present.
2. On the other points we should abide by the Wood-Winterton agreement i.e. no segregation; the highlands question to remain open; the franchise to be common; based on uniform qualifications, ten per cent of our community to get the vote, and the constituencies to be so arranged as to give us four out of the total of eleven elective seats.¹⁸¹

Sastri was horrified by the reactionary views that he encountered in Britain on the Kenya issue.¹⁸² He forecast that 'another act of perfidy to India seems likely.'¹⁸³ Peel was not very happy at finding the non-official deputation on his doorstep and felt that 'the Indian point of view should have been explained by Englishmen to Englishmen.'¹⁸⁴ He was worried that Sastri and the others would be too extreme in their public statements and alienate the British Government¹⁸⁵ Reading communicated the seriousness with which Indian opinion viewed the proceedings in London. Despite, or perhaps because of his condescending view towards the Indian deputation, Peel tried his best to put the Indian case before the Cabinet when it met on 20 July. He was not, however, successful. Although there were to be no moves to responsible government in the foreseeable future, the white highlands would remain a white preserve, there was no block to future immigration restrictions and a communal electorate was chosen instead of the common electoral

¹⁸¹ Sastri to G.A. Natesan, 22 May 1923, in Jagadisan, *Letters of Srinivasa Sastri*, pp. 101-2.

¹⁸² Sastri to Besant, 24 May 1923, Besant MSS.

¹⁸³ Sastri to Besant, 21 May 1923, Besant MSS.

¹⁸⁴ Peel to Reading, 28 Mar. 1923, R6.

¹⁸⁵ Peel to Reading, 17 May 1923, R6.

roll.¹⁸⁶ Peel tried to persuade the Viceroy that the settlement embodied in the White Paper of 25 July was not a bad one.¹⁸⁷ A month later he seemed to realise that this was not how the White Paper was received in India and excused himself by arguing that,

I agree that the Kenya settlement was not satisfactory; at the same time I do not think we could have done better. People here would not hear of any settlement which gave control of a British colony to Indians, nor were they much impressed by the demand for equality from Indians, worshippers of inequality in their own country. Nor again with communal representation in India, were they much impressed by the necessity of a common franchise in India...Public opinion would never tolerate here the control of two and a half million of Africans by the thirty thousand Indians. Indeed the Indians are so much disliked and despised by the Africans that grave disturbance would result.¹⁸⁸

The essence of the settlement had been the idea that African interests should be paramount and that Indian demands would have to be tempered with that in view. The Indian delegates were furious, knowing that they had been to some extent hoist with their own petard, as they had gone along with the native paramountcy argument in order to win as wide an element of support in London as possible. Sastri welcomed the proclamation of native paramountcy but stated that he felt that 'the Indian had been cruelly betrayed'¹⁸⁹ Sastri praised the support of the Labour Party in Britain, but felt that the British Liberal Party had fallen down on this issue and shown

¹⁸⁶ The Government of India and the India Office seem to have differed over the question of communal representation. Reading was firmly against the use of communal representation and felt that its use in the Indian context did not form a precedent as 'we reluctantly accepted communal representation in India at the request of the minority communities, but experience is already tending to indicate that the system is leading to the very dangers which we have emphasised above '[i.e. that it tended to harden divisions between the communities]. V (Dept. of Education, Health & Lands) to S/S, ptel. 583, 16 July 1923, R12. Indian Liberals on the deputation noticed, however, that the India Office disagreed on this issue with the Government of India and felt that the common roll would be unworkable in practice. See B.S. Kamat speech to Deccan Sabha, 18 Aug. 1923, Annual Report of the Deccan Sabha, 1923-24, GIPE.

¹⁸⁷ Peel to Reading, 25 July 1923, R6.

¹⁸⁸ Peel to Reading, 24 Aug. 1923, R6.

¹⁸⁹ Gregory, *India and East Africa*, p. 250. See also Sastri to Besant, 26 July 1923, Besant MSS.

itself demoralised.¹⁹⁰ Sir Ali Imam saw the decision as a throwing overboard of the Moderate Party of India.¹⁹¹ No other issue had so disillusioned Indian Liberals in the good intentions of the British Empire: the lesson that the British Government was ultimately moved more by threats of force and considerations of 'kith and kin' than by universal moral imperatives was one that totally undermined previous Liberal convictions. Sastri wrote dejectedly that 'in this supreme hour of trial, party divisions make no appeal to me.'¹⁹²

In India the Kenya decision had the effect of bringing the various political groupings closer together than they had been since the Congress split of 1918. Moderates joined with representatives of other political persuasion, including non-cooperators, in a meeting in Bombay to protest the Kenya decision and pressed for various forms of retaliatory measures to be taken by India, including a boycott of the 1924 Imperial Exhibition at Wembley.¹⁹³ The meeting comprised a number of organisations: the Bombay Presidency Association, the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, the Indian Merchants Chamber, the Imperial Indian Citizenship Association, the British Indian Colonial Merchants Association, the Indian Progressive Association, and the National Home Rule League. Significantly, the local Liberal organization, the Western Indian National Liberal Association, was not included, apparently because some of the Bombay Liberals, notably Wacha and Samarth, did not seem to find the Kenya decision objectionable.¹⁹⁴

Sastri, who felt he had been personally slighted by Winterton at the India Office when leaving England, was particularly devastated by what had happened and

¹⁹⁰ Sastri to Besant, 1 Aug. 1923, Besant MSS.

¹⁹¹ Gregory, *India and East Africa*, p. 250.

¹⁹² Sastri to Besant, 1 Aug. 1923, Besant MSS. Indeed Sastri was rather disgusted with the failure of some of his Liberal colleagues to protest effectively over the Kenya decision. He clearly expected, for example, that Sarma would resign.

¹⁹³ See P. Thakurdas to Sapru, 21 Sept. 1923 and enclosures., *SAP*, 2nd. series.

¹⁹⁴ D.G. Dalvi to Sapru, 17 Sept. 1923, *SAP/D6*. See also G.S. Bajpai to Sastri, 2 Sept. 1923, Sastri MSS, NMML.

in a series of articles and speeches he gave vent to his disillusion with the imperial ideal:

The Kenya settlement is a grave National humiliation. It shakes the foundations of our public life. Party interests and party shibboleths now seem irrelevant as well as a heavy handicap. I am happy to believe that the members of the Servants of India Society are unanimous in their desire, while remaining true to their creed and that of its Founder, to co-operate with men and women of all parties in the country in trying to get their grievous wrong righted and in the speedy achievement of *swaraj*, which is the sovereign need of the hour.¹⁹⁵

The Imperial Conference of 1923

The Kenya White Paper was published shortly after the arrival in England of Sapru as his country's representative (along with Alwar) to the Imperial Conference of 1923. Sastri advised Sapru to return home in protest against the Kenya decision. In fact Sapru was inundated with advice from Liberal colleagues in India, some agreeing with Sastri that Sapru should withdraw immediately from the Conference. It must have been tempting to follow this advice as there was apparently little to be gained at the Conference, India was expected to figure hardly at all on the agenda, whilst there was much to be lost, especially with elections coming up in India. D.G. Dalvi, Secretary of the Bombay Presidency Association, having explained why the Bombay

¹⁹⁵ 'Message to the Nation', *Servant of India*, 13 Sept. 1923, supplement, cited in Gregory, *India and East Africa*, p. 254. See Tinker, *Separate and Unequal*, p. 69 for details of the incident at the India Office.

Conference had decided against recommending Sapru's immediate withdrawal, gave advice that was more suited to Sapru's way of thinking:

No right-minded person wants a theatrical demonstration or hysterical action on your part. But surely, if the Imperial Conference endorses this decision [on Kenya] directly or indirectly or denies you any real opportunity to raise it for discussion then it is expected of you not to take part in the further stages of the Conference.¹⁹⁶

Sapru, as a gradualist and constitutionalist, was temperamentally against boycotting the Conference. He felt that the principle of Indian equality within the Empire needed restating in Conference and he would stay and fight to see the issue discussed so that at least Indians would know where they stood. Sapru told Reading of his plan to make sure that pious resolutions were this time turned into hard practice; he would get the Imperial Conference 'to ask each Dominion into whose ken the Indian problem comes to appoint a Commission of Enquiry, upon which Commission India should be represented, to investigate and report upon the practical steps that can be taken to implement the Resolution of 1921'.¹⁹⁷

The situation in England was not propitious to the success of Sapru's efforts as he was later to report to the Viceroy in an important summary of his mission, written on board ship returning to India:

When I arrived In England early in July it was at once obvious to me that the general political atmosphere was unfavourable to India. The Conservative Government was occupied with the problems of Reparations, the Ruhr and Unemployment. It had neither the leisure nor the inclination to concern itself much with India. But more formidable than the attitude of the Government was the attitude of the small section of the British public which takes real interest in Indian questions. Thanks largely as it seemed to me, to the fatal boycott of the Prince of Wales which had come as a severe shock to British opinion, the forces

¹⁹⁶ D.G. Dalvi to Sapru, 17 Sept. 1923, SAP/D6. [emphasis as in original].

¹⁹⁷ Sapru to Reading, 10 Oct. 1923, SAP/R219, 2nd. series.

of reaction held the field.¹⁹⁸

Sapru felt that a new approach was needed, that of responsible and quiet diplomacy. He canvassed all elements of opinion in Britain; the press through A.P. Penman of Reuters, F.H. Brown of the *Times* and Stanley Reed; the India and Colonial Offices through Rushbrook Williams and Lionel Curtis; and political circles in England through H.S.L. Polak and Edwin Montagu. One of Sapru's initial difficulties was with Peel at the India Office. Peel seemed wary of Sapru as a non-official and perhaps felt that he had his fingers burnt once already in his dealings with Sastri. Peel also could not understand how Indians like Sapru put the principle of equality within the Empire above all the political realities of the situation. 'Whatever the subject may be', Peel complained to the Viceroy, 'Sapru always discusses it with reference to this particular question...In fact Sapru is so full of this particular subject that, to speak quite frankly, he is perfectly useless to me at the Conference.'¹⁹⁹ Peel apparently envisaged ignoring Sapru and Alwar and putting the Indian case himself.²⁰⁰ Sapru philosophically blamed his poor relations with Peel on 'the traditional dislike of the British people for abstract principles; and their inability to understand that, in certain circumstances, their favourite device of a compromise would appear as a gross injustice in the eyes of a people more logical if less politically experienced than themselves.'²⁰¹ After a time, however, relations between the two men thawed- things being much eased by Sapru's recognition that Peel was in charge of the presentation of the Indian case. Peel, although very conservative on Indian affairs and really rather ignorant of current Indian political realities, saw himself as honour-bound to make the best of the Indian case, whilst not

¹⁹⁸ Sapru to Reading, Nov. 1923, [summary of his mission to England, written on board ship returning to India] SAP/R223, 2nd series.

¹⁹⁹ Peel to Reading, 10 Oct. 1923, R6.

²⁰⁰ Idem.

²⁰¹ Sapru to Reading, Nov 1923, SAP/ R223.

ignoring that of the Colonial office and Kenyan settlers. Tinker puts the position admirably: 'Whereas Sastri had fought his battles in 1921 with the unstinted support of Montagu, Sapru had to stand alone; Peel assumed the role of umpire or linesman, while the Maharajah of Alwar pursued his own whimsical unpredictable way'.²⁰²

What Sapru desperately needed for India and also for his own political position at home was some concrete indication that the Kenya decision would be re-opened and secondly that the Dominions were prepared to examine the question of Indians in their own territories alongside of Government of India representatives. At times Sapru threatened resignation to achieve his objectives but mostly he worked by patient diplomacy. By the time the Indian question was taken up by the Conference at the end of October Sapru was assured that the issue would be given a good hearing. In fact, as Tinker points out, Indian affairs took up nearly half the time of the formal conference.²⁰³ Sapru himself made a speech of one and three-quarter hours duration. 'Do not forget' he told the delegates' that my country, India, is the one country that makes the British Empire truly Imperial.'²⁰⁴

Once again the fly in the ointment was Smuts who went on to the offensive and actually wanted the 1921 Conference resolution overturned and the principle of inequality within the empire established. The veneer of idealism which Smuts had presented in the aftermath of the Great War had now been stripped aside, revealing the political insecurity of his domestic political situation. Sapru was stung by some words of Smuts' which he took to be an insult to his government and protested through the English newspapers²⁰⁵ In return Smuts took umbrage, particularly as Sapru was not even an official member of the Government of India. Peel actually

²⁰² Tinker, *Separate and Unequal*, p. 71.

²⁰³ *Idem*.

²⁰⁴ Tinker, *Separate and Unequal*, p. 72.

²⁰⁵ Smuts' message for Reuters, 15 Nov. 1923, protesting at Sapru's attack on him in the *Daily Express*, 14 Nov. 1923. Enclosure to Peel to Reading, 28 Nov. 1923, R6.

apologised in a private letter to Smuts and argued that Sapru should have known better.²⁰⁶ In the end the traditional British compromise was reached by allowing both sides to issue communiques restating their own positions whilst not attempting to formally reconcile them.²⁰⁷ The Colonial Office, whilst attempting to shut the door on the Kenya issue, left it slightly ajar by agreeing to confer on the subject of Indians in the colonies with a committee appointed by the Government of India. As Tinker argues this was Sapru's 'sole tangible gain'. Reporting back to Reading, however, Sapru put a much stronger gloss on his achievements:

It seems to me in the first place that we have secured a most valuable endorsement of the 1921 Resolution. Next, we have again isolated South Africa. Thirdly, we have reopened the Kenya question, and given hope to many thousands of Indians that justice may in the end prevail. Fourthly, we have provided a scheme for machinery which, rightly employed, will go far in the future to secure the proper investigation and the due remedy of the grievances under which Indians labour, whether in the colonies or in the Dominions. Fifthly, we have gained an unequivocal expression of good-will towards Indian aspirations from the other members of the British Commonwealth.²⁰⁸

Returning to India, Sapru had the difficult task of persuading fellow Liberals assembled for their annual conference that co-operation and not boycott was the proper policy to pursue with regard to the question of Indians overseas. Sapru presided over the Conference and found himself disagreeing with Sastri who moved a motion in the Subjects calling for a retaliatory boycott of British goods. The resolution was passed but later withdrawn to maintain party unity.²⁰⁹ Resolutions were passed thanking, Sapru, Sastri, B.S. Kamat, J.Dwarkadas, C.F. Andrews and H.S.L. Polak for their work on behalf of Indians in Kenya. A resolution was also passed

²⁰⁶ Peel to Smuts 20 Nov. 1923, enclosure to Peel to Reading, 28 Nov. 1923, R6.

²⁰⁷ Tinker, *Separate and Unequal*, p. 74.

²⁰⁸ Sapru to Reading, Nov. 1923, SAP/R223, 2nd. series.

²⁰⁹ Gregory, *India and East Africa*, pp. 254-55.

deploring the Kenya decision of July 1922 and calling on the Government of India to bring pressure on the Colonial Office to rectify the Kenya Immigration Bill which was currently being discussed in London. Finally, the Conference called for retaliatory measures to be taken against South Africa for its racial discrimination against Indians and suggested that these measures include a prohibitive import duty on South African coal.²¹⁰

Conclusion

In view of the Indian election results and now the treatment Indians had received over the Kenya issue, 1923 had been a thoroughly depressing year for the Indian Liberal Party. Its faith in constitutional methods, in negotiation rather than direct action, and its belief in the potential for good of the British Empire had all been severely shaken. The political atmosphere in England had changed for the worse and, as the Gandhian movement of non-co-operation disintegrated, the British saw less value in bolstering the Moderates. The electoral defeat of the Indian Liberals only emphasized that as a political party they were a spent force. As individual leaders they could still provide valuable service, but even that role was double-edged as Sastri's attacks on the Empire seemed to show. Just as Govindaraghava Iyer predicted, it was the issue of Indians in the Empire that provided the rock on which the ship of British-Indian Moderate co-operation finally foundered.²¹¹

²¹⁰ See L/P&J/6, vol. 1898.

²¹¹ L.A.G. Iyer speaking at N.L.F. Conference, Dec. 1920, cited in Mehrotra, *India and the Commonwealth*, p. 159.

CHAPTER VI : THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

Liberals were appointed to key ministerial positions in three Indian provinces, Bengal, Bombay and the United Provinces. Working the reforms at the provincial level provided the true test of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms as this was the level at which power had been clearly devolved to Indian representatives. The experience of Liberal Ministers proved to be different in each of the provinces. The differences resulted partly from the nature of the various provincial Governors, as the Governors had wide powers to interpret their instructions for operating the reforms according to their own views. However, the very different nature of politics in each of the provinces was also an important factor in varying the Ministers' experience in office, and each provincial section of this chapter is prefaced by a short introduction to the province and its politics.

1. Bengal: Community Politics

The nature of politics in Bengal derived essentially from Bengali responses to the long-standing and patently exploitative nature of the imperial relationship with the region. Bengal was the point of entry for British rule in India and Calcutta was the capital of the Raj until 1912. The region was the economic powerhouse not only of the Raj, but of the entire British Empire. The port of Calcutta was the natural outlet for tea, jute, coal and indigo and the major entry point for cloth, sugar, salt and other British manufactures. In 1914 one half of the capital invested in Indian industries was invested by companies with headquarters in Calcutta. Bengalis, unlike their counterparts in Bombay, played little part in this investment, 80% of which came from Britain. British managing agencies had a stranglehold on Calcutta industries,

banking and import-export houses. There was a large European community in Calcutta, 13,000 in all, 'one of the largest and most exclusive European societies in the East', as John Broomfield describes it.¹ This racial divide was to be another very important factor in Bengal politics. Even physically, Calcutta was divided, with Europeans living in neatly defined streets in the fashionable south of the city whilst Indians lived in the crowded and jumbled areas of the north.² The European community was powerfully entrenched both in Municipal politics and in the provincial legislature. Rajat Ray comments of Calcutta that 'In no other city of India was the relationship between the white rulers and their subjects so tinged with racism.'³

British dominance and the resentment it caused amongst the western-educated Bengalis was a key factor in Bengal's leading role in the nationalist movement. Bengal was where Indian nationalism had its political foundations. The Indian National Congress can be said to have arisen out of the racial conflict in Calcutta and the advanced political ideas of Bengal. It was the backlash of the European community in Bengal, angered at the provisions in the Ilbert Bill (1883) for Indian judges to try criminal cases in the *mofussil* involving Europeans that led Indians to organize themselves on a national basis. It was Bengal too that provided the issue which brought Indian nationalism nearest to the masses; this was the agitation over Curzon's decision to partition the province of Bengal in 1905. It was generally felt that one of Curzon's main motives was to undermine the powerful Bengali middle-class politicians, and indeed, even when the partition was revoked, the British balanced this by moving the capital from Calcutta to Delhi in 1912 in an attempt to thwart Bengali political ambitions. The rising nationalist movement had forced Britons to respond by

¹ Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, p.3. I gratefully acknowledge my debt to Dr. Broomfield for many of the ideas in this section on Bengal, particularly for his emphasis upon *bhadralok* politics. For emphasis upon the racial divide in Bengal I acknowledge my debt to Dr R.K. Ray, *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal, 1875-1927*, and *Urban Roots of Indian Nationalism*, Delhi, 1979.

² R. Ray, *Urban Roots*, pp. 4-5.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

defending their privileged position by playing on the many divisions within Bengali society, divisions which they themselves exacerbated. The most important of these divisions in relation to nationalist politics was that between the educated elite, the *bhadralok* or respectable classes as they were known, and the rest of Bengali society.⁴ Paralleling this division to some extent was the Hindu-Muslim divide which was so pronounced in Bengal.

The peculiarity of the *bhadralok* elite was the narrowness of its social base. It was predominantly high caste and western-educated. It probably didn't number more than 5% of the Bengal population but it was peculiarly cut off from the rest of the population. Although many *bhadralok* owned pieces of land, most were absentee landowners and now made their living in the professions, law, journalism and education. There was a wide gap between the Calcutta *bhadralok* who looked down on any form of manual labour as beneath them, and the majority of the population, Muslims and low-caste Hindus. In many respects the isolation of the *bhadralok* resulted from the impact of colonial rule, as in Bengal the outlet of trade and industry was effectively barred to Indians. In any case, the separateness of the *bhadralok* and their precarious and declining economic position made them insecure. Land rents were falling, whilst the professions were becoming more and more competitive as other provinces took steps to stop the flood of Bengalis into their administrations. The First World War saw new provinces rise in political importance to challenge Bengali dominance, e.g. the United Provinces and Gujarat, Gandhi's base. The leadership role of Bengal and the leadership of the *bhadralok* within Bengal was under pressure and in a state, some historians have argued, of terminal decline.⁵

Gandhi almost epitomised this challenge to the Bengali Hindu predominance;

⁴ For further discussion of the *bhadralok*, see Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, pp. 5-20.

⁵ J. Gallagher 'Congress in Decline: Bengal, 1930-1939', *Modern Asian Studies*, 7, 3 (1973), pp. 589-645.

not only was he seen as presenting an alternative, all-India leadership, but also a very different cultural outlook. Gandhi's quietist beliefs did not find ready acceptance amongst the majority of Bengalis; many of the *bhadralok* could sympathise with the Vaishnavite world-view and the concept of *ahimsa* but amongst the Hindu masses, Saivite cults like that of the Goddess Kali had more influence.⁶ It was significant that it was the Bengali leader, C.R. Das, who most effectively held out against Gandhian non-co-operation until his volte-face at Calcutta in December 1920. But Bengal was not converted, it merely swam with the Gandhian tide because it had no choice. Its support was temporary and conditional, and Bengalis like Das were the prime movers in the Swaraj Party, which after 1923 took Congressmen into the legislative council, if only to obstruct. Bengali politicians were back in their element, the politics of power. But the Government was prepared to use all the forces at their command to meet the Bengali nationalist challenge- they turned to the European community and to the Muslims to counterbalance the *bhadralok*. The result was the increasing communalisation of Bengal politics.

The fact that it was the Hindus who predominated in landholding and in moneylending whilst the Muslims were predominantly poor and illiterate was significant for communal relations in Bengal, which had a propensity to turn violent on occasion. By the end of the nineteenth century most of the land in Bengal was owned by Hindus. Thus, despite being numerically preponderant in East Bengal, Muslims were economically backward. Muslims also fell behind in government service and the professions. The British displaced a number of Muslim administrators and later in 1837 their introduction of English rather than Persian as the language of administration dealt Muslims another blow. Muslims were slow to take up English education and they suffered in the professions consequently. In fact, the British belief,

⁶ For the Bengali response to Gandhi see Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, pp. 146-51.

in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, that Muslims were suffering under their rule was very much based on the backwardness of Muslims in Bengal. The potential for Hindu-Muslim tension was a key factor in later Bengali politics. The fact that the British position in Bengal came to depend on their manipulation of the communal divisions worsened the situation.

The New Councils

The decision taken at the Calcutta Congress in September 1920 to boycott British institutions and to place the professional classes at the forefront of that boycott ran almost entirely counter to *bhadralok* politics. The *bhadralok* had come to predominance through using British institutions, schools, universities, law courts etc., not by boycotting them. The acceptance of non-co-operation marked a reluctant swimming with the tide for Bengal's politicians. There was a strong suspicion that Gandhi, if given enough rope, might hang himself. For the time being, however, the Extremist Bengali politicians were not to be outdone in the sacrifices that they made; C.R. Das set the example by abandoning his lucrative legal practice. The most immediate effect of non-co-operation, however, was the boycott of the new Legislative Councils. Apart from a few 'joke' candidates, put up to ridicule the reforms, there was a total Congress boycott of the elections.⁷ It has been argued that the decision to support the Gandhian boycott of the Councils was influenced by the belief, especially in the Presidencies, that the Councils were so weighted in favour of communal interests and nominated supporters of Government that Congress would have no chance of taking power in the new councils.⁸ Certainly this would have been a sound calculation to make in regard to the Bengal Legislative Assembly where

⁷ Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, p 175, n.13; see also confidential note from H.E.A. Cotton to Lytton, 18 March 1923, L36.

⁸ Gordon, 'Non-cooperation and Council Entry, 1919-1920', pp. 443-73.

the electoral system was weighted in favour of special interests and against the urban-based Hindu groups.⁹ As Lord Lytton later admitted, the Government always held the 'dummy hand' of up to 26 nominated and official votes, and in a three-cornered contest between the Muslims, the Hindus and the European community it could use this bloc of votes in combination with any other substantial Indian group to win the majority.¹⁰

Of the 56 elected Hindu seats in the new Council, Indian Liberals took 27 and were considered to form the largest single political party. Accordingly, the Governor, Ronaldshay, called upon 2 Liberals, Surendranath Banerjea and Provas Chunder Mitter, to take up two of the Ministerial posts. Banerjea, as the elder statesman, was offered first choice of portfolios and opted for Local Self-Government and Education. Ronaldshay advised him that it was impossible to combine these two departments and so it was agreed that Mitter, Banerjea's preferred choice, should become Minister in charge of Education and Public Health.¹¹ The third Minister was chosen less for his intrinsic abilities than for his out-spoken hostility to non-co-operation and power to pull in the Muslim vote in the Legislature; he was Nawab Ali Chaudhuri, a Muslim communalist from East Bengal.¹² If Ronaldshay had wanted a party cabinet he could have chosen one of the Muslim members of the Liberal Party, such as Dr. Abdulla Suhrawardy, who had served as a nominated member on the Franchise

⁹ See Ray, *Social Conflict*, pp. 237-8; Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, pp. 102-4.

¹⁰ Lytton to Peel, 14 Dec. 1923, L10. Table 2 [p. 260 below] shows how this operated in practice in the Legislative Council of 1921-23.

¹¹ S.N. Banerjea, *A Nation in the Making*, Bombay, 1963 (1925), p. 313. Mitter was Secretary of the National Liberal League and recommended himself to Ronaldshay by his courage in sitting on the Hunter Committee investigating the events in the Punjab in 1919. Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, p. 173.

¹² Banerjea, *Nation*, p. 314; Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, p. 173.

Committee.

Table 2

CONSTITUTION OF THE BENGAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
UNDER THE REFORMS ACT OF 1919

Elected Members		Nominated Members	
Non-Muslim urban	11	Indian Christians	1
Non-Muslim rural	35	Depressed classes	1
Muslim urban	6	Labour	2
Muslim rural	33	Others, not less than	2
Landholders	5	Officials, not more than	20
Universities of Dacca & Calcutta	2		<u>26</u>
European General	5		
European Commerce	11		
Anglo-Indian	2		
Indian Commerce	4		
	<u>114</u>		

SOURCE: Government of Bengal, *Report on the Working of the Reformed Constitution in Bengal, 1921-1927*, Calcutta, 1928, pp. 136-7, cited in R. Ray, *Social Conflict*, p. 239.

However, the choice of Chaudhuri was more sensible in view of the need to satisfy *mofussil* needs and to keep the support of the traditionalists who formed the majority of Muslim members. As it turned out, the three Ministers had no difficulty working together.¹³ Nor, apparently, did they have any difficulty in working with the

¹³ Banerjea, *Nation*, p. 314.

Executive Councillors.¹⁴

Ronaldshay and the New Ministers

Ronaldshay, along with other Governors, received a set of instructions on the implementation of the new reforms. These were a masterly balance between the traditional British goals of good government and the new goals of providing a training in democracy. Article III enjoined him 'as far as may be possible' to keep the responsibility for reserved and transferred subjects clear and distinct. Article IV on the other hand, instructed him to

...encourage the habit of joint deliberation between yourself, your Councillors and your Ministers, in order that the experience of your official advisers may be at the disposal of your Ministers, and that the knowledge of your Ministers as to the wishes of the people may be at the disposal of your Councillors.¹⁵

Ronaldshay, in his last year as Governor, carried out these instructions faithfully, holding joint meetings to discuss all important matters but making it perfectly clear where the final decision lay.

The first problem which confronted the new Government when it met on 11 January 1921 was how to cope with a projected budget deficit of more than 2 crores of rupees. Bengal, along with the rest of India, faced the economic problems associated with the First World War and its aftermath: there had been a marked increase of prices, but poor harvests and a world-wide economic slump had hit trade badly. Bengal was in a particularly difficult position because of the fixed nature of its land revenue under the Permanent Settlement; it was therefore very dependent on the income from the duties on its trade in jute, coal and tea, and also on income tax. Under the so-called Meston arrangement, whereby revenue heads were divided

¹⁴ Banerjea, *Nation*, p. 356. The Executive Councillors were: Sir H. Wheeler (Appointment, Political & Police); the Maharaja of Burdwan (Revenue & Irrigation); J.H. Kerr (Finance Commerce & Marine); Sir A. Rahim (Judicial, Jails).

¹⁵ *India in 1920*, Appendix IV, pp. 252-3. More explicit instructions as to when joint meetings were to be held were contained in the Devolution Rules and the Rules of Executive Business under Section 49 (2) of the Government of India Act (1919). See Government of Bengal, *Report on the Working of the Reformed Constitution in Bengal 1921 to 1927*, Calcutta, 1929, p. 42.

between the centre and the provinces, Bengal felt that it had been particularly hard done by. Customs duties, which had been one of the major sources of revenue in Bengal, became a Government of India asset and Bengalis complained loudly that they saw none of the profits of their export trades, such as the jute trade. All of the provinces had to make up the deficit in the Government of India's finances by annual contributions, but Bengal felt that its contribution, though not large relative to other provinces, would be particularly difficult to pay in view of the inelasticity of the provincial revenues in Bengal.¹⁶

The prospect for the new Ministers was fairly dismal, in that they would either have to raise taxation (and immediately antagonise important interests) or cut back on spending programmes which would make it impossible to carry out the constructive programmes that they had set their hearts on and ultimately by which they would be judged. There was talk of resignation, but Kerr, the Finance Member, persuaded them to desist, on the grounds that they could fall back on savings for the first year and meanwhile try to get the Meston settlement overturned.¹⁷

The debates in the Legislature on the Budget revealed the basic problem for the Liberal Ministers, for whilst they could secure support on the matter of protesting the Meston settlement they were buffeted by totally unacceptable suggestions about the best way to make financial savings. These latter included reducing the number of Executive Councillors and, more embarrassingly, reducing the Ministers' salaries. The Ministers obviously felt a degree of guilt in using the official bloc to protect what were after all generous salaries by Indian standards.¹⁸

It was Ronaldshay and not the Ministers who took the initiative in trying to avoid this situation in the future by organising supporters in the Council. He had been perturbed at the lack of party organisation, which he blamed either on the lethargy of the Moderates or the fear of social boycott and the prevalence of personal rivalries in the legislature.¹⁹ Satish Ranjan Das, a Liberal, and Standing-Council to the

¹⁶ Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, pp. 177-8. See also Government of Bengal, *Reformed Constitution*, ch. iv, especially Appendix, P.C. Mitter's 'Note on the Financial position in Bengal', pp. 96-7.

¹⁷ Ronaldshay to Montagu, 17 Feb. 1921, M32.

¹⁸ Banerjea devotes quite a long section to defending the salaries on the grounds that they maintained an equality with the Executive Councillors; *Nation*, pp. 359-61.

¹⁹ Ronaldshay to King George V, 1 June 1921, RONA; Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, pp. 179-81.

Government, was asked to act as a ministerial whip. The new arrangement was made too late to save the police budget from being rejected by the Council in March 1921 by 51 votes to 42. There were a group of up to 30 Hindu members who might be classed as Extremist and who could use the unpopularity of the police in Bengal as a weapon to attack the Government. They were joined by a number of the Muslim members and some of the Liberals.²⁰ Ronaldshay handled the situation with great tact and diplomacy. He recognised that an immediate certification of the police funds would be a damaging blow to the *amour propre* of the Councillors and probably drive them to further obstruction. Through a series of questions planted through S.R. Das, the Government was able to stress the gravity of the situation that arose from the Council's action and to adjourn to allow members to consider the full implications. This and Government lobbying were enough to secure a supplementary grant and to avoid certification.²¹

In September 1921 a deputation from the Bengal Legislative Council went to see the Viceroy to put their case about the financial plight of Bengal. Reading was faced with economic difficulties on all sides; he was trying to reduce expenditure but the main savings could only be made in the British Army in India and this was being resisted by the War Office. He was also aware that any attempt to raise revenue by increasing import duties would be resented by British industry that was going through post-war recession. Reading agreed to remit the Bengal contribution central funds for three years. This was something that no other province received but it still necessitated going to the Assembly for an additional Rs 1.5 crores in taxes.²² Ronaldshay determined that retrenchments would have to be offered primarily in the Reserved Departments, and that cuts in the Transferred Departments could be restored if the Legislative Council agreed to additional taxes.²³

At last the Ministers began to organise support in the legislature so that they could ensure the finances necessary from improvements in the transferred

²⁰ Reforms Enquiry Committee [Muddiman Report], Reports of Local Governments on the Working of the Reforms, Cmd. 2361, 1925, Report of Bengal Government, p. 117.

²¹ Zetland, 2nd. Marquess of, *Essayez*, London, 1956, pp. 140-3, cited in Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, pp. 181-3.

²² Ronaldshay to Montagu, 18 Sept. 1921, M32.

²³ Ronaldshay to Montagu, 19 Oct. 1921, M32.

subjects.²⁴ According to the Government, fear of non-co-operation and agrarian unrest also caused property owners to lean more heavily towards the Government, and a fairly compact Moderate party, with party whips and a Constitutional Club, was established.²⁵ This provided a shaky basis for supporting the Ministers, though, as Broomfield argues, many members were not prepared to give their backing on a formal party basis as they feared loss of support outside the legislature.²⁶

Indeed, one of the major problems for Ministers was that their concentration on working the reforms left them more and more isolated from public opinion, which was becoming more aroused every day by the patriotism of non-co-operation. It would take some time before the Ministers' labours in the Legislative Council bore practical fruit. Meanwhile they were castigated in the popular press as 'yes-men'; while the Ministers collected their fat salaries, Congress politicians, it was noted, were sacrificing livelihoods for their nationalist ideals. Incidents like that at Chandpur in 1921, when tea labourers in Assam suffered as pawns in the struggle between Government and non-co-operators, seemed to reflect badly on the Ministers who, it was claimed, stood idly by.²⁷

The identification of Ministers with Government was at its most acute over the issue of the maintenance of law and order, which, of course, remained a reserved subject, and therefore the responsibility of the Executive Councillors. However Ronaldshay liked to try and take his Ministers with him on these important matters and therefore involved them in discussions. In November 1921 there was an increase of conflict in Bengal arising from the visit of the Prince of Wales and the Khilafat issue. Ronaldshay decided to proclaim the volunteer corps illegal and forbade the holding of meetings and the organising of processions without a licence.²⁸ He then held a number of joint meetings of his Government to discuss further measures such as the application of the Seditious Meetings Act to the mill area districts and Chittagong, the areas which were most affected, and the issue of externment orders

²⁴ Reforms Enquiry Committee, Cmd. 2361, 1925, pp. 119-20.

²⁵ Idem; Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, pp. 183-4.

²⁶ Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, p. 184.

²⁷ See Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, pp. 184, 214-19; Banerjea, *Nation*, p. 348, in which Banerjea defends himself from the charge.

²⁸ Ronaldshay Diary, entry for 22 Nov. 1921, *ROM2*.

against a number of non-Bengali agitators who were felt to be responsible for the disorder. One of the Executive Councillors, Sir Abdur Rahim, opposed the measures and he was joined by the Ministers, who wanted to see the ordinary law tried first. Ronaldshay spent a week trying in vain to persuade Rahim and the Ministers before he took matters into his own hands and applied to Delhi for permission to apply the Seditious Meetings Act to Howrah. He decided not to press for the externments. Sterner measures were taken under the law against law-breaking non-co-operators and some newspapers. Action was also taken to mobilise Europeans and Indians as special constables and through an anti-*hartal* committee to persuade shop-keepers and others to stay open. Ronaldshay commented optimistically that 'I think our rapid and drastic measures have rattled these non-co-operators.'²⁹ In fact the disorders intensified as the date of the Prince of Wales' visit to Calcutta approached. After being advised by his Chief of Police that the situation was in danger of getting out of hand, Ronaldshay consulted separately the Viceroy, the Bengal Executive Council, and Ministers (but not Banerjea who was 'out of town') and got their agreement to arrest the ringleaders, including C.R. Das and A.K.Azad.³⁰

These arrests were merely the tip of the iceberg and other arrests followed sometimes over 200 a day, mostly millhands.³¹ Two things are clear from this account. Firstly, that the Government was keen to involve Ministers in discussions and decisions on matters of law and order. It was very difficult for the Ministers, therefore, however much they disliked these repressive measures, to avoid being implicated with them in the public eye. Even where they disagreed with the measures in such discussions they felt that they could not speak out publicly.³² Secondly, it does appear that the Ministers had some influence in modifying Government policy. As D.A. Low has argued, the Government of India was increasingly having to play for the middle ground and look to moderate opinion.³³ From the point of view of the Bengal Ministers the situation relating to repression was worsened by the fact

²⁹ Ibid., entry for 4 Dec. 1921.

³⁰ Ibid., entry 11 Nov. 1921.

³¹ Ibid., entry 20 Dec. 1921. The political context of these events is dealt with on p. 146 ff., above. Further details on the disturbances may be found in Ray, *Social Conflict*, pp. 270-310.

³² Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings, 19 Dec. 1921, vol. vi, pp. 1-53, cited in Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, p. 186.

³³ Low, 'First non-co-operation movement', pp. 320-3.

that Ronaldshay's successor, Lord Lytton, pursued a policy of joint deliberation rather than joint consultation, so that there could be no hiding place in future for the Ministers. Their dilemma was that they needed to be involved in deliberations if they were to influence policy, but the very process meant that public opinion saw the two halves of Government as one, and made no distinction regarding responsibility for repressive legislation.

Lord Lytton

The new Governor, Lord Lytton, was the son of a famous Viceroy and had been serving as Montagu's Under Secretary of State at the India Office. Broomfield has described him as a 'man with a mission', but he might be better described as a 'man with someone else's mission.'³⁴ Lytton was reluctant to come to India and interrupt a promising political career for the dubious honour of governing the most difficult province in British India. It was only Montagu's persuasiveness that won him over, and, even when he accepted the post, he seemed to be looking for routes to make an early exit.³⁵ Montagu had perceived how difficult it was to find men as governors who would faithfully carry out the intentions of the reforms enthusiastically. Lytton, however, perfectly reflected Montagu's belief that what was needed now was a touch of political imagination combined with racial goodwill. As Broomfield says, 'he had a clear vision of what the task involved: the preparation of Bengal for a further transfer of power by the development of the parliamentary system, and the provision of opportunities for Indians to influence all the decisions of Government.'³⁶ There is little doubt that Lytton reflected Montagu's preference for running the Provincial Governments as unified bodies, although, ironically, as Lytton arrived in India he found his old chief had resigned his office.³⁷

Lytton admitted that, strictly speaking, dyarchy would mean separate meetings of the two halves of government but,

³⁴ Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, ch. 1.

³⁵ See correspondence in L6.

³⁶ Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, p. 187.

³⁷ Montagu to Lytton, 30 Sept. 1922, L25; note also Montagu's tolerance of Willingdon's joint deliberation approach, Montagu to Willingdon, 14 April 1921, W4.

I myself have always adopted a different policy. I do not like the principle of dyarchy and I have tried as much as possible to treat my Government as a whole. I discuss all questions of general policy at joint meetings of both halves of Government, and though, while the present system lasts, actual responsibility for a decision must rest with the half of Government concerned with any particular matter, I always hear the opinions of both sides before coming to a decision. As a matter of fact whenever there has been any difference of opinion it has never been a clear-cut difference between Ministers on the one hand and Members of Council on the other. Acting on this principle, I have urged my Government to adopt a united front in the Legislative Council and have advised Ministers to support Members of the Executive Council in a debate on a reserved subject and Members of Council to support the Ministers in a debate on a transferred subject. I believe this policy is more in accordance with Indian opinion than the strict adherence to the principle of dyarchy.³⁸

Reflecting on the working of the Council towards the end of its term of office, Lytton felt that Ministers had generally accepted this 'obligation' and 'have loyally and effectively acted up to it. In matters like the taxation Bills, demands for grants, resolutions regarding law and order, release of political prisoners etc., they have called meetings of their followers and secured majorities for the Government policy.'³⁹

The advantages to the Government of this process of joint deliberation were obvious: Ministers could be persuaded to back measures which they might otherwise have opposed and, having won their approval, Ministers could bring support in the Legislature behind Government proposals. A good example of this is the discussion that took place soon after Lytton arrived in response to a successful resolution that a Member had tabled in the Legislative Council calling for the repeal of repressive legislation and the release of prisoners. Lytton called together both halves of his Government and admitted that whilst in England he had opposed the use of legislation such as the Criminal Law Amendment Act. However, he now felt that the Act had worked in Bengal and had restored calm. Additionally, the District Officers favoured

³⁸ Lytton to Peel, 23 Oct. 1922, L10.

³⁹ Lytton to Reading 20 Sept. 1923, R25. Lytton cited one exception, which was the Ministers' abstention from voting on a private Member's resolution for the abolition of whipping in jails. Government opposed the resolution and Ministers defended themselves by arguing amongst other things that 'the subject matter of the resolution had never been discussed at length at a joint meeting nor a decision arrived at.'

its retention. As for the prisoners, Lytton argued against any releases. He was supported by the Ministers, but with some reservations. After some discussion the Ministers dropped these reservations and agreed that Government should meet members of the Council 'who were disposed to give a general support to Government' so as to explain why it could not act upon the Council's Resolution, also that Government should explain its policy.⁴⁰

Later in the summer Peel had further joint meetings to reconsider the question of the retention of repressive laws in the light of the improved political situation. Once again, Lytton was able to gain the support of his Ministers in his policy which was to retain the laws for the time being. He commented, 'I am confident that if the decision had been taken by the Executive Council and the Ministers had not been consulted, they would not have agreed with the decision.'⁴¹ However, whilst the advantages to Government were clear, and Lytton built upon the situation by helping the European community representatives and the Indian Moderates to come together in support of Government measures, it was not obvious what the political benefits to Ministers were. Presumably they hoped that in return for their support on law and order measures they would gain support in the Assembly for their legislative programme. Perhaps, after the evidence of street violence at the time of the Prince of Wales' visit, they had become convinced of the necessity of special measures despite their inherent dislike for such extra-legal procedures. Perhaps the fact that they were now party to the evidence which Government officers could provide about subversive movements meant they saw matters in a new light. Whatever the reason, the Ministers had set themselves on a slippery slope towards electoral disaster, and Lytton's well-intentioned policy of joint consultation was largely to blame.⁴² At the time, however, Lytton did not see that his policies of encouraging the growth of a Moderate Party and that of involving Ministers in decision-making in the Reserved side were contradictory. By taking on this special position of being taken into Government confidence, but of not being responsible in any way for the decisions, the Ministers

⁴⁰ Lytton to Peel, 6 Apr. 1922, L10.

⁴¹ Lytton to Peel, 25 July 1922, L10.

⁴² Years later, in his autobiography, Lytton regretted his use of joint deliberation, the only result of which 'was to identify the Ministers with a Government that was disliked, and to weaken instead of strengthening their position.' Earl of Lytton, *Pundits and Elephants*, London, 1942, p. 180.

became isolated from their Party, which most probably would have disapproved of their actions.⁴³

The Ministries

In terms of constructive legislation the achievements of the Bengali Liberal Ministers were considerable, considering the lack of certain backing in the Assembly, the short time that they were in office, the shortage of funds, and the general preoccupation with the non-co-operation movement outside the Council. Perhaps the greatest achievements were made by Surendranath Banerjea as Minister of Local Self-Government. Banerjea saw the reform of the Calcutta Municipality, which had been dominated by European business interests since Lord Curzon's reforms, as the climax of his career. He had refused to participate in the Municipality since 1899 and now he had the chance, as the first Indian Minister in charge of the subject, to bring greater democracy and greater autonomy to the body which governed one of the most important cities in the East. Banerjea saw reform of the municipality as a practical expression of Liberal concerns: while the non-co-operators noisily boasted of Indian self-government within the year, here would be practical attainment of *swaraj* through working the constitution.⁴⁴ Elected Indians would become the majority in the Corporation and would be able to appoint the chief executive officers, subject to Government approval. Once this was achieved, Indianisation of the personnel of the Corporation would inevitably follow. Banerjea did not work from a *tabula rasa*- plans for reform had been drawn up in 1917. However, Banerjea wanted to go further in democratising the Corporation than had been envisaged at that time and he wanted to do away with the provision for communal representation contained therein.⁴⁵ Banerjea introduced the new Bill to the legislature on 22 November 1921, but it was

⁴³ It is notable that the main opposition within the joint Government to the Government's policy on law and order came not from the elected Ministers but from the Muslim Executive Councillor, Sir Abdur Rahim, who, after a disagreement about the treatment of political prisoners, resigned the portfolio for jails. see Lytton to Peel, 30 Mar. 1922, L10; Lytton to Peel, 25 July 1922, L10.

⁴⁴ Banerjea, *Nation*, p. 333.

⁴⁵ Tinker writes that 'The franchise qualification was halved, with equality for women as voters. Four-fifths of the members were elected while the Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer were in turn elected by the members. Government control was strictly limited; government approval was needed for the appointment of the four chief officials, for expenditure of over 2.5 lakhs and for the raising of loans, but for nothing else.' *Local Self-Government*, p. 130.

to take eighteen months of often bitter debating before the long Bill was passed, and by then it had been altered to allow for separate communal electorates for a transitional period of nine years.⁴⁶ Banerjea was perfectly prepared to allow communities like the Muslims to have seats reserved for them so that they should not be under-represented, but he felt, like other Liberals, that separate electorates hindered the development of Indian nationalism. Banerjea was swimming against a tide that was sweeping all India before it: in Bengal the current of demand for separate representation was strong and was supported at all levels, even including the Muslims in the Bengal Government. Compromise was therefore inevitable, but it was not a compromise that made Banerjea popular with his fellow Hindus. As Broomfield points out, 'Even the Indian Association and his old newspaper the *Bengalee*, condemned him.'⁴⁷ Banerjea followed his reform of the Calcutta Corporation with a proposed reform of the Bengal municipalities, which he introduced in the Legislative Council on 16 August 1923. Once again Banerjea fought to keep communal electorates out of the Bill, and once again he failed, though he had been swept out of office before the Bengal Municipal Bill had completed its passage through the Legislature.⁴⁸

The biggest disappointment for Banerjea lay ahead. When the first elections to the new Corporation took place, the Swarajists swept the Board and the Liberals were decimated. It hurt Banerjea to see C.R. Das and his followers use the Corporation and its offices for what he considered to be party political rather than civic ends.⁴⁹ Das combined the offices of Mayor and President of the Council, which was not at all what Banerjea had intended in looking to separate legislative and executive functions. He also implemented his pact with the Muslims so that a substantial majority of posts within the Corporation went to them. He filled the 5 posts of aldermen, which Banerjea had intended to be filled by elder statesmen who would probably not wish to

⁴⁶ The communal nature of the arguments in the Assembly is well brought out by Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, pp. 194-7.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 197, n. 101.

⁴⁸ See Banerjea to Lytton, 24 May 1923, L22, for Banerjea's arguments against having communal electorates in the terms of the Bill- he preferred the matter to be left to the municipalities themselves to decide. For the argument against Banerjea's approach, see Sir Abdur Rahim to Lytton, 12 June 1923, L22.

⁴⁹ Banerjea, *Nation*, pp. 336-9.

face the rough and tumble of elections, with his own young nominees. Most notoriously, he used the Corporation corruptly to obtain funds for his party coffers.⁵⁰ It was a shameful end to Banerjea's dream of democratising local government.

P.C. Mitter, the other Liberal Minister, was probably even less popular than Banerjea. Yet Lytton considered him 'a better administrator. He has more firmness and independence of character and is not so susceptible to personal influences or political considerations.'⁵¹ Mitter explained his problems as a Minister as being due to the shortage of finance in Bengal, which meant that his programme of primary education reform in Bengal could not be carried out as intended, especially during the final year in office. According to Mitter the finance problem 'destroyed all faith of the public in Bengal in the successful working of dyarchy.'⁵² It must also be said though that some of Mitter's unpopularity also stemmed from the nature of his job as Minister for Education. Education had become a battleground in the period of no-cooperation; a boycott campaign was directed against government education institutions and national institutions were set up as replacements. Mitter's planned expansion coincided with this campaign and brought him face to face with obstruction in local schools. At the same time, Mitter's attempts to reform secondary and higher education by reforming the overseeing body, Calcutta University, inevitably touched key areas of power of the *bhadralok* elite. The *bhadralok* were very jealous of the powers they had won in the running of the University since Curzon's day. In Bengal these powers were peculiarly concentrated in the hands of one man, Sir Asutosh Mookerjee. Lytton had recalled Mookerjee to the post of Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University in 1921, at a time when the Government of Bengal had just taken over responsibility for the running of the University from the Government of India. The extraordinary degree to which Mookerjee centralised power in his own hands and those of his nominees inevitably alienated many Bengalis, particularly those from East Bengal who felt that

⁵⁰ Ray, *Urban Roots*, p. 106.

⁵¹ Lytton to Reading, 20 Sept. 1923, R25; Evan Cotton the President of the Legislative Council, and a good judge of men, also thought that Mitter had been a 'most excellent Minister of Education', Cotton to Lytton, 17 Dec. 1923, L17.

⁵² Reforms Enquiry Committee [Muddiman report], Appendix 5, Oral Evidence, vol. 1, Simla, 1928, p. 181.

the University of Dacca suffered from neglect as a result of Mookerjee's aggrandising expenditure on Calcutta University.⁵³ Lytton and his government were more worried by the lack of financial controls at the University and the fact that secondary education suffered from Mookerjee's concentration on expanding postgraduate studies.⁵⁴ Mitter prepared legislation which was intended firstly to take control of secondary education away from the University and vest it in a separate board, secondly to secure some control over the finances of the University, and thirdly to increase the representative element on the Governing Body.⁵⁵ Lytton believed that reform was urgent as the University administration had become, as he told Peel, 'rather a scandal'. Mookerjee resisted these reforms tooth and nail and this eventually led to Lytton forcing Mookerjee's resignation. Mookerjee published the text of his correspondence with Lytton in order to try and show that he was the victim of high-handed Government bullying. In fact Lytton made every effort to conciliate the University authorities. Bhupendranath Basu, who was friendly with both Mookerjee and Mitter, was appointed as a stop-gap Vice-Chancellor. At a Conference between Government, Mookerjee and the University authorities in August, Lytton succeeded to some extent in defusing the situation by conciliation- he must have been very aware that his Ministers were shortly due to stand for re-election and they could not be seen to be responsible for a policy of coercing the University.⁵⁶ The price that Lytton paid though for his conciliation was that he never achieved his desired reform of the University.

The failure to reform the University was not the only frustration that Lytton suffered in his five year term as Governor Bengal. When he came during the Second World War to write his memoirs of this time he gave the book the title, *Pundits and Elephants*, explaining that, 'It is the things that are indigenous and admirable in Indian civilisation which we must look for and build upon, rather than the second-hand imitations of our own institutions'.⁵⁷ Lytton had not given up his belief in the transferability of western political institutions, but his experiences in Bengal had

⁵³ Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, p. 192.

⁵⁴ *Idem*.

⁵⁵ Lytton to Peel, 3 Oct. 1923, L10.

⁵⁶ Lytton to Peel, 3 Oct. 1923, L10.

⁵⁷ Lytton, *Pundits and Elephants*, p. 184.

taught him that, because of India's racial diversity, the process would be a longer one than he had originally thought. Lytton's views were very much coloured by the experience of Swarajist Party obstructionism in the second Legislative Council (1924-26) and the increase in Hindu-Muslim tension in the mid-1920s. One must be careful therefore not to read back the air of disappointment that pervades *Pundits and Elephants* (1942) or the cynicism and bitterness which mark the Bengal Government's submission to the Muddiman Committee (1924) to the period of the first Council (1921-23).⁵⁸ A safer guide to Lytton's views is the private and confidential report which Lytton sent to Reading towards the end of the first Council.⁵⁹ In this very frank document Lytton praised the Ministers for their generally responsible attitude but argued that their work was undermined by the absence of secure support in the Legislative Council which he attributed to a lack of party organisation and to the communal nature of Bengali politics. He obviously felt that the two Hindu Ministers were divorced from public opinion outside the chamber and especially from rural Bengal. Whilst admitting that there were real problems of a shortage of funds and time in which to develop their programmes, Lytton felt that the Ministers spent too much time on politics and patronage rather than on administration.

When he touched on the issue of patronage Lytton was alluding to a sensitive aspect of his relations with his ministers. The reforms gave Indian ministers unprecedented influence over numerous appointments in the fields of local government, education and the medical services. Decisions on these appointments brought them into potential conflict with their civil servants who were used to the Government using rather different criteria for public appointments than the new Ministers. It was partly that Ministers felt obliged to reward their supporters, and even their relatives, whilst the civil service ethos was to regard such appointments as both corrupt and not conducive to good administration.⁶⁰ But there was also a genuine conflict about the pace of Indianisation. Banerjea saw his new office as a golden opportunity to put into practice his lifelong belief that Indians should be

⁵⁸ By 1925 Lytton was describing the Bengali politician as 'a contemptible creature. His actions are always dictated by personal considerations.' Lytton to Baldwin, 12 Aug. 1925, L25.

⁵⁹ Lytton to Reading, 20 Sept. 1923, R25.

⁶⁰ Idem.

appointed to posts wherever they were able to fill them. There was resistance to this policy especially within the Medical Service, where, incidentally, it was argued that European women did not like to be treated by Indian doctors. Banerjea plays down these differences with his civil servants, particularly in the higher echelons, in his autobiography and stresses that he received the complete support of both Lord Ronaldshay and Lord Lytton.⁶¹

With nearly a year of the expected life of the Legislative Council to run, the Bengal Ministers pleaded with Lytton for the life of the councils to be extended an extra year, i.e. to November 1924, to allow them time to complete their legislative programmes and thus to be able to go the electorate with a solid record of practical achievement behind them.⁶² Lytton refused, primarily on the grounds of constitutional propriety, but also on the ground of political tactics, in that he believed a postponement of elections would give any returning non-co-operators greater time to organise.⁶³

When the elections did take place, the Liberals were swept aside by the Swarajist tide. Only a rump of 7 Liberals remained.⁶⁴ Both Mitter and Banerjea were soundly defeated by Swarajists. A number of explanations were posited by the Liberal leaders for their defeat. Banerjea focused on the type of campaign that he had to face in his constituency. Whilst expressing his gratitude for the help of the authorities in his constituency, he complained that he was the victim of electoral malpractice by his Swarajist opponents, including a campaign of lies, such as the claim that Banerjea had 'raised the salt-tax, doubled the price of the post-card, supported cow-slaughter.'⁶⁵ Mitter was more inclined to emphasise the failings of the reforms themselves; he told the Muddiman Committee that 'our party tried to work dyarchy loyally, but dyarchy killed our party.'⁶⁶ Mitter's explanation was part of a wider campaign to discredit dyarchy and to press for immediate provincial

⁶¹ Banerjea, *Nation*, pp. 319-23, 331, 341-6. Mitter also praised the support given to him by his departmental secretaries. Reforms Enquiry Committee [Muddiman report], Appendix 5, Oral Evidence, vol. 1, Simla, 1928, p. 182.

⁶² Vincent to Reading, 1 Dec. 1922, R(P)87.

⁶³ Lytton to Peel, 21 Dec. 1922, L10.

⁶⁴ Tinker, *Local Self-Government*, p. 137.

⁶⁵ Banerjea to Hailey, 7 Dec. 1923, WH5d; Banerjea to Lytton, 2 Dec. 1923, L22.

⁶⁶ Muddiman Report, 1924-25, Cmd. 2362, vol. x, p. 632, cited in Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, p. 200.

autonomy and should not be taken at face value. However both Mitter and Banerjea were looking for scapegoats and missing the basic point that it was their own political miscalculations that led to their electoral defeat. This is well brought out by Broomfield who suggests that there was no necessary correlation in the new mass politics between performance in the legislature and electoral success. The Liberals had failed

to realise that there were two levels in the politics of the reformed order: the upper level of the more sophisticated *bhadralok* and the lower level of the new mass electorate...It was not merely a question of making a good showing in the Council or reaching a satisfactory *modus vivendi* with the British as Sapru had suggested. To win elections, nationalist politicians required not only zeal and a good record but organisation and discipline, inside and outside the legislature. They needed money for local publicity and canvassing. They needed a leader who could appeal to the wider electorate; and they needed to respect the symbols and terms of the new mass politics.⁶⁷

These were precisely the qualities that the Liberals lacked but which the Swarajists possessed.

2. Bombay : Lord Lloyd's Ministers

Whereas in Bengal Indians were effectively excluded from manufacturing by European predominance, in Bombay Indians had developed a thriving cotton industry since the middle of the nineteenth century.⁶⁸ As a result of the First World War, this industry, relieved at last of the burden of British competition, underwent a marked growth. Bombay mill-owners at the end of the war faced ambivalent relations with the Government. On the one hand, in contrast to the smaller traders, they remained dependent on British goodwill for a host of economic lubricants, without

⁶⁷ Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, pp. 201-2.

⁶⁸ C. Markovits, *Indian Business and Nationalist Politics 1931-39*, Cambridge, 1985, ch. 1. I am indebted to the complementary studies of Markovits and A.D.D. Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics. Rising Nationalism and a Modernising Economy in Bombay, 1918-1933*, New Delhi, 1978, for much of the information in this introductory section.

which their businesses might collapse: also they needed Government on their side in the growing worker unrest in their factories.⁶⁹ On the other hand, they resented the fact that they had taken (for the first time, it must be said) the weight of increased taxation during the war, and that they remained dependent on Government fiscal and economic policies for their continued well-being.⁷⁰ British manipulation of exchange rates left them particularly vulnerable in the trade depression that set in during 1920. The mill-owners had forged links with the Moderate Congress in order to protect their interests and these links were maintained after the Indian Liberals broke away from Congress. The mill-owners supported the anti-non-co-operation movement of 1920 and the more traditional pressure politics of the intelligentsia, through the Western India National Liberal Association (founded in 1919).⁷¹ They had traditionally found it useful to make links with the professional classes; they needed the support of lawyers, particularly, in the running of their businesses, and from the last quarter of the nineteenth century found the links that the professional classes provided with provincial and central politics a useful adjunct.⁷² Both groups shared Anglophile tastes and a moderate political outlook.

Bombay City acted as a social magnet in just the same way that Calcutta did and, in terms of social mix, it was even more cosmopolitan in its composition. There was not the same level of racial tension between Britons and Indians as existed in Calcutta. Bombay City however, was rivalled by a second centre of political activity, Poona, which was only some one hundred and fifty miles away over the Western Ghats in the Deccan.⁷³ Poona, the traditional centre of Chitpavan Brahmin activity, remained deeply divided between the Moderate and Extreme nationalists, revolving around the followers of the late G.K. Gokhale and B.G. Tilak respectively. Poona Liberal politics, perhaps because of this competitive environment, remained more progressive and more socially aware than that of Bombay City, where

⁶⁹ Markovits, *Indian Business*, pp. 29-30.

⁷⁰ See P. Thakurdas to Sir T. Holland (Industries & Munitions Dept., G.I.), 16 Oct. 1920, Thakurdas MSS, NMML, for some of the political grievances of Indian mill-owners.

⁷¹ Gordon, *Businessmen*, pp. 157 & 159.

⁷² See C. Dobbin, *Urban Leadership in Western India*, Oxford, 1972, pp. 259-61.

⁷³ The history of Poona politics is described in S.A. Wolpert, *Tilak and Gokhale*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962.

mill-owner interests were probably a constraining and conservative factor.⁷⁴

Whereas in Poona politics remained essentially a matter of difference between socially homogeneous groups, in Bombay City politics had an added dimension of inter-communal rivalry. At the end of the war one incident served to highlight the communal divisions in Bombay City; this was the meeting called to mark the end of Willingdon's term of office as Governor of the Presidency by establishing a memorial. Europeans and moderate Indians, especially the Parsi community, came together in organising a public meeting and they ran into the hostility of the Extremists, angered by Willingdon's rather autocratic record.⁷⁵ Whereas the Home Rulers were able to rally support from the middle-classes of Bombay, and especially from the Gujarati sections, the Moderates were able to use their links with the mills to bring out the physical support of the Marathi mill-hands and from other lower class Muslim supporters.⁷⁶ The major issues in Bombay politics in 1919, such as the Rowlatt satyagraha or the Khilafat movement, tended to leave the Moderates rather on the side lines and never again could they call upon this sort of mass support in Bombay city politics. Instead it was Gandhi who was to reap the benefits of popular support in Bombay. Support for Gandhi came from the Muslims because of the Khilafat issue, and from part of the Gujarati community, from the small merchants shopkeepers, clerks etc. As R. Kumar points out, 'few of the established Gujarati industrialists or businessmen, or lawyers, associated themselves at this juncture with the Mahatma.'⁷⁷ This division was part of the broader split between the manufacturers, with their associated interests, and the smaller merchants, with the former group tending to support Liberal and anti-non-co-operation politics and the latter increasingly supportive of the Gandhian Congress.⁷⁸

One further division in Bombay society was that between the upper-caste

⁷⁴ This argument is developed further on pp. 317-319 below. A flavour of the more radical social policies of the Deccan may be had from the programme of work which the Deccan Liberal Party proposed for the new Bombay Legislative Council. See *Advocate of India*, 15 Feb. 1921.

⁷⁵ See J. Masselos, 'Some Aspects of Bombay City Politics in 1919' in R. Kumar (ed.), *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, pp. 161-5. I am indebted to Dr. Masselos' article for much of the information on Bombay politics in the period at the end of the First World War.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-4.

⁷⁷ See R. Kumar, 'From Swaraj to Purna Swaraj. Nationalist Politics in the City of Bombay 1920-1932.', in D.A. Low (ed.) *Congress and the Raj*, London, 1977, p. 85.

⁷⁸ Gordon, *Businessmen*, pp. 1-10.

Hindu elite, who, along with the Parsis, traditionally had dominated nationalist politics, and the newly-organised non-Brahmin movement. The British allowed seven reserved seats for 'Marathas and allied castes' in the new constitution and non-Brahmins in Maharashtra were able to win three seats over and above this special representation in the November 1920 elections. The Bombay Government continued to encourage the non-Brahmin movement as a loyalist movement. At the special request of the Governor, the Prince of Wales's unveiled a memorial to Shivaji and a war memorial to Maratha soldiers during his visit to the Presidency in the winter of 1921-22.⁷⁹ Despite the fact that the Liberals were a predominantly high caste organisation, they were able to build upon quite effective, if paternalistic, links with the non-Brahmins due to their alliance on the issue of social reform. Sir Narayan Chandavarkar was President of the Depressed Classes Mission Society and 'exercised considerable influence over the Depressed Classes.'⁸⁰ In Poona the Moderates and non-Brahmins had allied against Tilakite conservatism on social reform issues.⁸¹

Sir George Lloyd and the working of the Reforms

Willington's replacement as Governor of Bombay was the dashing young Conservative M.P., Sir George Lloyd. Lloyd was to be responsible during the crucial period of the making and working of the reforms. He was a firm believer in the civilising mission and, with his Tory imperialist background, a somewhat surprising supporter of the Montford reforms. Lloyd's ideas were very much in the activist imperial mold of men like Curzon or Cromer. Indeed he was a somewhat anachronistic figure, an enthusiastic young imperialist in a period when the British Empire was coming to terms with the growth of anti-colonial nationalism and

⁷⁹ See Lloyd to Reading, 19 Aug. 1921 and 18 Oct. 1921, R23. Lloyd assured the Viceroy that the Sivaji cult was no longer in the hands of Brahmins for seditious agitation, but was under the control of the non-Brahmin movement which was a definite counterbalance to Brahmin ascendancy.

⁸⁰ B.R. Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables*, Bombay, 1946, p. 17.

⁸¹ G. Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society. The Non-Brahman Movement in Western India: 1873 to 1930*, Bombay, 1976, ch. xiii. As Omvedt argues, the alliance was not based on firm ground, however, as the Moderates wanted gradual social reform only and tended to maintain their social distance from the non-Brahmins.

declining imperial resources.⁸² He placed a greater emphasis on the provision of material benefits for the majority of the Indian population than he did on meeting the political demands of the educated Indian elite.⁸³ The achievements of which he was most proud were the physical ones, such as the building of the Sukkur Barrage or the Bombay reclamation scheme. He saw the reforms as an experiment which should be given a fair chance, but reckoned that they reduced the efficiency of the administration and raised its cost.⁸⁴ When he left office at the end of 1923, Lloyd could look back on his term of office with a good deal of satisfaction. He told his successor Sir Leslie Wilson that:

I found the Presidency in the most complete state of lawlessness, agitation and disorder both political and economic. But we have killed the agitation and you could not wish for a more orderly and peaceful charge than is this Presidency now.⁸⁵

One key to his success lay in his policy of firmness mixed with liberality, or as he put it to Montagu, 'The guiding "tag" or formula is this: "to pay out rope and hit the agitator hard"'.⁸⁶ Lloyd was particularly proud that during the difficult days of the Prince of Wales' visit in the winter of 1921-22, Bombay, unlike provinces such as Bengal, was able to deal with agitation without recourse to special powers of detention and summary justice. The Governor of Bombay had been able to keep his Legislative Council on his side and count on its support in dealing with the non-co-operation movement, and in financing any necessary expenditure.

⁸² See the official biography, J. Charmley, *Lord Lloyd and the Decline of the British Empire*, London, 1987.

⁸³ He advised Reading that, 'After all the things that matter to these people are water, shelter and religion: we may leave the rest if we can satisfy them as to these.' Lloyd to Reading, 5 Oct. 1921, *R(P)48*.

⁸⁴ Lloyd to Reading, 31 July 1923, *R25*.

⁸⁵ Lloyd to Wilson, 29 June 1923, *GL10/21*.

⁸⁶ Lloyd to Montagu, 30 April 1920, *M25*.

Table 3

CONSTITUTION OF THE BOMBAY LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
UNDER THE REFORMS ACT OF 1919

Elected Members		Nominated Members	
Non-Muslim urban	11	Officials	20
Non-Muslim rural	35	Non-officials	5
Muslim urban	5		
Muslim rural	22		25
Landholders	3		
Universities	1		
Europeans	2		
Commerce & Industry	7		
	86		

SOURCE: L.F. Rushbrook Williams, *India in 1920*, Calcutta, 1921, p. 249.

Another reason for Lloyd's relative success, was the balance of interests in the Bombay Legislative Council, which allowed the Government to put together the necessary support. H.S. Lawrence, a Member of the Bombay Executive Council, argued that the Presidency had been fortunate in the balance of interests represented in the Legislative Assembly:

No other Province perhaps possesses so delicate a balance of conflicting interests...There are the highly educated and intelligent citizens of Bombay city intent on commerce and industry; the Mahomedan landlords of Sind intent on irrigation; the Marathas and the Lingayats of the Deccan bitterly opposed to Brahmin supremacy; and the intellectual Brahmins of the Deccan resentful of policies directed by Mr. Gandhi and his Gujarati clique at Ahmedabad.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ 'Confidential Note on the Reform System in the Bombay Presidency 1921-24', 1 Sept. 1924, L15.

Even so, Lawrence felt that the first council had not been really representative of Bombay interests, in that lawyers continued to be over-represented.⁸⁸

Liberals were well represented on Lloyd's Government. R.P. Paranjpye, with his background as an educationalist, was seen as a natural choice as Minister in charge of Education, Medicine and Public Health, whilst Chunilal Mehta was put, rather more surprisingly, in charge of Forests, Excise and Agriculture.⁸⁹ The third Minister, Gulam Hussain Hidayatullah, seems to have been chosen less for any intrinsic ability than as a senior representative of the loyalist Muslims of Sind. On the Executive Council, Chimanlal Setalvad was given charge of the Law Department and the other Indian Member, Sir Ibrahim Rahimtulla, a Muslim (and a Liberal sympathiser), was given charge of the Revenue Department.⁹⁰ When Rahimtulla was absent whilst presiding over the Fiscal Commission (from 6 Dec. 1921 to 26 July 1922) he was replaced by an eminent Liberal, Sir Cowasjee Jehangir. The Ministers were not chosen as representatives of any particular political party nor indeed had the electors been presented with party programmes or labels. Lloyd did not allow his ministers to form a joint cabinet, he told them that each Minister was individually responsible to him for their relevant departments.⁹¹ Setalvad even claimed to the Muddiman Committee that Lloyd expected Ministers only to advise him on the Transferred Departments; he would take the decisions, even on day to day matters.⁹² Sir Maurice Hayward, in replying on behalf of the Bombay Government to Setalvad's submission, argued that it was because Ministers did not represent real parties in the Legislative Council that the Government did not feel it right to leave them an entirely free hand to run their departments. However, he denied that Ministers were ever overruled by the Governor as Setalvad had claimed.⁹³

⁸⁸ *Idem.* He estimated that Lawyers formed one third of the Legislative Council, landlords another third, and commercial and industrial magnates the remaining third.

⁸⁹ *Indian Social Reformer*, 16 Jan. 1921.

⁹⁰ Setalvad believed that he was only available for the Bombay post because the Government of India had gone back on an earlier private promise to make him Law Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council because he had signed the minority report of the Hunter Committee on the Punjab disturbances. C.H. Setalvad, *Recollections and Reflections. An Autobiography*, Bombay, 1946, pp. 320-1.

⁹¹ R.P. Paranjpye, *84 Not Out*, Delhi, 1961, p. 71.

⁹² Reforms Enquiry Committee [Muddiman report], Appendix 5, Oral Evidence, vol. 1, Simla, 1928., pp. 89-95.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-8.

Setalvad further complained that, although there were at most times joint meetings of the two halves of Government, Ministers were made to feel unwelcome, whilst Members were left in the dark about transferred subjects. C.F. Adam, who was Lloyd's Private Secretary in this period, strenuously denied these charges when he came to write Lloyd's biography in 1948. He argued that joint meetings 'had been held almost weekly at which both transferred and reserved subjects had been freely discussed.'⁹⁴ It does seem that Setalvad was factually mistaken in some of his claims, but he was right to the extent that he indicated the spirit of Lloyd's administration, which was autocratic and not according to the intentions of the Montford reforms. Lloyd prided himself in running a 'tight ship'. He had a fairly low opinion of the administrative capacity of his Ministers, arguing that 'without the most careful guidance of members of the Imperial Services they would be unable to frame any policy or carry that policy into effect.'⁹⁵ Lloyd felt that the Ministers made partial choices when making recommendations for appointments and added that 'corporate responsibility is almost beyond their comprehension, while loyalty to their subordinates and consistency of policy are not considered by them to be attributes of any value.'⁹⁶ Lloyd blamed the failure of the system on the fact that, contrary to the expectations of the reforms' makers, the Ministers did not have behind them the support of a well-organised party in the Legislative Council nor even the support of a definite majority.⁹⁷ However, whilst Lytton decided that he would have to use Government resources to help the party process along in Bengal, Lloyd preferred to run Government in a more personal way, persuading and cajoling Legislative Councillors himself if necessary. It was certainly true that Ministers in Bombay were particularly isolated, in that, when an association of members of the Legislative Council was formed, Ministers were specifically excluded from it!⁹⁸ Lloyd saw legislation in the transferred departments as his own achievement rather than that of

⁹⁴ C.F. Adam, *Life of Lord Lloyd*, London, 1948, p. 187.

⁹⁵ Lloyd to Reading, 31 July 1923, R25.

⁹⁶ *Idem*.

⁹⁷ See Lloyd to Montagu, 4 March 1921, M26. '...how would you like to carry on a government without a majority behind you in the house? - or rather with 16 votes against 111!' In fact, in addition to his officials, Lloyd could count on a majority of the Sind members, plus the non-Brahmin members. See Lloyd to Reading, 19 Feb. 1922, R24.

⁹⁸ Muddiman Report, Appendix 5, C.H. Setalvad's written evidence, p. 91.

his Ministers. For example, in a letter to his wife, Lloyd wrote that, 'I am introducing free and compulsory primary education this month in the Council. It is the first measure for free and compulsory education ever put forward in this country.'⁹⁹

Lloyd was conveniently forgetting both British opposition before the First World War to G.K. Gokhale's Compulsory Primary Education Bill, and the fact that it was his Education Minister, R.P. Paranjpye who introduced the Compulsory Primary Education Bill, which was modelled on Gokhale's previous measure. Paranjpye had, indeed, devoted his whole life to educational matters and one of the first things he did when he was appointed a Minister was to set up a committee under Sir Narayan Chandavarkar to report on primary education.¹⁰⁰ It was this report that formed the basis for the new bill which empowered government to call on local government bodies to prepare schemes of compulsory primary education.¹⁰¹ The measure was enacted in 1923.

Although, like the its Bengal counterpart, the Bombay Government felt it did badly out of the Meston financial settlement, which left the industrial/commercial provinces bereft of their expanding income tax revenues, the problem did not reach the crisis proportions that it did in Bengal. Lloyd was a stickler for strict balancing of the books and the Retrenchment Committee managed to make economies, not just of the Rs. 60 lakhs which they were asked to find, but of Rs. 1 crore. Whereas the Bengal Retrenchment Committee made the cuts as far as possible in the upper echelons of the Services, Bombay focused on reducing the lower ranks, thus putting out of work thousands of village officials, accountants, police, schoolmasters etc..¹⁰² It may well be that the Liberals rued their over-enthusiastic reduction of expenditure when it came to the Council elections in 1923. Though the Government had a healthy budget surplus in 1923-24, this had been achieved, in part, by starving the transferred departments of funds for their development.

The greatest difficulties that Lloyd had with the Indian members of his Government related to two issues: protection of the Imperial Services and, measures

⁹⁹ G. Lloyd to B. Lloyd [his wife, Blanche], 8 Sept. 1922, *GLA/1C*.

¹⁰⁰ Paranjpye, *84 Not Out*, p. 80.

¹⁰¹ Tinker, *Local Self-Government*, pp. 133, 262-5.

¹⁰² *Times of India*, 20 Feb. 1923.

for dealing with the threat from non-co-operation. Lloyd saw the protection of the interests of the services as an essential part of his job but one which inevitably brought him into conflict with his Indian Ministers who were keen to make their own appointments and to Indianise the Services. Of all the Provincial Governors, nobody did more than George Lloyd to argue the case for the British element in the Services.¹⁰³ Lloyd even got his wife to lobby on behalf of the Services whilst she was in London in 1922.¹⁰⁴ The vehemence of Lloyd's stance stemmed from a number of factors. Firstly, there was his fundamental conviction as an imperialist that good administration could be equated with British administration. In a valedictory speech to the Sind Club in September 1923, Lloyd spoke of 'the incapacity of the peoples to govern themselves - or more accurately, to govern each other, which is their real desire.'¹⁰⁵ Lloyd argued that this incapacity, based on fundamental antagonisms between the Indian communities had been proved in history.

Nearer to home, Lloyd's experience of working with Indian colleagues did not leave him with an impression of Indian capacity for government. He described his colleagues [the Executive Councillors] as being 'quite ready to encourage little intrigues all the time and to cabal against one another busily'. 'I often think', he told Montagu, 'what an easy job government here would be if one had no Indian colleagues to deal with!'¹⁰⁶ As has been indicated, Lloyd felt that Indians could not be trusted to make administrative appointments impartially, therefore it was incumbent upon him to protect the interests of the British members of the Services.¹⁰⁷ A good example of this came early in the life of the Council, in the spring of 1921, when Sir George Curtis retired as Finance Member and Vice-President of the Executive Council. Normal custom would have been to appoint the Senior Councillor in his place, but this was one of the Indians, Sir Ibrahim Rahimtulla, and Lloyd was reluctant to appoint Rahimtulla because it meant that he would stand in as Governor if ever Lloyd should need to return home for any period of time. This, Lloyd felt, would be 'very serious...more particularly with regard to

¹⁰³ G. Lloyd to B. Lloyd, 28 July 1922, *GL4/1C*.

¹⁰⁴ G. Lloyd to B. Lloyd, 12 Sept. 1922, *GL4/1C*.

¹⁰⁵ Speech to Sind Club, Sept. 1923, *GL22/3*.

¹⁰⁶ Lloyd to Montagu, 5 Aug. 1921, *M26*

¹⁰⁷ Lloyd to Montagu, 23 Dec. 1921, *M26*.

the civil servants...Sir Ibrahim would immediately set to work to fill every office with Indians and would completely exclude the British where he could.¹⁰⁸ Lloyd left the position vacant, apparently waiting for Rahimtulla to leave when he took up the appointment Lloyd had found him as President of the Fiscal Commission. However, Setalvad saw this as a matter of racial equality and confronted Lloyd over the issue, even threatening him with the resignation of all the Indian members of the cabinet.¹⁰⁹ Ultimately Lloyd relented, which is in itself a good indication of the power of Indian Members under the new system.¹¹⁰ Partly, Lloyd felt that Rahimtulla's natural combativeness added greatly to the work of the administration, as 'he fights every case and every point, involving additional interviews galore.'¹¹¹ There does seem to have been a serious clash of personalities involved: the two men were both rather imperious in their own ways. The *Indian Social Reformer* felt that whilst Rahimtulla was in the Government, the Indian Members had stood up to Lloyd.¹¹² A second factor in Lloyd's special attention to the needs of the Services was that he felt that the latter were not properly defended by the Viceroy, and therefore it was all the more important that he put the case, especially to London.¹¹³

The other major area of disagreement with Indian Ministers and Councillors was over matters of law and order relating to dealing with the non-co-operation movement. Lloyd believed that Indians were too scared to face the hostile criticism and even social ostracism that would result from their participating in what he considered to be the right decisions on law and order. He saw it as his role as Governor to provide them with the necessary firmness and resolve. He told Montagu at the time of the argument with Reading about Gandhi's arrest that the British

¹⁰⁸ Lloyd to Reading, 26 May 1921, R3.

¹⁰⁹ C.H. Setalvad, *Recollections*, pp. 326-7.

¹¹⁰ The vendetta with Rahimtulla continued right to the end of Rahimtullah's period of service in March 1923 (a date which was in itself controversial in that it meant that Lloyd did not make any allowance of time for Rahimtulla's period of absence whilst on the Fiscal Commission). Lloyd partly ascribed the differences between himself and Rahimtulla to the fact that the latter as a Bombay landowner was opposing Lloyd's Back Bay Reclamation Scheme. Lloyd to Reading, 23 June 1921, R23.

¹¹¹ G. Lloyd to B. Lloyd, 28 July 1922, GLA/1C.

¹¹² *Indian Social Reformer*, 15 Dec. 1923.

¹¹³ See, e.g., G. Lloyd to B. Lloyd, 12 Sept. 1922, GLA/1C.

position in relation to Indian members of their government should be 'not to give these people wits for they are clever enough, but to give them our steadiness and greater moral courage in emergencies.'¹¹⁴ The key test came over the question of arresting the Ali Brothers, the leaders of the Khilafat movement.

Like many imperialists in India, Lloyd was particularly sensitive to maintaining the loyalty of the Muslim community.¹¹⁵ The question of prosecuting Shaukat and Mohammed Ali had arisen as early as the spring of 1921.¹¹⁶ In May 1921 the Government of India considered prosecuting the brothers for seditious speeches made in the United Provinces. However, the majority of the Viceroy's Council preferred that Reading should see Mahatma Gandhi before starting any prosecution; they feared the consequences if Gandhi should merely repeat the offence and thus force the Government to arrest him. As a result, Reading spent several long interviews with Gandhi and eventually got him to agree to try and obtain a full apology for the speeches from the Ali brothers, and an undertaking that they would not repeat them. Reading, finding that his Councillors now seemed to prefer prosecution, consulted Lloyd, as Governor of the Alis' home province. Lloyd had an interview at Simla with Reading at which Lloyd argued for immediate prosecution, whilst the Viceroy argued for his political strategy of driving a wedge between Gandhi and the Alis to be given a chance. Lloyd admitted that he was 'reluctant to interrupt an artist in his stride' and seems to have helped to persuade the Council to allow Reading's strategy a chance.¹¹⁷ The requisite apology was received and published at the end of May and led to a period of relative quiet. However, in July, in speeches to the All-India Khilafat Conference at Karachi, the Alis called for Muslims to leave the British army. Reading was now ready for a prosecution and consulted Lloyd. Lloyd recommended arrest, but, rather embarrassingly, admitted privately that his two Indian Councillors did not approve until they were satisfied that the Army had

¹¹⁴ Lloyd to Montagu, 17 Feb. 1922, *M26*.

¹¹⁵ He felt that Hardinge's mistake as Viceroy had been to look to the Hindus instead of the Muslims. G. Lloyd to B. Lloyd, 19 Oct. 1921, *GL4/1C*.

¹¹⁶ See also pp. 153-155 above.

¹¹⁷ This narrative is constructed largely from Lloyd's 'Note of an Interview between H.E. the Viceroy and H.E. the Governor of Bombay regarding the prosecution of the Ali Brothers, Simla, May 1921, *GL10/20*.

real fears of disaffection resulting from these speeches.¹¹⁸ Presumably this was an issue upon which the Ministers were also consulted and Lloyd later admitted to Montagu that the three Indian Ministers had also opposed the prosecution and he had had to push it through by a bare majority.¹¹⁹ Lloyd added that 'The fact that my Indian colleagues refused to support me in this step only shows how little fit they are for any responsibility which can possibly make them the target for even the mildest criticism.'¹²⁰ The Ali Brothers were prosecuted and eventually sentenced to two years imprisonment.

The prosecutions were deeply disturbing to the Muslim community, and were a prelude to the next crisis, the disturbances at the time of the Prince of Wales' visit. The visit saw major inter-communal violence in Bombay between Parsis and Europeans welcoming the Prince on the one side, and Hindus and Muslims trying to enforce a *hartal* on the other. The *Times of India* calculated that 53 people were killed in these disturbances, 298 wounded, and 341 arrests made.¹²¹ The experience of the violence of the Gandhian protest seems to have achieved the change of heart in his Indian colleagues that he had been looking for. In January Lloyd reported to Montagu that he had the unanimous support of all 3 Ministers and 4 Executive Councillors for the arrest of Gandhi.¹²² He pronounced himself 'very pleased on the whole' with the attitude of his Council and reported proudly that:

It is a fact that the Bombay Moderates are the only Moderates in India who have stood firm by Government throughout the last two months. It is a fact that whilst Bengal, the Punjab, and the United Provinces have failed to deal with their Volunteers by means of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, we have succeeded in dealing with our Volunteers without the use of such Act at all.¹²³

¹¹⁸ Lloyd to Reading, ptel. 1171, 22 Aug. 1920, R23. This division in the Government became public knowledge, see *Bombay Chronicle*, 21 Sept. 1921.

¹¹⁹ Lloyd to Montagu, 23 Sept. 1921, M26.

¹²⁰ *Idem*.

¹²¹ *Times of India*, 15 Dec. 1921. See also the account in R. Kumar, 'From Swaraj to Purna Swaraj', pp. 90-93.

¹²² Lloyd to Montagu, 20 Jan. 1922, M26. This is contradicted by R.P. Paranjpye who in his autobiography says that he and Chunilal Mehta opposed the arrest of Gandhi, but could not make this fact public at the time of the Council elections of November 1923. Paranjpye, *84 Not Out*, p. 83.

¹²³ Lloyd to Montagu, 20 Jan. 1920, M26 ; Lloyd to Reading, 21 Jan 1922, R24.; Lloyd to Reading, ptel. 45a, 8 Sept. 1922, R24.

Lloyd's relations with his Indian colleagues got warmer after Rahimtulla's departure. Chunilal Mehta was eventually moved from the transferred side to take over from Rahimtulla.¹²⁴ Setalvad resigned in February 1923 (with effect from June 1923), but this was not, as some of the newspapers suspected, due to differences with British members of the administration.¹²⁵ In fact Setalvad resigned for financial reasons; he and Rahimtulla were among a number of people who lost large amounts of money with the collapse in prices on the Bombay Stock Exchange at the end of 1922, and therefore Setalvad felt it incumbent on him to restore his fortunes by returning to his legal career.¹²⁶ Lloyd was obviously disappointed and had been trying for some time to get Reading to agree to Setalvad replacing Sapru as Law Member of the Government of India; he was very keen to have a Bombay man in the Viceroy's cabinet.¹²⁷ There was, however, the advantage that Setalvad could help to organise the inert Bombay Liberals in time for the forthcoming Council elections.¹²⁸ In his final year in office Lloyd became quite concerned that the Liberals should do well against the returning Congressmen.¹²⁹

However solicitous Lloyd was for the Liberal Party, he could do nothing to save it from a crushing electoral defeat in the Council elections of November 1923. Most of the leading Liberals were defeated by Swarajist candidates and only a rump of 3 or 4 official Liberals remained in the new Council.¹³⁰ This heavy defeat, which might have been predicted after the Swarajist successes earlier in the year in the Bombay Municipal Council elections, was the result of a number of factors. One

¹²⁴ Setalvad opposed this move as tending to give the Governor too much power of patronage over his Ministers; *Recollections*, p. 328.

¹²⁵ *Bombay Chronicle*, 13 Dec. 1923.

¹²⁶ Gordon, *Businessmen*, p. 176; Peel to Reading, 21 Oct. 1923, R6.

¹²⁷ Lloyd to Reading, 14 Feb. 1923, R25; Lloyd to Reading, 3 June 1922, & ptel. 45a, 8 Sept. 1922, R24.

¹²⁸ Setalvad to C.F. Adam (PS to G/Bombay), 24 June 1923, R25.

¹²⁹ Lloyd to Reading, ptel. 348, 25 March 1923, R25., in which Lloyd warned of the damaging effect that certification of the salt tax would have on the Moderates's electoral prospects. Lloyd seems, ironically, to have taken here the sort of political stance that he had attacked when Reading took it regarding the arrest of Gandhi. Lloyd's advice was 'to do nothing which might injure [the moderate party's political supremacy]... at any rate until after the elections'.

¹³⁰ Smith, thesis, p. 340.

element was the paucity of Liberal preparations and party organisation; they had stirred themselves too little and too late against a highly energetic Swarajist campaign. More importantly, many of the electors must have associated the Liberals with the Government that had arrested Mahatma Gandhi and helped to suppress the non-co-operation movement: they just didn't appear nationalist enough to meet the public mood. Finally, it must be said that, in contrast to the Bengal Ministers, the Bombay Ministers did not have much of constructive record to point too.¹³¹ This was largely a result of the financial stringencies which the first council worked under, but also, to some extent, to the degree to which the Ministers operated under the shadow of an interventionist Governor.

¹³¹ See the criticisms in the *Indian Social Reformer*, 24 Feb. 1923. Even measures such as the Compulsory Primary Education Act were vitiated by a lack of funds to implement them.

3. The United Provinces: *Aman Sabhas*- landlords and Liberals

To be guided by the [Indian] intelligentsia only, would be as if the Germans had won the war, occupied this country and consulted only those Englishmen who could read and write German fluently. *Sir Harcourt Butler, Governor of the United Provinces, 1921-22.*¹³²

Whereas Bombay and Bengal were relatively urbanised provinces by Indian standards, the United Provinces had a much smaller percentage of its population living in towns.¹³³ Until recently the United Provinces had been a political backwater, but by the time of the First World War it was coming to play an important role in national politics.¹³⁴ As in Bombay and Bengal, local politics took the form of a symbiotic relationship between the traditional and newer elites, in this case between the powerful bankers, merchants and landowners on the one hand and the professional classes on the other.¹³⁵ Politics tended to have a very provincial flavour, with much concentration on supporting religious/cultural organisations and the provision of University education.¹³⁶ The new Legislative Council was dominated by the rural interests, particularly by the larger landlords who were such a feature of some parts of the United Provinces [see Table 3].¹³⁷ In the first Councils, landholders and lawyers were the two predominant groups, with the former group holding the majority.¹³⁸ Harcourt Butler, the Governor, reported that there were three blocks in the Legislative Council which usually voted solidly: landlords, Muslims and Liberals.¹³⁹ The Government could usually rely on the support of the first two groups and of course, the officials and nominated members.¹⁴⁰

However, Butler decided to choose his Ministers on ability and this meant

¹³² Butler to Reading, 1 Nov. 1930, *R(P)*7.

¹³³ Of the 46 million people living in the U.P. in 1921, 89% lived in rural areas. G. Pandey, *The Ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh 1926-34*, Oxford, 1978, p. 11.

¹³⁴ See C. Bayly, *The Local Roots of Indian Politics. Allahabad 1880-1920*, Oxford, 1975, pp. 2-3.

¹³⁵ Bayly, *Local Roots*, pp. 271-8.

¹³⁶ See Gordon, 'Hindu Mahasabha', pp. 145-203.

¹³⁷ As many as 77 of the general constituencies were rural as against 12 urban. Indian Statutory Commission [Simon Report], Cmd. 3572, vol. 3, 1929-30, p. 215. For landlord politics, see P.D. Reeves, *Landlords and Governments in Uttar Pradesh*, Bombay, 1991.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

¹³⁹ Butler to Reading, 30 Nov. 1921, *R23*.

¹⁴⁰ *Idem.*

turning to the intelligentsia, who formed the backbone of the Liberal Party.¹⁴¹

There were to be only two Ministers in the U.P., and Butler gave the Education and Industries portfolio to C.Y. Chintamani, a Madras journalist who edited the *Leader* newspaper and was a leading figure in the Liberal party nationally.¹⁴² Pandit Jagat Narayan, a Liberal lawyer from Lucknow, became Minister for Local Self-Government and Public Health. On the Reserved side of Government, Butler was able to appoint a Muslim landowner, the Raja of Mahmudabad, to be in charge of the Home Department, and Ludovic Porter was in charge of the all-important Finance portfolio (until replaced by S.P. O'Donnell at the beginning of 1923).

Considering that Harcourt Butler had not been a friend to the Montford reforms in their early stages, it must be said that he seems to have made every effort to make the reforms a success in his province. He opted to run a system of joint consultation and joint decision-making of the two halves of Government. Where there were differences between the two sides, the decision was left to whichever side was responsible for the subject.¹⁴³ The system worked happily, at least for the first eight months.¹⁴⁴

From the Governor's point of view, however, it was disappointing that the Ministers had failed to influence either the Legislative Council or public opinion.¹⁴⁵ Butler commented that, 'From the outset I endeavoured, with the invaluable assistance of Sir Ludovic Porter, to build up a party which would support the Government and make the administration possible.'¹⁴⁶ Butler was not the sort of person to sit idly by and allow the Government case to go by default, especially in the countryside where Congress was allying itself to the *kisan* or peasant movement that grew up during 1920. He planned to meet this threat with a policy

¹⁴¹ In this Province, as in Bombay and Bengal, the Liberals were not chosen because they were Members of a particular party, indeed party politics had not formed a feature of the elections of 1920. Butler to H.E. Richards, 27 May 1920, B21.

¹⁴² Chintamani does not seem to have been chosen for his popular support in the Legislature- as an outsider in U.P. politics he had earlier doubted whether he could even get elected. See H. Butler to G. Butler (his brother), 2 June 1920, B25.

¹⁴³ Butler to Reading, 5 May 1923, R25.

¹⁴⁴ Chintamani, evidence to Muddiman Committee, Appendix 6, Oral Evidence, vol. 1, pp. 297-8, 312; J. Narayan to Butler, 27 Dec. 1925, B29; H.N. Kunzru to Sapru, 4 Mar. 1921, SAP/K86, 1st. series; J. Narayan to Sapru, 8 July 1921, SAP/N2, 1st. series.

¹⁴⁵ Butler to Reading, 5 May 1923, R25.

¹⁴⁶ Idem.

mixing reform, repression and counter-propaganda.¹⁴⁷ Butler prepared to amend the Oudh Rent Act so as to give tenants greater security, but he made sure to do so in a manner that

Table 4

**CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED PROVINCES LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
UNDER THE REFORMS ACT OF 1919**

Elected Members		Nominated Members	
Non-Muslim urban	8	Officials	18
Non-Muslim rural	52	Non-officials	5
Muslim urban	4		
Muslim rural	25		<u>23</u>
Landholders	6		
Universities	1		
Europeans	1		
Commerce & Industry	3		
	<u>100</u>		

SOURCE: L.F. Rushbrook Williams, *India in 1920*, Calcutta, 1921, p. 249.

ensured he did not alienate the landlords, whom he regarded as 'the only friends we have.'¹⁴⁸ In April 1921 Butler wrote to local commissioners to encourage them to form *aman sabhas* or 'leagues of public security', which would bring together

¹⁴⁷ See P.D. Reeves, 'The Politics of Order. "Anti-Non-Cooperation" in the United Provinces, 1921, *Journal of Asian Studies*, xxv, 2, 1966, pp. 264-5.

¹⁴⁸ Butler to Vincent, 10 Nov. 1920 B21. Butler told Reading that 'The Taluqdars are the most loyal body in India and a break-water between trouble in the Punjab and trouble in Bengal.' Butler to Reading, 27 June 1921, R23.

moderate opinion on the side of law and order.¹⁴⁹ This active Government intervention in politics was just the sort of thing that Montagu had been calling for for some time. British officials in the districts convened and chaired the *sabhas* which were formed in every district. The Liberal newspaper, the *Leader*, reported the formation of a new *sabha* almost daily during 1921, and the remarkable thing was that Liberals supported these organisations initially and worked on a joint platform with Government officials and local landowners.¹⁵⁰ An editorial in the *Leader* of 4 June 1921 frankly recognized the danger that these organizations might become 'strongholds of reaction and conservatism', but, on balance, it felt that they were in the best interests of the peasantry, who were now being courted by officials and landlords to attend these meetings. More importantly it was argued that the *sabhas* would allow the peasants to make their grievances known. With Liberals attending *aman sabhas* and landlords attending liberal conferences, it became important to maintain a distinction between the two organisations and, at a meeting of the Moradabad Liberal Association on 27 June 1921, K.P. Kaul of the Servants of India Society argued that the difference lay in the fact that Liberal bodies did not have officials as members.¹⁵¹

Liberals in the United Provinces believed that they could, by co-operating with the landlords and the Government, achieve an acceptable compromise over the amendment to the Oudh Rent Act (1886). When Sir Ludovic Porter introduced the Amending Bill into the Legislative Council on 4 August 1921, the Liberals were aggrieved to find that the Bill hardly improved the tenants' position at all, and certainly did not give the level of tenant occupancy rights which prevailed in Agra.¹⁵² Liberals organised public meetings throughout Oudh to press for more

¹⁴⁹ Reeves, 'Politics of Order', p. 265.

¹⁵⁰ A good example was the anti-non-co-operation meeting at Lucknow on 30 Apr. 1921, cited in the *Leader*, 2 May 1921.

¹⁵¹ *Leader*, 29 June 1921; from the evidence of the various local meetings, Kaul seems to have been correct, one does not find officials at Liberal Federation meetings but they are almost invariably present at *aman sabha* meetings.

¹⁵² Reeves argues that 'The bill in fact gave the landlords more than they surrendered and left the Government of India...with the feeling that many provisions were of "very doubtful expediency".' Reeves, 'Politics of Order', p. 272.

radical changes to be incorporated.¹⁵³ When the Liberals tried to use *aman sabha* meetings to criticise the new Rent Bill, they were warned by Government officials that they could only hold meetings if they were supporting the Bill.¹⁵⁴ Naturally, the Liberals felt deceived- the *aman sabhas* had no independent, constructive role, they were merely the tool of the Government in their war against non-co-operation.¹⁵⁵ Liberals eventually resigned their membership of the *sabhas* and, likewise, the few *taluqdars* who had joined the Liberal League quit.¹⁵⁶ The Liberals also protested within the machinery of Government by sending a deputation to wait on the Finance Minister and by trying to pass amendments within the Select Committee of the Legislative Council which had been set up to examine the Bill. However they found the Government unwilling to make any concessions and the five Liberal members walked out of the Committee and boycotted its proceedings.¹⁵⁷ Whether as a response to Government of India criticism, local Liberal pressure or the fear of renewed agrarian discontent, the Bill was to some extent liberalised in Committee, but no concession was made on the key issue of hereditary security of tenure.¹⁵⁸ I.N. Gurtu resigned as Secretary to the Minister of Local Self-Government, and the Liberals put up a valiant fight against the amended Bill when it returned to the Legislative Council, losing most votes, however, by a margin of at least two to one.¹⁵⁹ When the Bill finally passed through the legislature and was approved by Delhi, Radha Kant Malaviya, the Liberal son of Pandit Mohan Malaviya, handed in his resignation as a member of the Legislative Council.¹⁶⁰

The events described above seem to run counter to the picture described in the

¹⁵³ A convenient summary of these meetings can be found in K. Kumar, *Peasants in Revolt. Tenants, Landlords, Congress and the Raj in Oudh, 1886-1922*, New Delhi, 1984, p. 180.

¹⁵⁴ Kumar, *Peasants in Revolt*, p. 182; Reeves, 'Politics of Order', p. 272.

¹⁵⁵ This was denied by British officials. See J.E. Goudge (Publicity Commissioner, U.P) to Sri Prakasa, editor of the *Aj*, Benares, 6 Apr. 1922, Sri Prakasa MSS, NMML.

¹⁵⁶ Kumar, *Peasants in Revolt*, pp. 184-85.

¹⁵⁷ M.H. Siddiqi, *Agrarian Unrest in North India. The United Provinces 1918-22*, New Delhi, 1978, p. 191.

¹⁵⁸ Siddiqi writes that 'The "concessions" of the Rent Act would not have been achieved had it not been for the efforts made by the Liberals both inside the council and in public meetings.' See Siddiqi, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

¹⁵⁹ Kumar, *Peasants in Revolt*, pp. 183-4.

¹⁶⁰ Kumar, *Peasants in Revolt*, p. 187.

Bengal and Bombay Councils, i.e. that where Liberal Ministries were in place, the Provincial Government usually had to adapt its policies, even on the Reserved side, to their views. Threats of ministerial resignation were quite powerful weapons under the new reforms. However in the United Provinces, the Government remained quite adamant and resignations would have been futile because the Governor only needed to turn to the majority group, the landlords, to provide him with new ministers. Butler believed that it was the landlords and not the Liberal intelligentsia who formed the most important support of British rule in the United Provinces. As Reeves concludes, 'In the last resort the Government was more concerned to maintain order than to undertake far-reaching agrarian reform.'¹⁶¹ At the same time as they were losing the battle over the Oudh Rent Bill, the Liberals were also being alienated from Government by the more blatantly repressive actions it took towards the non-co-operation movement in the locality. Although the Government had used the Seditious Meetings Act earlier to restore order against the *kisans*, the Liberals had not objected.¹⁶² However, with the Prince of Wales' visit to the United Provinces in November 1922, the Government used the Criminal Law Amendment Act to try and maintain the image of an orderly province. By calling together both halves of his Government, Butler was able to get the consent of the Ministers to the use of the C.L.A.A., under certain provisos. However, what the Ministers objected to was that Butler used the Act indiscriminately and ignored the Ministers' conditions.¹⁶³ If the Ministers were hostile to the Governor, the feeling was obviously mutual as Butler wrote home that, 'I have never been able to distinguish in practice between many extremists and many moderates except that an extremist openly wants to get rid of us and a moderate wants office.'¹⁶⁴ Like many other Governors, Butler felt that the Indian Liberals had failed to show courage and support Government at the real hour of need. With relation to the running of the transferred departments, Butler was prepared to admit that 'on the whole...the Ministers showed considerable

¹⁶¹ Reeves, 'The Politics of Order', p. 272.

¹⁶² Muddiman Report, Appendix 6, vol.1, oral evidence of G.N. Misra & H.N. Kunzru of the U.P. Liberal Association, p. 197.

¹⁶³ Ibid, pp. 197-8; Chintamani to L. Porter, 6 June 1922, B55. For the action taken by Government see S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru. A Biography*, London, 1975, vol. 1, ch. 11.

¹⁶⁴ Butler to Hardinge et. al., 22 Dec. 1921, B29.

administrative capacity in their handling of transferred subjects.’¹⁶⁵

A key issue which divided the Ministers from the landlords once again was Narayan’s U.P. District Boards Act (1922), under which district boards were given considerable powers independent of Government.¹⁶⁶ The Bill threatened landlord interests by giving boards the power to raise the land revenue cess to pay for their expenditure, but in this case the Government took the side of the reformers against the landlords and encouraged the idea that local development should be paid for through local taxation.¹⁶⁷ The Ministerial position was strengthened by the formation of a Progressive Party in the legislature on 30 January 1922, in which independents joined with Liberals in a programme of responsive co-operation with Government. Landlord opposition was undermined by internal divisions and in November 1922 the landlords were heavily defeated in the legislative council. Chintamani, who worked with Narayan in drawing up the Bill, incurred a good deal of unpopularity amongst the landlords. He was quite acerbic and still controlled the *Leader* newspaper, and thus was seen as responsible for its attacks on landlord interests.¹⁶⁸ Butler was convinced that Chintamani saved himself by stirring up Hindu-Muslim differences regarding the District Boards Bill and thus splitting the landlords.¹⁶⁹ But Muslims were, in fact, concerned that there was no separate representation provided for them in the Bill. Provision was eventually made, over the protest of the Ministers.¹⁷⁰ Whether it was due to the desire to have a solid piece of legislative achievement on the statute books well before the elections in 1923 or for some other reason, the Bill had been rushed through the Legislature and was, as Tinker comments ‘not a well-constructed measure’ which ‘was often to be exploited and perverted when put into operation in the coming years’.¹⁷¹

Chintamani was convinced that Butler’s attitude hardened after Montagu’s resignation in March 1922.¹⁷² It may be, however, that the successful arrest of

¹⁶⁵ Butler to Reading, 5 May 1923, R25.

¹⁶⁶ Tinker, *Local Self-Government*, pp. 131-2.

¹⁶⁷ I have followed the account in Reeves, *Landlords and Government*, pp. 114-19.

¹⁶⁸ L.F. Rushbrook Williams to author, 2 Dec. 1971.

¹⁶⁹ Butler to Reading, 10 Nov. 1922, R24.

¹⁷⁰ Tinker, *Local Self-Government*, p. 132.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

¹⁷² Chintamani to Sapru, 21 Dec. 1922, Srinivasa Sastri MSS, NMML.

Gandhi and the collapse of the non-co-operation movement was a more important factor. Whatever the case, by the time Butler left at the end of 1922 there was only the faintest memory of the honeymoon period that Ministers had enjoyed in the first three-quarters of 1921. In one division on the District Boards Bill on 6 November 1922, the two Executive Councillors and all except one of the officials in the Council voted against the Ministers.¹⁷³ The joint approach to dyarchy was obviously falling apart at the seams, and the Ministers complained that by their second year of office they were only being barely tolerated by their official colleagues.¹⁷⁴

The appointment of Butler's successor, Sir William Marris, came as a relief to the Services in the U.P. as he had risen from their ranks. Marris, who had been closely involved in writing the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, operated the reforms in the United Provinces in quite a different way from his predecessor. As the Simon Report comments, Sir William 'made no attempt to return to a unitary system. He held regular meetings of his Executive Council and he met his Ministers individually, but he did not hold meetings with them as a Ministry.'¹⁷⁵ Chintamani wrote disconsolately, 'Our new Governor is working the constitution in a spirit of fairness, but in a technical and narrow-minded manner. Diarchy is being ridden to death and Ministers are complete zeroes in the administration of Reserved subjects.'¹⁷⁶ Financial problems had also become acute. Although the United Provinces did well out of the Meston Settlement, starting with extra resources worth nearly Rs. 1.6 crores, this was soon dissipated on rises in Service pay and the extra costs involved in the reforms machinery. By the Spring of 1923, the two Ministers must have foreseen a very difficult time ahead within the Government and the prospect of setbacks at the polls in November 1923, with Liberal Party organisation unready.¹⁷⁷ In April 1923 Chintamani and Jagat Narayan both resigned, having previously agreed to act together if either one of them had to resign on a difference with the Governor. As has

¹⁷³ Simon Commission Report, Cmd. 3572, 1929-30, vol. 3, p. 204.

¹⁷⁴ Chintamani's written evidence to Muddiman Committee, Appendix 5, Cmd. 2361, Simla 1924, p.276.

¹⁷⁵ Simon Commission Report, Cmd. 3572, 1929-30, vol. 3, p. 201. Marris explained to the Viceroy that he did not consult Indian Members on Reserved subjects 'over which a definite cleavage of opinion was to be expected.' Marris to Reading, 15 July 1923, R25.

¹⁷⁶ Chintamani to Sivaswami Aiyer, 19 Feb. 1923, Aiyer MSS, NAI.

¹⁷⁷ Simon Commission Report, Cmd. 3572, 1929-30, vol.3, p. 202.

been indicated, Chintamani had been unhappy in Government for some time and a number of considerations must have weighed with him.¹⁷⁸ Marris believed that the final straw was a scandal relating to a libel action which Sir Claude de la Fosse, Vice-Chancellor of Allahabad University, brought against Iqbal Narain Gurtu, a friend of Chintamani's. Gurtu had apparently accused de la Fosse of taking bribes and Chintamani had tried to use his official position to stop the libel case going forward, arguing that Government servants had, under the rules, to refer libel actions to the Government for permission. Chintamani was ruled out of order, and resigned.¹⁷⁹ Marris decided to offer one of the vacant posts to a landlord and the other to a Liberal, recognising that 'ability and energy were mainly on the side of the Liberal party'.¹⁸⁰ Firstly Rai Sahib Sita Ram and then Gokaran Nath Misra were offered a Ministry on condition that they worked with Raja Parmanand, a senior landlord, but both refused on the grounds that they could only work with another Liberal Minister.¹⁸¹

Chintamani's resignation did at least allow him time to work on preparing the Liberal Party organisation for the forthcoming elections.¹⁸² Once again, however, despite the Liberal Party having a larger and more active organisational base than most other Provincial Liberal Parties, the U.P. Liberals were swept from the councils in the elections.¹⁸³

What lessons can be learnt from the United Provinces' experience of working the reforms? Firstly, that in a Province where the urban-based intelligentsia was very much in a minority in the new councils, the Liberals were inevitably very dependent on the support of the Governor, without which the Ministers would always be defeated. In the United Provinces the Governor always regarded the landlords as his chief constituency and the Ministers owed their positions entirely to the Governor.

¹⁷⁸ One of the issues that he clearly thought was crucial was the intervention of the Governor in Transferred Departments '...so as to weaken Ministers in the eyes of, and by comparison with Secretaries and Heads of Departments...'. Chintamani to Srinivasa Sastri, 24 Apr. 1922, Sastri MSS, NMML.

¹⁷⁹ Marris to Reading, 2 May 1923, R25. See also V to S/S, ptel. 348, 11 May 1923, R12.

¹⁸⁰ Marris to Reading, 17 May 1923, R25.

¹⁸¹ Marris to Reading, 17 May 1923, R25; G.N. Misra to Besant, 14 May 1923, Besant MSS, file AS/3.

¹⁸² See Chintamani to Sapru, 12 July & 9 Aug. 1923, SAP/C50 & 51, 2nd. series.

¹⁸³ See below, p. 325, n. 75.

Secondly, that the attitude of the Governor under the reformed system was crucial. Chintamani complained that the Rules of Executive Business, which were kept confidential, gave inordinate powers to the Governor, and that the Finance Department was to all intents and purposes a Reserved Department. 'It is only', Chintamani argued, 'when the Governor casts his influence decisively on the side of the Ministers as against the permanent officials that the former can get on at all with self-respect.'¹⁸⁴

4. Summary. The Experience of the Indian Liberals of Working the Reforms in the Provinces

This study has focused on three Provinces where members of the Indian Liberal Party played a leading part as Ministers in the first reformed councils. It has not been the intention to analyse the working of the dyarchical system *per se*, but rather to study the relations between the Ministers and the British establishment during the implementation of the Montford reforms.¹⁸⁵ Certain conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, one must take into account the circumstances in which the reforms were brought into operation. The ill-feeling that resulted from the Amritsar Massacre and its repercussions, the Khilafat movement, the parlous economic conditions in India after the War, all contributed to the worst possible atmosphere in which to start the new Councils. Congress' belated decision to boycott the elections meant that the turnout of voters was very limited and that consequently, many of those elected did not feel they had a real mandate for their positions in the Councils. This may well have contributed to a feeling amongst the new Councillors that they should show their independence by attacking government, refusing to vote supplies etc.¹⁸⁶ Certainly there seemed to be an absence of any recognition of the difference between Ministers on the transferred side, whom the Council were supposed to be influencing,

¹⁸⁴ Chintamani to Sastri, 21 Dec. 1922, Sastri MSS, NMML.

¹⁸⁵ Muddiman Report, Reforms Enquiry Committee 1924, Cmd.2360, 1924-5. Both majority and minority versions provide an excellent dissection of the dyarchical system in practice, though it must be remembered that some of the evidence and the conclusions were coloured by the later experience of Swarajist obstructionism.

¹⁸⁶ See Setalvad, *Recollections*, p. 324.

and the Executive side. Ministers were treated as if they were part of the Government and as much to be attacked as Executive Councillors. Things did settle down eventually and Ministers began to work to achieve majorities for their policies, but this following seems to have been a personal loyalty rather than a party one, and Ministers often had to rely on the official bloc to achieve their policies.

Even though Congress supporters were absent from the Councils, their spectre continued to haunt the new Ministers. The Congress boycott of schools and other Government institutions, the programme of picketing liquor shops and burning foreign cloth, the refusal to pay revenue in parts of the countryside, the *hartals* at the time of the visit of the Prince of Wales, all brought Ministers into conflict with public opinion outside of the Council Chambers. As nationalists, the experience must have been very unpleasant for the Liberal Ministers; as members of Government their position was particularly ambivalent. Whilst deprecating the direct action of Congress, particularly the more lawless forms of non-co-operation, Liberals felt reluctant to be involved in taking executive action or 'repression', as they called it, against Congress. Nothing divided the Ministers and the British more than this law and order issue. Some Governors accused the Liberals of cowardice, some argued that they would not support in public what they were prepared to support in private. The British failed to understand that Indian politicians inevitably saw the role of the police in an entirely different perspective to the British.¹⁸⁷ They failed also to understand how it would be electoral suicide for Indian politicians to be associated with the British on law and order issues, such as the arrest of Gandhi and other leading Congressmen.

Problems of finance were another important factor in undermining the position of the Ministers. The latter were shocked to find themselves coming into office facing budget deficits rather than the surpluses which seemed vital if their programmes in the Transferred Departments were to be achieved. There was some improvement thanks to increased trade and improved harvests in the revenue side but there was never enough money for Ministers to carry out the range of their plans in transferred subjects. It

¹⁸⁷ See B. Siva Rao to Lytton, 11 Aug. 1924, L22, for a very clear exposition of the Liberal view: 'We see none of the difficulties of the police, we only see that they are generally harsh in the measures they adopt. We further see that in the budgets of the various provinces the police grant exceeds the education, medical, agriculture and public health grants; in a few provinces, I believe, all of them together.'

should not be forgotten that Ministers had a very short time indeed in which to make their mark- three years only. This, in addition to their lack of executive experience, would have made Ministers inevitably reliant on their civil servants' advice.

In each of the provincial examples which have been studied, emphasis has been placed on the role of the Governors. Partly this is a matter of the nature of the documentary sources available, which are mostly written from the Governors' point of view, but also this reflects an important truth about the working of the reforms. Governors had wide powers under the reforms: they selected the Ministers, they assigned the departmental portfolios, they effectively determined whether to consult Ministers on matters in the reserved half of Government, they had ultimate control of the power of the purse to determine whether Ministers had any surplus to spend on their Departments, they could and did intervene in the Transferred Departments, especially on issues concerning appointments, and finally, they controlled the official bloc which could make or break measures in the Legislature. The differences in the way in which Governors operated the reforms is remarkable, as can be seen in the United Provinces when Marris took over from Butler and ran the Government on entirely different lines from his predecessor. Considering that a number of the Governors had not originally been sympathetic to the reforms and that some were distinctly hostile to the idea of the educated elite coming to dominate the Councils, it is remarkable that Governors were as open to appointing and then supporting Indian Liberals as they were. Butler, for instance, might have selected Ministers from the landlord majority in the United Provinces' Council and probably should have done so, properly speaking. However, Governors sensibly recognised, firstly, that they needed talented and capable Ministers if they were to make headway in the Transferred Departments, and, secondly, that it was important to the public prestige of the reforms that Ministers should not be seen as Government stooges. If non-co-operation made for problems over law and order it is also quite probable that it made the British more susceptible to the influence of the Ministers and the Legislatures. It was vital that the Councils should be seen to be working and that constitutional co-operation should be rewarded. Thus, despite the very real powers of the Governors, Ministers could

generally get their way if they stuck to their guns and threatened resignation.¹⁸⁸

This threat would have much more impact if backed by the sort of party solidarity that operated in the United Provinces.

Party solidarity, or rather the lack of it, is another very important aspect of the working of the reforms. The reforms were predicated upon the idea that a party system would develop in India and that Government would not find itself on its own against its arrayed critics. These calculations were thrown awry by the Congress boycott. Now there was nothing to push the Moderates towards co-operation with the Government, save support of their own Ministers. In provinces like Madras the Liberals formed part of the opposition (to the non-Brahmin Justice Ministry) and the Madras Government argued that this showed that the 'differences between the views of the "moderates" and Congressmen were more imaginary than real...for all practical purposes they shared the Congress policy and sentiments.'¹⁸⁹ There was not the party organisation or discipline to operate reforms in the way intended.¹⁹⁰ The British blamed the lethargy of Indian politicians or the intrinsic unsuitability of the country to western-type democracy, and made some attempts to organise a Government party, even providing the whips where necessary.¹⁹¹ Butler even described the Liberals as 'political peacocks', strutting before the public, all of a tremble when there is any suggestion of work.'¹⁹²

What the British failed to recognise was their own responsibility for the failure of ideologically-based parties to take root. The acceptance, and, indeed, extension of separate electorates under the 1919 Act, was not conducive to the development of political parties on ideological rather than on interest group, factional or communal lines. There was, therefore, a certain hypocrisy in British complaints that the Indians seemed incapable of breaking away from community politics. In a clear reference to the role of caste and religion in Government-formation under the 1919 Act,

¹⁸⁸ See the example of the Bombay Ministers, Setalvad, *Recollections*, p. 325.

¹⁸⁹ Muddiman Report, Cmd. 2361, 1925, Views of Local Governments, p. 44.

¹⁹⁰ Almost every Province argued that real political parties were absent from the first Council, e.g. Muddiman Report, Cmd. 2360, 1925, pp. 12-13 (Bihar & Orissa); p. 13 (Central Provinces); Maclagan (Punjab) to Reading, 4 Jan. 1922, R24.

¹⁹¹ E.g. In Madras where Willingdon provided three council secretaries to act as whips. See Arnold, *Congress in Tamilnad*, p. 59.

¹⁹² Butler to H.E. Richards, 26 Apr. 1921, B21.

C. Ramalinga Reddy of Madras argued that, 'Party implies the possibility of converting another to your faith. Birth is hardly susceptible of conversion after it has once occurred'.¹⁹³ Reddy went on to point out in a brilliant and amusing piece of evidence to the Muddiman Committee that Governors had not chosen Ministers because of their party affiliation, and that they maintained Ministers in office even if they were defeated in the Legislature.¹⁹⁴ Additionally, the system of dyarchy meant expecting Ministers to vote with Executive Councillors, who of course did not represent parties. At the end of the day Governors could carry on without reference to any party by using the bloc of officials and nominated votes in combination with loyalist groups such as Christians, Muslims, landholders, European commercial groups etc.. Reddy concluded by arguing that 'Dyarchy renders Party impossible and that as no true responsibility is possible without Party, the system is but camouflaged bureaucracy.'¹⁹⁵ Obviously, Liberals did not go along with this conclusion, indeed they turned the argument on its head and argued that the problem was that until there was real responsibility over all departments of provincial government there would be no effective party system.¹⁹⁶

The only Province which could have claimed to have worked the reforms really successfully was Madras, where the Non-Brahmin Party provided the first Ministry. In fact the Governor, Willingdon, was prepared to move to the complete transfer of departments to Indian Ministers. The irony is that the Justice Party is generally agreed to have been very much a creation of the British themselves and that Willingdon's choice of Justice Party Ministers was probably based upon a misapprehension that they commanded a majority in the new Legislature.¹⁹⁷ As Irschick argues, in a sense the Justice Party were almost the ideal reforms party, moderate, if not conservative, and entirely concerned with the sort of provincial matters that the new reforms focused on.¹⁹⁸ Willingdon was at first enthusiastic about non-Brahmin loyalty, indeed the Justice Party was entirely supportive of the

¹⁹³ Muddiman Report, Appendix 5, Written Evidence, p. 33.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, pp. 33-5.

¹⁹⁶ See evidence of P.C. Mitter, Muddiman Report, Appendix 6, vol.2, Oral Evidence, p. 155.

¹⁹⁷ Baker, *The Politics of South India*, pp. 37-8. Once Willingdon had selected them, the Justice Ministers were able to win over enough Independents to maintain a majority.

¹⁹⁸ Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, p. 170.

Government's policies towards non-co-operation.¹⁹⁹ However, working the reforms seemed to make the Justice Party more and more conservative, eschewing social reform and concentrating on using office to obtain community advantage.²⁰⁰ Montagu tried to dampen Willingdon's anti-Brahmin enthusiasm and, by the end of the first Councils, Willingdon himself seemed to have tired of communally-based politics.²⁰¹ Elsewhere In India, divisions tended to follow community rather than ideological lines.²⁰² In the Punjab the main lines of division were Hindu versus Muslim and between rural and urban interests, with the former very much in control.²⁰³ Ramalinga Reddy argued that the British concentrated so much on building up their allies that they gave no consideration to the existence of an opposition, indeed Reddy argued that they didn't even want one.²⁰⁴

Whilst not agreeing with this last argument, it does seem that Reddy had put his finger on one of the great problems in the Montford reforms. One purpose of the reforms was, as has been argued, to develop a system of democracy in India, and the Westminster two-party system was an inevitable model for the British to export. However, most Britons governing India had fundamental doubts whether India was a suitable ground for planting western political institutions. Not only that, but the implications of establishing a parliamentary system in India were that the British would eventually be shown the door. A party system implies that an opposition may be able to gain power. Admittedly, the British made sure that only very restricted power was on offer initially, and ensured that they could manipulate the system to ensure the maintenance of their allies in what positions of power were available. But the logic of the position remained: if an opposition took power it could potentially bring Government to a standstill and/or bring sufficient pressure for an expansion of its powers. This is indeed what happened when the Swarajists took control of the

¹⁹⁹ Willingdon to Montagu, 27 Aug. & 20 Dec. 1921, W4.

²⁰⁰ Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, pp. 188-93.

²⁰¹ Montagu to Willingdon, 8 June & 10 Aug. 1921, W4; Willingdon to Peel, 30 Apr. 1923, W4.

²⁰² In the Central Provinces the divisions followed linguistic-regional lines with Hindi-speaking areas in the North aligned against Marathi-speaking areas in the South. See Sly to Reading, 22 July 1923, R25; also D.E.U. Baker, *Changing Political Leadership in an Indian Province: the Central Provinces and Berar 1919-1939*, Delhi, 1979.

²⁰³ Maclagan to Reading, 4 Jan. 1922, R24.

²⁰⁴ Muddiman Report, Appendix 5, Written Evidence, p. 28.

Legislatures in Bengal and the Central Provinces in the second Councils and pursued a programme of obstruction. The British responded by falling back on safeguards and strengthening the position of their traditional allies, whilst relying on divisions in the nationalist movement. However, it is important not to paint the Montford reforms from a palette derived from the history of the 1930s. The reforms were intended to begin a process of developing parliamentary institutions in India. However, the reforms had about them much of Janus- one side facing the intended democratic future, the other looking to continue to protect imperial interests by the best means available. The new reforms were largely worked by the old personnel, so that it shouldn't be surprising that attitudes took some time to change.

CHAPTER VII : THE COLLAPSE OF THE LIBERALS

The collapse of the Indian Liberal Party as a result of the Legislative Council elections of November 1923 was dramatic, but not entirely unexpected. Some Liberals blamed the British for their electoral demise.¹ They argued that the British cut the ground from under their feet by measures they had taken in the period 1921-1923, including the association of the Liberals with unpopular measures taken against the nationalist movement, and the financial constraints placed upon the ministers in the provinces. Certain policies had seemed almost designed to undermine Liberal standing with the electorate: most particularly, they resented the certification of the salt tax and the failure to protect the interests of Indians overseas. The Liberals felt that these policies were just part of a much larger turnaround in British policy to India: they regarded themselves as the victims of a die-hard backlash in British politics which was signalled by the resignation of Edwin Montagu as Secretary of State in February 1922.

1. A British Backlash?

The Liberal claims require some investigation. There is some foundation to the idea of a hardening in British attitudes towards India in the years 1921 to 1923, but, as we have seen, this process started well before the resignation of Montagu and resulted primarily from antagonism to the Gandhian non-co-operation movement. The hardening of British attitudes towards Indian constitutional advance may be said to have continued throughout the interwar years. Never again was there the optimistic assumption in British governing circles that India could progress rapidly towards

¹ J. Dwarkadas to P.S.S. Aiyer, 25 Nov. 1923, Aiyer Mss, NAI.

western-style self-governing institutions. In fact, there were increasing doubts in British circles whether western political institutions were suited to India at all.²

The Government of India reacted negatively to moves by Indian politicians to speed up the process of constitutional change by appointing a round table conference to discuss constitutional progress towards Dominion self-rule. The Government's position was that the Montford reforms had not yet been given a proper chance to see if they could work satisfactorily. The most they were prepared to consider was a review of the working of the constitution, with the intention that some faults within the system might be identified and ironed out.³ However, British Governments, of whatever party affiliation in the 1920s, refused to consider another major round of constitutional concessions.

The experience of the working of the Montford reforms had highlighted a number of intrinsic problems within the Indian political situation. Firstly, there had been a lack of Indian co-operation in the working of the reforms. It was true that Congress, in the form of the Swarajists, did fight the elections of 1923 and take up seats in the legislatures and also important offices in some cases. However, the obstruction of Government business by the Swarajists in the Central Provinces and Bengal effectively disabled the working of government for a time in the mid-1920s and very much antagonised British policy-makers.⁴ There was a strong feeling in Britain that Indian politicians had not made the most of the opportunities provided by the new constitution.⁵ Secondly, there was a growing belief that the working of the new constitution had revealed certain intrinsic flaws in India's preparedness for

² See, e.g., Leslie Wilson (Governor of Bombay) to Lytton, 27 Aug. 1925, L15.

³ The appointment of the Muddiman Committee in May 1924 served this very purpose. Three Liberals, Sapru, Sivaswamy Aiyer and R.P. Paranjpye were on the committee and signed the minority report.

⁴ For an example of the change in attitude of Lord Lytton, for instance, see Lytton to Baldwin, 12 Aug. 1925, L25.

⁵ See Chelmsford to Evan Cotton, 26 Aug. 1924, Cotton MSS, EUR. F. 82, IOLR.

future self-government. The most important problem was that India had, if anything, become less of an identifiable and coherent nation during the 1920s than before. Sir Frederick Whyte, who as President of the first Imperial Legislative Assembly, was a fairly sympathetic observer, put this feeling succinctly when he wrote that, 'You can't talk of Self-Government unless the country has a self, and our responsibility in India and for India will not be over until India has found herself.'⁶ What Whyte and others focused on was the growth of Hindu-Muslim rivalry in the 1920s, and the implications that this held for India's political future. There was general agreement that the reforms had probably exacerbated communal differences but the main point was that these differences could not just be talked away.⁷ Of course British politicians like Birkenhead realised that communal rivalry in India gave one of the best justifications for the continuance of colonial rule:

In [the] ultimate analysis the strength of the British position is that we are in India for the good of India. The most striking illustration of the truth of the position is supplied by the infinite variation of nationality, sect and religion in the sub-continent. The more it is made obvious that these antagonisms are profound, and affect immense and irreconcilable sections of the population, the more conspicuously is the fact illustrated that we, and we alone, can play the part of composers.⁸

In addition to the issue of communal rivalry, there were other practical considerations that had arisen in the early years of working the Montford reforms, which gave rise to doubts about the practicability of Indian self-government in the

⁶ F. Whyte, Diary entry, 16 June 1923, Whyte Mss, EUR D 761, vol 4. IOLR.

⁷ F. Whyte, diary entry 16 June 1923, Whyte MSS, 761/4. For discussion of the causes of Hindu-Muslim discord in this period see G.R. Thursby, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India*, Leiden, 1975; B. Chandra, *Communalism in India*, New Delhi, 1984.

⁸ Birkenhead to Reading, 22 Jan. 1925, cited in John Campbell, *F.E. Smith. First Earl of Birkenhead*, London, 1983, pp. 733-4. Further evidence of the recognition that Hindu-Muslim disunity worked to the advantage of the British can be found in Stamfordham (PS to King George V) to Lytton, 22 Feb. 1924, L1.

foreseeable future.⁹ One such issue was the future of the Indian army, a problem which it was conspicuously obvious that most Indian nationalists shied away from. The practical difficulty was that it would take several decades to build up the Indian contingent in the army and in the meantime India would be dependent on British troops for defence.¹⁰ One other important issue was the future status of the Indian Princes within self-governing India. As can be seen from the debate about the abolition of the Press Act, the Liberals had no more sensitivity to this issue than the Congress.¹¹

Finally, there was the much broader consideration of the suitability of the pattern of the devolution of power on the Dominion model for India. There was a growing conviction in British governing circles that Dominion Status, which took on a much more concrete form in the Balfour Committee Report of 1926, was not a suitable goal for India. Malcolm Hailey, the Home Member of the Government of India, made the distinction, when speaking before the Imperial Legislative Assembly in February 1924, between responsible government and Dominion Status and argued that the British Government had promised India the former, but not the latter.¹² Birkenhead, the right-wing Secretary of State for India, privately confirmed this opinion only a few months later when he told the Viceroy that, 'to me it is frankly inconceivable that India will ever be fit for Dominion self-government.'¹³

The above considerations amount to a very marked reaction from the liberal thinking about India that permeated government circles in the years 1917 to 1921. The

⁹ These issues are identified by Sir Frederick Whyte in a fascinating article which he wrote in the *Observer*, 10 June 1923, a copy of which can be found in Whyte MSS, 761/4.

¹⁰ This was a matter which the Indian Liberals, especially Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer, gave more attention to than Congress did. The Liberals tended to be more realistic in their view that India would need to maintain the imperial connection if only for defence purposes. See Mehrotra, *India and the Commonwealth*, pp. 168-73.

¹¹ See pp. 227-229 above.

¹² Mehrotra, *India and the Commonwealth*, p. 175.

¹³ Birkenhead to Reading, 4 Dec. 1924, cited in Campbell, *F.E. Smith*, p. 733.

view that India could take on western parliamentary institutions and move to a Dominion pattern of self-government, admittedly never a completely explicit or unanimous view amongst policy-makers, was hardly heard of after 1924. The permanence of British rule became the general assumption of the day.¹⁴

However, the Liberals were wrong to place the blame for their failure in 1923 at the door of a British die-hard reaction. The primary responsibility lay with themselves and their failure to use their period in office to build up a proper party organisation and publicity machine which might have allowed them to win over more of the enlarged electorate under the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. The Liberals, always a party of chiefs rather than followers, played the political game of the pre-1914 system rather than coming to terms with the transformation which the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms had brought into being.

2. The failure of Liberal Party Organisation

Like the old Congress, the Liberal Party had a fairly loose organisation. This was deliberately so, because, just as Congress had been a coalition of provincial organisations and leaderships, so the Liberal Party had to maintain an equilibrium between rival centres. Any attempt by one region to dominate the Party would put severe stress on a fragile coalition. As the Congress itself came to accept a much more rigorous constitution at Nagpur in December 1920, the Liberals put more and more emphasis on the argument that they did not think India was ready for a constitution that marked so clearly the dominance of one group within the party. However, like the early Congress, some provinces inevitably came to carry greater weight than others. Bengal had provided the founding organisation and the Indian

¹⁴ See Stamfordham to Lytton, 8 July 1925, L1: 'If only we can make plain to India that the British Raj is there for all time'.

Association and the Bengal National Liberal League (both centred in Calcutta) were the first two constituent organisations of the central National Liberal Federation. If the founders of the party came from Calcutta, the financing came from Bombay City. The Bombay leadership, including men like Dinshaw Wacha, had links with the mill-owning interests and the Parsi financiers who provided the largest sources of Liberal funds.¹⁵ This gave the rather more conservative leaders from Bombay an undue weight in party decisions, a factor which came to be resented by the rising politicians of the United Provinces. There were two Liberal organisations in Bombay Presidency; the Western India National Liberal League, which was dominated by Wacha and friends, and the more progressive Deccan Sabha, which benefited from the very lively tradition of Poona politics and the influence of cognate organisations, such as the Deccan Education Society and the Servants of India Society. The United Provinces, the third region in importance in Liberal politics, tended to provide younger and more activist politicians, men like H.N. Kunzru of the Servants of India Society. The headquarters of the U.P. Liberal Association was in Allahabad, the political capital of the U.P., and home to politicians like Tej Bahadur Sapru. The last of the Presidency capitals, Madras, was the centre of the Madras Liberal League. The influence of Madras in Liberal politics was lessened by the intricate local political rivalries of the region, and the fact that leading Madras figures such as Srinivasa Sastri and Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer preferred to play to a national rather than a local gallery.¹⁶ Finally there was a growing Liberal organisation in the Central Provinces and Berar, established initially in Nagpur only, but by 1923 there was another organisation at Akola.¹⁷

¹⁵ Party funds were always short, see below, n. 25.

¹⁶ Although Sastri came from Madras, he was identified rather more with Bombay because of his leadership of the Servants of India Society.

¹⁷ There were also numerous minor branches many of which centred around a local political figure, e.g. the West Khandesh Liberal Association, Dhulia, W. Khandesh (Bombay Province) which was formed around S.D. Garud, M.L.C, and M.K. Apte. *Citizen*, vol. 28, no. 1, 17 Feb. 1921.

Before the second Liberal conference which took place in Calcutta at the end of December 1919, there was some debate as to what sort of organisation the Liberal Party should be. There were three main issues, all of them reflecting the desire of some Moderates to return to the 'good old days' of the Congress movement. Firstly, should the party aim to be a large-scale organisation, sending large numbers of delegates to its annual conference, as the Congress did? Secondly, should there be a subjects committee or could the decisions as to resolutions to be put before the conference be left to informal discussions, as had happened in the early phase of Congress history? Thirdly, should a formal constitution be established; Congress in its early years had done without one? The host province, Bengal, favoured a small gathering, partly because they did not feel that the Liberals could compete in numbers with the Congress. They also felt they could do without a subjects committee.¹⁸ Bombay agreed, Wacha continuing his basic theme that 'it is not quantity but quality which is needed...a few picked men of the greatest experience and knowledge of public affairs, of sober and sagacious statesmanship will be enough...Let our numbers be as low as 50 or 75.'¹⁹ Wacha differed from Mitter, however, on the last issue, in that he wanted the Liberal Party constitution not to be settled immediately but to develop gradually as the Congress constitution had done.²⁰ Sivaswamy Aiyer, the President of the forthcoming Congress and the leader of the Madras organisation, however, was adamant that it was important that the Liberal conference attract as large an attendance as possible. He also insisted that there be a proper subjects committee and that 'there must be no attempt by any province to bring forward cut and dry resolutions prepared behind the backs of the representatives of other

¹⁸ P.C. Mitter, Secretary, Bengal, National Liberal League, to Liberal organisations, 27 Nov. 1919, W.I.N.L.A. MSS.

¹⁹ Wacha to P.C. Mitter, 4 Dec. 1919, W.I.N.L.A. MSS.

²⁰ Idem.

provinces.’²¹

As it turned out, some 875 delegates attended the 1919 conference, of whom the vast majority, 691, were from the host province, Bengal. There was no embarrassment about paucity of numbers as, according to the *Bengalee*, all 1,500 visitors tickets were taken up and the town hall was filled to capacity.²² The conference formally adopted the new title of National Liberal Federation and established a council to undertake work during the year.²³ This council would be made up of up to 15 (raised to 25 in 1920) members from each province, plus the office-holders elected at the annual session. The President of the annual conference would chair the council in the year that followed. Delegates to the Conference would be either members of the local associations mentioned above or those chosen by them. Local associations were recommended to undertake a programme of constructive work which included educational reform, agricultural reform, amelioration of the backward classes, organisation of medical relief and sanitation, and prohibition work. Two general secretaries were appointed to carry out the work of the council during the year. In his speech Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer defended the creation of the new party on the basis that party organisation formed on issues of principle was a fundamental tenet of British democracy and was suited to this stage in India’s development: ‘so long as the people had no voice in the administration and it was only a question of wresting privileges from the bureaucracy, the policy of a united front was indispensable. This was not so under responsibility.’²⁴

In the following year at the annual conference at Madras the rules for the composition of the subjects committee were established and it was agreed that one half

²¹ P.S.S. Aiyer to P.C. Mitter, copy pl., n.d., 5 Dec. 1919, W.I.N.L.A. MSS.

²² *Bengalee*, 3 & 4 Jan. 1920, cited in L/P&J/1648/699/1920.

²³ See National Liberal Federation, Report of 2nd. Annual Conference held at Calcutta, Dec. 1919. Copies of annual reports may be found in the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune, and occasionally in L/P&J files, e.g. for this conference see L/P &J/6/1656/1338/1920.

²⁴ *Bengalee*, 31 Dec. 1919, L/P&J/1648/699/1920.

of the delegates fees plus an additional £600 p.a. be set aside for the work of the Indian Reform Committee in London, which replaced the British Committee of the Congress which had been taken over by the mainstream Congress and was later to be disbanded. Here again the Liberals followed traditional Congress policy, whilst the Gandhian Congress went in an entirely different direction. The Liberals consciously saw themselves as maintaining Congress traditions. Thereafter annual Liberal conferences remained sedate affairs with typical attendances of about 500 delegates. Compared with the Gandhian Congress, the Liberal Party ran on a shoestring. Its income for 1920 amounted to only Rs. 4,487, most of which came from delegate fees of Rs.10 per person.²⁵ As had happened in the past, the British organisation was kept short of funds.²⁶ Devaprasad Savadhikary who visited London in 1921 reported that the London committee was not working effectively: 'the Secretary is not adequately remunerated and there is no provision for getting into touch with and bringing together M.P.s, journalists and leaders of public opinion interested in Indian reforms'.²⁷

The problem for the party was to maintain a momentum in between conferences. The difficulty was that some of the most energetic leaders became members of Government under the new reforms and therefore were required to give up their active roles in the Liberal Party. The very nature of Liberal membership also made continued political activity problematical; many Liberals were successful businessmen or professional people, especially lawyers.²⁸ They found it difficult

²⁵ See Accounts presented to 3rd. Session N.L.F., Dec. 1920, in N.L.F. General File, 1921-23, at BPA offices.

²⁶ See W. Douglas Hall, Sec. Indian Reforms Committee, to G.A. Natesan, 9 Nov. 1921 & 17 May 1922, N.L.F. General File.

²⁷ D. Sarvadhikary to Natesan, n.d., [Nov. 1921?], N.L.F. General File.

²⁸ See Appendix 2 for an analysis of the occupations of members and supporters at the first Moderate conference, Nov. 1918. The figures represent minimum numbers as many people did not have their occupation recorded. 32% were lawyers; nearly 14% merchants or manufacturers; 9% landlord/landowners; 19% were educationalists, doctors, journalists or other professions. 27% had B.A. qualifications at least.

to devote time to Liberal activities. In addition, it was difficult to bring together the council of the Federation over such vast distances as the Indian sub-continent. The council soon became moribund and came merely to register members willing to make a larger (Rs. 25 p.a.) donation to party funds. B.S. Kamat, in resigning from the all-India council in 1922, protested that the council did not meet at all in the previous year.²⁹ Things were obviously not much improved during 1922 as D.G. Dalvi wrote that he was 'really angry with the General Secretaries in doing next to nothing in this year to advance the Liberal case in these critical times...The secretaries called only one meeting of the council during the year and managed to call it at their doors at one end of the country [Madras].'³⁰

It might be argued that the fact that the central organisation of the Liberal Party was not very active did not present an insuperable problem as long as the local associations were active. It was particularly important that the latter should maintain an organisation that would reach outside of the main urban centres and which would act effectively in preparing the party for elections. But did the associations perform this function? The fullest surviving records for a local association are those of the Western India National Liberal Association, Bombay, and they give a valuable picture of local organisation.³¹ W.I.N.L.A. was formed at the instigation of Sir Dinshaw Wacha, who was keen that Bombay should not be left too far in the wake of Bengal, which had taken the lead in establishing a local liberal organisation.³² The organisation paralleled to some extent the membership of the Bombay Presidency Association, which was no longer the absolute bastion of the Moderates and from

²⁹ B.S. Kamat to G.A. Natesan, 22 May 1922, N.L.F. General File.

³⁰ D.G. Dalvi to G.A. Natesan, 2 Dec. 1922, N.L.F. General File.

³¹ Kept at the offices of the B.P.A..

³² Wacha to various persons, circular letter, Jan 1919, W.I.N.L.A. MSS, General Correspondence file, 1919.

which Wacha resigned in July 1919 as president.³³ In February 1919 W.I.N.L.A. had 82 members and this had risen to over 130 by the end of the year. The largest financial supporters of the Association were the Bombay mill-owners, Sir Hormusji Wadia, Sir Dorab Tata and Sir Shapurji Bharucha. The two latter gentlemen donated Rs. 10,000 each to the fund supporting the Liberal deputation to Britain in 1919.³⁴ Despite Wacha's elitist approach, the Association gave full approval to Bengal's policy of undertaking educational work among the backward classes and also village sanitation on co-operative lines. However, it was significant that Bombay preferred to leave such work to existing organisations such as the Social Service League.³⁵ The Association supported the Anti-Non-Co-operation Committee established by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad in October 1920 with Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas, Sir Cowasji Jehangir and Kanji Dwarkadas as secretaries.³⁶ Setalvad saw this as a propagandist organisation which would encompass men like Thakurdas who would not want to join a Liberal organisation. The committee accepted an invitation to hold a public meeting in Surat from Chunilal Gandhi, a Liberal who was standing in the Assembly elections.³⁷ Gandhi was keen that the Liberals do more to educate the people. 'Pious resolutions', he complained 'and excellent speeches in the Bombay dailies do not reach masses who are daily being captured in larger and larger numbers by the glamour of all the promises these irresponsible non-co-operationists give. The trading classes are still sound at core. But they are afraid of social ostracism and cannot stand up without

³³ B.P.A. Minute Books, vol. v, entry 1 July 1919, B.P.A. MSS. The B.P.A. retained a balance between moderate and extreme members during the following years.

³⁴ W.I.N.L.A. Membership and Donations List 1919; Wacha to Joshi, 16 Aug. 1919, W.I.N.L.A. MSS, Correspondence File A, 1919-20.

³⁵ Hon. Sec. W.I.N.L.A. to Hon. Sec. National Liberal League, Calcutta, draft letter, 11 May 1919, W.I.N.L.A. MSS, General Correspondence file, 1919.

³⁶ See K. Dwarkadas, *India's Fight for Freedom 1913-37*, Bombay, 1966, p. 154.

³⁷ Thakurdas to C.M. Gandhi, 24 Oct. 1920, Thakurdas MSS, NMML.

encouragement from outside.³⁸ Setalvad, Thakurdas and Jamnadas Dwarkadas provided just this outside encouragement when they addressed a public meeting at Surat on 7 November. One thousand people turned up and the meeting was deemed a successful venture into 'mass politics'.³⁹ Unfortunately, Wacha, who seems to have provided all the funds for the Committee, took umbrage at Thakurdas' establishment of a separate organisation and this contretemps led to Thakurdas resigning from the committee, arguing that 'it is a great pity that the few anti-non-co-operationists in Bombay should not agree among themselves and work in unity.'⁴⁰

In April 1921 a report from M.D. Altekar on his work in the *mofussil* in establishing Liberal associations in the districts during the last six months was read to the council of the W.I.N.L.A.. It was resolved that Altekar should assume the post of Deputy Secretary and maintain this work, spending at least half of every month in the *mofussil*.⁴¹ Indeed it was in the Deccan that the Bombay Liberals came nearest to their goal of establishing rural links. In 1920 Liberal centres were established at Satara, Dhulia, Nasik and Igatpuri. W.I.N.L.A. was aided in this work by the Deccan Sabha, for whom Profs. Kanitkar, Kale and Joag and Messrs. Limaye, Gadgil, Paranjpye and Kothari toured the Deccan and Berar propagandising against non-co-operation.⁴² The Deccan Sabha, using its long-standing social work links with the countryside, was quite prepared to drum up large numbers of peasant delegates to try and win support for the reforms at the Poona District Conference held at Junnar in

³⁸ C.M. Gandhi to Thakurdas, 29 Oct. 1920, Thakurdas MSS, NMML.

³⁹ Anti-non-co-operation work involved more than just mass meetings. B.S. Kamat informed the national conference in Dec 1920 that he had been working for the movement in the Deccan 'moving from village to village and explaining its [non-co-operation] evil to the masses.' Report of Proceedings of 3rd. session of N.L.F. Madras, Dec. 1920 p. 79, G.I.P.E..

⁴⁰ See Thakurdas, Jehangir, & Dwarkadas to Wacha, 5 Nov. 1920- with annotations by Wacha; Thakurdas to Setalvad, 19 Nov. 1920, Thakurdas MSS, NMML. See also accounts of the Anti-Non-co-operation Committee, W.I.N.L.A. MSS.

⁴¹ W.I.N.L.A. Council minutes, 7 April 1921, W.I.N.L.A. MSS.

⁴² See Annual Report, Deccan Sabha, 1920-21, G.I.P.E..

March 1920.⁴³ However, shortly before the conference the delegates were excluded- the Sabha went ahead with a separate peasants' conference.⁴⁴ The Sabha used its links with the non-Brahmin movement to get together nearly one thousand delegates for the Bombay Provincial Conference at Sholapur in April 1920.⁴⁵ A Deccan Liberal Society was set up in June 1920 and the contrast with its more well-heeled counterpart, the W.I.N.L.A. in Bombay, can be seen in its programme which insisted that 'if fresh or additional taxation has to be resorted to, the taxes should be so devised that they will fall chiefly upon the wealthy classes who are able to bear the burden.'⁴⁶ The Deccan Sabha provided useful support to the Ministers in that members toured the municipalities advising them on how to prepare detailed schemes for compulsory primary education without incurring additional costs.⁴⁷

The work of the Deccan Sabha was closely related to that of another organisation based in Poona, the Servants of India Society, which provided the Liberals with their strongest links with the concerns of the majority of Indians. It was founded by G.K. Gokhale in 1905 in order to train what might be called secular missionaries to undertake national work. Srinivasa Sastri, a high school headmaster from Madras, became the leading member of the Society after Gokhale's death in 1915. New members were admitted as probationers for their first five years and followed the instructions of the First Member. The Society usually attached its members, of whom there were never more than about fifty, throughout the country, to

⁴³ The Deccan Sabha was founded by Justice M.G. Ranade in 1896 and lapsed on his death. It was revived on the eve of the Morley-Minto reform and again in 1918. See *The Deccan Sabha. Golden Jubilee Celebration*, Poona, 1947, G.I.P.E..

⁴⁴ Idem.

⁴⁵ Idem.

⁴⁶ Idem. Appendix 1. Programme of the Deccan Liberal Party 1920. The Sabha had over 150 members but its main income was from an annual donation of Rs. 2000 from Sir Hormusji Wadia, its President. See Report of Deccan Sabha 1922-23, G.I.P.E..

⁴⁷ Report of the Deccan Sabha 1921-22, G.I.P.E.. Paranjpye, the Education Minister for Bombay, was a member of the Sabha.

a local organisation for service. Members came to specialise in certain fields. Thus A.V. Thakkar was assigned to work with tribals and untouchables in Gujarat, V. Venkatasubbiyah to the depressed classes in Madras, N.M. Joshi to labour matters, G.K. Devadhar to the education of women and the co-operative movement via the Poona Seva Sadan etc.. Most of the members were from poor or middle class backgrounds and relied on allowances paid by the society.⁴⁸ Financial support for the Society came from donations from Bombay businessmen men like Sir Dorab Tata, A.J. Billimoria, Sir Dinshaw Wacha, Jamnadas Dwarkadas and from Annamalai Chettiar, the Madras banker and merchant.⁴⁹

The work of members of the Servants of India Society meant that the Liberals had more concrete links with and knowledge of the countryside than they otherwise would have had. In Madras, K.G. Sivaswamy Aiyer of the Servants of India Society undertook Liberal propaganda and recruitment in the rural districts. He put great emphasis on social reform matters, especially on the abolition of caste distinctions and the creation of social unity, and argued that the non-co-operation movement in Madras was being exploited by social conservatives who supported the *varna* system.⁵⁰ For instance in January 1918 leading figures in the agitation in Kaira district, Gujarat, seeking abatement of revenue demands following failure of the kharif crop, asked Amritlal Thakkar of the Servants of India Society to come to the area and examine the situation. As a result three members of the Servants of India Society, Devadhar,

⁴⁸ See P. Kodanda Rao, 'Bubbles of Memory', articles of reminiscence published in the *Deccan Herald*, weekly 1966-1970, especially issue of 14 May 1967, P. Kodanda Rao MSS, NMML.

⁴⁹ G.K. Devadhar to A. V. Patwardhan, 7 Sept. 1920, Joshi MSS, NMML; Sastri to A. V. Patwardhan, 2 July 1920, 8 March 1921, 24 Nov. 1923, Sastri MSS, NAI; Sastri's diary, entries for 26 & 29 March 1919, Sastri Microfilm, NMML.

⁵⁰ Sivaswamy also asked Sastri's permission to make overtures to the Non-Brahmin Party so as to oppose non-co-operation. See K.G. Sivaswamy Aiyer to Sastri, 6 Feb. 1921, Sastri MSS, S.I.S.. For further details of K.G. Sivaswamy's activities see the *Citizen*, 9 Oct. 1920, 24 Mar., 19 May, 2 June 1921. See also K.G. Sivaswamy Aiyer to P.S.S. Aiyer, 16 April 1921, Sivaswamy Aiyer MSS, NAI, in which he contrasted the negative attitude to this work of G.A. Natesan, the General Secretary of the Party, and of Srinivasa Sastri and the Servants of India Society who supported his rural work.

Thakkar and Joshi, examined the situation in one taluka thoroughly and reported to the Government their findings.⁵¹ The Government accepted one of the recommendations of the report, namely that there be a suspension of half the revenue demand in twenty-two villages, but other recommendations were rejected or postponed to be further investigated. Following their work in Matar taluka the three men went on to continue their enquiry in Thasra taluka but gave way to the work of Gandhi and other members of the Gujarat Sabha who had finally acceded to the demands of the Kheda peasants and come to collect further evidence.

Another example of Liberal intervention on behalf of the rural classes was in the United Provinces in 1921 when, as we have seen, the Government was introduced the Oudh Rent Bill. The Liberal League of the United Provinces organised a series of meetings in the districts: the main speakers being Pandit Krishna Kaul of the Servants of India Society, Gokaran Nath Misra, and P.N. Sapru.⁵²

In many ways the Liberals found themselves in a cleft stick when it came to organising themselves in rural India. It was not, it is true, a natural environment for them to operate in. The examples given above reflect particularly the work of the Servants of India Society and of the most active and radical of the local Liberal organisations, that of the United Provinces.⁵³ More typically, the Liberal leadership was based in the Presidency cities and reflected the concerns of the urban professional elite.⁵⁴ There was no way that they could compete in making the sort

⁵¹ For the full background of the Kaira (or Kheda) satyagraha which followed see D. Hardiman, *Peasant Nationalists of Gujarat*, Oxford, 1981, ch.5. A printed copy of the report by the three S.I.S. members, dated 18 Feb. 1918, may be found in the G.I.P.E..

⁵² See K. Kumar, *Peasants in Revolt*, p. 180 for a list of the meetings. I am indebted to the accounts in Kumar, ch.4 and to M. Siddiqi, *Agrarian Unrest in North India*, pp. 186-95. See also pp. 293-294 above.

⁵³ I have emphasised these examples because they contradict the generally accepted view that the Liberals did not venture into the countryside.

⁵⁴ R. Suryanarayana Rao of the Servants of India Society in Madras complained that 'the Madras Liberal League evinces little or no interest in matters affecting the people in general...it is mostly composed of vested interests and men who have no idea of the poverty and sufferings of the poor.' R. Suryanarayana Rao to V.S.S. Sastri, 6 Feb. 1921 Sastri MSS, S.I.S..

of effective contacts with rural India that the Gandhian Congress made. On the other hand, their most effective way of organising in the districts depended on organisations such as the Anti-Non-Co-operation movement in Bombay or the *aman sabhas* in the United Provinces, and the danger here was that they could easily come to be seen as the stooges of the Government or of vested interests, whether it be the merchants in Bombay or the landlords in the United Provinces.

3. Organising for Elections

The only time the Liberals across the country did come to recognise the value of organised links with the districts was when elections were imminent. British sources are agreed that elected members did very little to nurse their constituencies between elections.⁵⁵ This may have been the result of complacency fostered by the Congress boycott of the first elections, or, more likely, a result of the enlarged size of the constituencies which meant that it was much more difficult to maintain contact with electors between elections.⁵⁶ Constituencies, from being a matter of a small number of electors under the Morley-Minto Councils, and thus easily corruptible, became substantially larger.⁵⁷ For example, in the 1923 election Surendranath Banerjea's constituency, 24-Parganas Municipal North, had 11,694 voters on the electoral roll.⁵⁸ A later survey found that a high percentage (62%

⁵⁵ E.g., see Ronaldshay to Reading, 3 Feb. 1922. R24. Ronaldshay stated that he could only find six members having taken any interest in their constituencies since the elections.

⁵⁶ This can be demonstrated by looking more clearly at the growth of the Bengal electorate. Whereas in 1913 there were only 9000 electors in total in the Bengal Legislative Council elections, i.e. 1 in 4650 of the population, the electorate was enlarged in 1920 to over 1 million in total (approx 2.5% of population). Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, p. 58; Report of the Indian Statutory Commission [Simon] vol 1, p. 191.

⁵⁷ See J. Broomfield, 'The Vote and the Transfer of Power: A Study of the Bengal General Election, 1912-1913', in J. Broomfield, *Mostly about Bengal*, Delhi, 1982, pp. 54-83. Municipality seats under the Morley-Minto system had an average of only 199 electors, whilst landholder seats had an average of only 159.

⁵⁸ Return Showing the Election Results in India, 1923, Cmd. 2154, 1924, p. 521.

of the Muhammadans and 41% of the non-Muhammadans) of the Bengali electorate were illiterate so that normal methods of influencing opinion through newspapers and circulars must have had a limited impact.⁵⁹ This enlargement of the electorate had been a ploy of the Bengal officials to try and undermine the 'bhadralok oligarchy' who might otherwise dominate the elections.⁶⁰ In addition, efforts were made to keep rural and urban interests separate by insistence on a residence qualification for candidates.⁶¹ This was intended to keep the carpet-bagging urban elite out of the rural constituencies and to restrict the influence of the lawyer group.⁶²

One person who did see the urgent need for the Liberal Party to reorganise itself in time for the elections in November 1923 was C.Y. Chintamani, who, soon after resigning his Ministerial position in the United Provinces in May 1923, started to tour Bombay Presidency to stimulate the Party into action.⁶³ Although Chintamani reported some revival in the United Provinces and Bombay, he bemoaned the lack of virile leadership in the party and wrote that he was 'handicapped for want of coadjutors.'⁶⁴ Sapru and Sastri, the two most likely leaders, were both absent

⁵⁹ 'Secret Memorandum on the Working of the Reformed Constitution in Bengal, 1923-26', dated 1927, p. 6, in L43.

⁶⁰ Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, pp. 102-4.

⁶¹ This was noticed by the Labour politician Josiah Wedgwood who wrote of 'the careful segregation of county constituencies from the towns, and the grouping of the towns into "lost seats" which alone should be surrendered to nationalist politicians.' Josiah Wedgwood, *The Future of the Indo-British Commonwealth*, Madras, 1921, p. 138.

⁶² Even so in the first Bengal Legislative Council it was estimated that out of 119 elected and nominated non-official members, 43 were lawyers, 31 were landholders, 27 from the banking and commercial classes, and 18 miscellaneous. Ronaldshay to Reading, 3 Feb. 1922. R24. In the United Provinces however, the landholding classes retained their predominance. As many as 77 of the general constituencies in the United Provinces were rural as against only 12 urban seats. In the first Council landlords outnumbered lawyers by 46 to 41 (10 others). See Simon Report, Indian Statutory Commission, Cmd. 3572, 1930, pp. 215-6. The average size of a rural general constituency was 24,230 electors. *Ibid.*, p. 212. Franchise qualifications were based on essentially on property or rental values in land. For example, in the U.P., for rural constituencies the qualifications covered those who paid Rs. 25 p.a. in land revenue or who paid rents of Rs. 50 p.a. or Rs. 25 p.a. if they certain tenure rights. See P.D. Reeves et al. (eds.) *A Handbook to Elections in the United Provinces 1920-1951*, Delhi, 1975.

⁶³ Deccan Sabha Annual Report, 1923-24, G.I.P.E..

⁶⁴ Chintamani to Sapru, 12 July 1923, SAP/C50, 2nd. series. Sivaswamy Aiyer, of whom Chintamani's complaint was mainly directed, himself complained that the Liberal organisation in Madras was moribund and existed only in name. 'There are very few people', he told Sapru, 'of the

in London during crucial periods of 1923.

The 1923 election files of the W.I.N.L.A. give a valuable picture of the Liberal organisation and its defects. Firstly, it is clear that preparations for the elections started too late. A meeting called to select candidates on 28 August 1923 was dissolved without any work being done. It was not until September, therefore, that candidates were selected and in some cases their selection came too late for them to accept a party ticket.⁶⁵ Following the selection of candidates it was agreed that the Association should provide 2 paid canvassers/agents to each candidate at the cost of Rs. 50 per month each. An 18 point manifesto was adopted and leaflets prepared.⁶⁶ Candidates put out their own manifestos but in the ones that survive there is no mention of their party allegiance.⁶⁷ The Liberals just could not compete with the reputation and organisation that Congress had established in the countryside during the non-co-operation movement. Whilst the Liberals had focused on legislative politics and came to be seen as supporting the Government, Congress had pursued issues which were of more direct meaning to the majority of Indians and had developed a nationalist stance and political method that restored the pride of Indians in their nationality. John Broomfield puts this very well when he outlines the advantages of the Bengal Swarajists in the elections:

⁶⁴ (...continued)

right sort that is qualified for the work who are willing to spare time and trouble for any honest political work. Indignation meetings, resolutions and anglophobic talk exhaust all their spare energies'. Aiyer to Sapru, 27 Sept. 1923. *SAP*, 2nd. series.

⁶⁵ See, e.g., V.V. Kalyanpurkar to W.I.N.L.A., 18 Sept. 1923. Kalyanpurkar, a retired judge from Kumta in N. Kanara, received the Liberal nomination after he had already toured his constituency telling them that he was standing as an independent candidate. G.B. Pradhan wrote from Nasik on 30 Sept. 1923 to the same effect. Pradhan was a member of the Liberal Party but not having received the party nomination in time he stood as an 'Independent Liberal'. W.I.N.L.A. election file, 1923.

⁶⁶ There was a reciprocal arrangement for the Bombay Government and the W.I.N.L.A. to circulate each other's leaflets, but it is not clear if this was implemented for the election. Director of Information Government of Bombay to W.I.N.L.A., 29 Aug. 1923, W.I.N.L.A. Election File, 1923.

⁶⁷ See the manifesto of M.N. Dastur who stood in Poona City 1 Sept. 1923; also A.N. Surve, for Bombay City North (Non-Muhammadian) 2 Oct. 1923. Surve's main claim to fame was that he had voted 54 times against the Government out of 93 divisions in the last legislature! W.I.N.L.A. Election File, 1923.

They were the heroes of the greatest anti-Government agitation India had ever seen and they proudly bore the new title of honour: prison graduates. They had symbols such as the wearing of khadi, by which they could appeal to the new mass electorate and they could offer themselves to the people as Mahatmaji's disciples.⁶⁸

The example of Surendranath Banerjea's heavy defeat at the hands of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, described in the *Statesman* as 'an amiable doctor whose name was chiefly known to his numerous patients' illustrates the failure of the Liberal campaign perfectly.⁶⁹ Roy began his campaign as early as May 1923 and, according to Broomfield, 'spent most of his evenings and his Sundays among his electors' in the 24-Parganas North constituency.⁷⁰ By contrast, 'in the same period Banerjea visited the constituency twice only, for he was in Darjeeling throughout the summer.'⁷¹ Roy skilfully played to all the various interest groups in the constituency and had the invaluable support of Congress volunteers and the personal backing of the popular Bengali leader C.R. Das. The result was a devastating blow to Banerjea, who polled only 2,283 votes against the 5,689 of his opponent.⁷² Broomfield calculates that the Swarajists captured three-quarters of the Hindu constituencies and half the Muslim seats. 'The Moderate party had been reduced to a rump and nearly all its leaders had been kept out of the Council.'⁷³ In the Bombay Legislative Council, ten official Liberals were reduced to three or

⁶⁸ Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, p. 239.

⁶⁹ *Statesman*, 1. Dec. 1923, cited in B.R. Nanda, 'The Swarajist Interlude' in B.N. Pande (ed.), *A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress (1885-1985)*, vol. 2, p. 119. On the election campaign, see Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, pp. 240-2.

⁷⁰ Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, p. 241.

⁷¹ *Idem*.

⁷² Interestingly, Banerjea thanked the authorities for the help they had given him in his constituency and singled out Sir Alexander Murray for gratitude. Banerjea argued that he lost the election due to a campaign of personal vilification against him, and he called on the Government to rescue the Liberals by nominating them to the councils. Banerjea to W. Hailey, 7 Dec. 1923, *WH5(d)*.

⁷³ Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*, p. 242. Tinker, *Local Self-Government*, p. 137, says that 7 Liberals were elected to the second Bengal Legislative Council, as against 47 Swarajists and 19 other independent Nationalists, who gave the Swarajists 'general' support.

four.⁷⁴ The *Leader* calculated that five official Liberals survived in the U.P. Legislative Council, to which might be added six potential sympathisers.⁷⁵ In the Imperial Legislative Assembly elections Liberals did very badly, losing candidates like Chintamani, Kunzru and Gurtu from the United Provinces, and Setalvad, J. Dwarkadas and B.S. Kamat in Bombay. It was only through Government nomination that five Liberals were able to enter the Assembly, to be joined by three members elected from Madras.⁷⁶

The lack of Liberal Party organisation was therefore the major reason for the Liberal inability to maintain themselves as a viable national party after 1923.⁷⁷ It was typical of their plight that the sub-committee which the party appointed in 1923 to examine their organisation seems never to have reported.⁷⁸

4. The Indian Liberals after 1923

After 1923 the Liberals as a party in the legislatures were effectively defunct. In the Imperial Legislative Assembly the Liberals were reduced from some twenty seats to only five nominated and three elected seats.⁷⁹ It was apparently difficult to maintain a party discipline over even this small number of representatives.⁸⁰ Whatever power the Liberals could exercise was a balancing power, offering their support sometimes to the Government, sometimes to the Nationalist opposition, which

⁷⁴ Smith, thesis, p. 340.

⁷⁵ *Leader*, 15 Dec. 1923, p. 3, cited in Smith, thesis, p. 340. Tinker, however, calculates that there were 20 Liberals in the U.P. Legislative Council after the 1923 elections, as against 50 landlords and 30 Swarajists: *Local Self-Government*, p. 137. Lack of clear party affiliations makes precise calculation impossible.

⁷⁶ *Idem.*

⁷⁷ This conclusion contradicts the more generous view taken by R. Smith, thesis, p. 321, that the Liberals actually campaigned vigorously.

⁷⁸ B.D. Shukla, *History of the Indian Liberal Party*, Allahabad, 1960, p. 242.

⁷⁹ Smith, thesis, p. 340.

⁸⁰ Smith, thesis, pp. 354-66. See also V.S.S. Sastri to Editor of the *Leader*, 3 Apr. 1924, in Jagadisan (ed.), *Sastri Letters*, pp. 117-19.

included Swarajists, Independents and later some Responsivists. The Liberals did a little better in the Imperial Legislative Assembly elections of 1926, returning six members by election and one by Government nomination. With the Swarajists much reduced in number, the balancing role of the Liberals was maintained. This rather prosaic existence in the legislatures was eked out until 1937 when the Liberal Party was finally swept into oblivion by the Congress decision to contest elections under the 1935 reforms with a view to taking ministerial office in the provinces. To some extent the Liberals could see the Congress decision as a victory for their brand of constitutionalism, indeed they consoled themselves at the time of the Swarajist victories in 1923 that to all intents and purposes Congress was coming round to the constitutionalist stance that the Liberals had fought for since 1918.⁸¹ The Swarajists gradually dropped their policy of obstructionism within the Councils and in 1925 some of their leaders took up office just as the Liberals had done. Motilal Nehru accepted a place on the Skeen Committee on the army; V.J. Patel was elected to presidency of the Imperial Legislative Assembly, succeeding Sir Frederick Whyte; S.B. Tambe, leader of the majority Swarajists in Central Provinces accepted the post of Executive Councillor in the Central Provinces.⁸²

However, in many respects the most important role of the Liberals after 1923 was not as a party within the legislatures, a role for which neither their small numbers nor their lack of party discipline particularly fitted them, but rather as individuals at the service of the state or as mediators between the colonial state and the broader nationalist movement.⁸³ Srinivasa Sastri and Tej Bahadur Sapru, the leading Liberal figures of the 1918-1923 period, continued to play the most noteworthy roles

⁸¹ Smith, thesis, pp. 321-2.

⁸² B.R. Nanda, 'The Swarajist Interlude', p. 138.

⁸³ The mediating role of the Liberals is the central argument of Ray Smith's thesis, *op. cit.*, and also of later writings such as H. Banerjee, *Political Activity of the Liberal Party in India, 1919-1937*, Calcutta, 1987.

after that date. Sastri, following on from his earlier work for Indians overseas, was appointed member of an India-South Africa Round Table Conference in 1926, and the following year took up the position of India's first Agent in South Africa.⁸⁴

Sapru, in addition to continuing a distinguished legal career, played an important role as Chairman of the Delhi all party conferences of 1923 and 1924, and drafted the Commonwealth of India Bill under Mrs Besant's auspices. Sapru continued to seek the sort of all party, cross-community consensus that he had contributed to achieving at Lucknow in 1916, but which became more and more difficult to achieve in the interwar years as communal rivalry and political factionalism increased markedly. In 1928 Sapru succeeded, in conjunction with Motilal Nehru, in drawing up an all-party constitutional proposal, the Nehru Report, but he was not able ultimately to win majority Muslim approval for the scheme. In the 1930s Sapru was a leading figure in the Round Table Conferences and played a key role in mediating between the British, the Congress and the Princes.⁸⁵

Liberal relations with their British rulers did not improve after 1923, but rather tended to worsen as constitutional concessions became harder to obtain with the dominance of the Conservative Party in politics. At times a chink of opportunity was presented by events such as the coming to power of Labour minority governments in 1924 and 1929, or by the British search for a means to take the initiative from the Congress programme of civil disobedience, but these opportunities were wasted more often than not. Sapru and other Liberals played an important role in trying to progress the constitutional position towards Dominion status and to bring the nationalists and the Government around the discussion table to achieve that object. But usually the Liberal mediators were squeezed between the mutually re-enforcing forces of

⁸⁴ Sastri's later career can be followed in P. Kodanda Rao, *V.S. Srinivasa Sastri*, Bombay, 1963.

⁸⁵ See D.A. Low, 'Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and the First Round Table Conference', in Low (ed.), *Soundings*, pp. 294-329.

Government intransigence and Congress extremism.⁸⁶ The Liberals were frustrated by the Government's complete unwillingness to accept the minority report of the Muddiman Committee, which was presented in the spring of 1925. Sapru, Sivaswami Aiyer and R.P. Paranjpye had, together with M.A. Jinnah, signed the minority report which argued, contrary to the majority version, that dyarchy, the key feature of the Montford reforms, had failed. The remedy was full responsible government in the provinces and central government, save for defence, foreign affairs, and political relations, which should continue to be reserved subjects at the centre. For the Liberals this marked a painful outcome to their experience of the years 1918 to 1923, when they had pinned everything to the hope that they could make the reforms work.

There were further British rebuffs for the Indian Liberal approach, most especially when the Government decided in 1927 to appoint an all-white Parliamentary body to examine constitutional change, as required under the 1919 Act. Liberals boycotted the Simon Commission as wholeheartedly as other nationalist groups. The fact that the Government finally agreed to a series of Round Table Conferences to discuss India's progress to Dominion Status in the early 1930s, and that the Liberals, led by Sapru, played a key role in those conferences, was some final vindication of the Liberal faith in the constitutional path towards independence within the Empire. Even then, the proposed reforms were so hedged with safeguards and the British position so entrenched by the support of the Princes, Muslims and other non-Congress groups that the final goal seemed a long way off still.

When Independence eventually came in 1947, the Liberals, individuals now and no longer a party, could take some satisfaction that they had contributed to the achievement and that the constitutional model that was followed was the one that they

⁸⁶ Smith, thesis, p. 650 on.

had fought for all along. India remained in the Commonwealth, even after it became a Republic in 1950.

CHAPTER VIII : CONCLUSION

To the courage of those who called themselves 'Liberals' is due the fact that the new Constitution launched in 1921 has had any chance of life at all. These men co-operated with Government to inaugurate and establish the new Legislatures; and if these bodies have weathered the storms of the past three years, the National Liberal Federation and the Government of India may share the credit between them.

*Sir Frederick Whyte, President of the Imperial Legislative Assembly, 1923.*¹

It is tempting when analysing the significance of the British-Indian Liberal relationship in the years 1920 to 1923 to write in terms of an unfolding tragedy, using imagery of a marriage that failed etc..² The undoubted collapse of the Liberal Party after 1923 and the return to a more conservative line of British policy in India might lead one to conclude that this was merely a brief encounter without long-term significance. Alternatively, there is an attraction in placing too much weight on the long-term significance of the role of the Liberals in relation to the ruling power. Thus some historians have seen the Liberals as the guardians of the constitutionalist tradition within Congress.³ They have argued that the Liberals kept this tradition alive in the difficult period between the demise of the old Congress in 1918 and the acceptance by Congress of a constitutionalist role in 1937. A third assessment might treat the Liberals as 'collaborators' with the British, allowing the rulers to maintain a facade of constitutional propriety and betraying the sacrifices of Congressmen and

¹ Diary entry, 'notes for C.S.K.', Oct. 1923, Whyte MSS, IOLR, vol. 6.

² Banerjee's study, *The Political Activity of the Liberal Party in India, 1919-1937*, tends towards this approach, see conclusion, pp. 226-39 especially.

³ This is the argument of R. Smith, thesis, p. 668. This is also the implication of Low, 'Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and the First Round Table Conference', pp. 321-2: 'India would have become independent without Sapru, but the manner in which it became independent owed a great deal to men of his ilk; and one may reasonably doubt if India would have become independent without a violent revolution, or would then have sustained a parliamentary system of government, but for his efforts and those of his colleagues in the tumultuous years 1929-31.'

women in these years. This view sees the Liberals as cowardly mendicants, breaking with their nationalist colleagues for the sake of the lure of office.⁴

The above views seem inadequate as explanations of the role of the British-Indian relationship in this period. To see the Liberal role as tragic is to play down the fact that they chose the path they took for themselves. In fact, in certain respects, Montagu and others were offering them a way out of almost certainly being consigned to a secondary role if they had stayed within the Congress. Many Liberals would only be satisfied with a leadership role, and their secession from Congress allowed them to strut on the political stage until their rival actors returned and they became understudies once more. The Liberals seceded from Congress of their own volition; there was no deliberate British policy to split the Congress, indeed all the signs are that the British initially opposed the break-away. As has been argued, the tendency of the British to divide Indian politicians into groups of reconcilables and irreconcilables, to take the Moderates into their confidence in the making of the reforms, and to use Moderate support as part of their political strategy in Parliament, contributed to the Congress split, but were not decisive factors.

The second approach which sees the Liberals as guardians of the constitutionalist tradition also has serious flaws. It tends to assume that without the Liberals the nationalist movement might have maintained a programme of civil disobedience, possibly leading to revolution, particularly in the countryside. Most research into Congress activities between the wars suggests that the Congress leadership was quite determined to maintain orderly change and to control more socially revolutionary forces.⁵ Gandhi himself contributed to this policy of

⁴ See J. Nehru, *An Autobiography*, New Delhi, 1962 edn., pp. 392-3, for one of the most powerful contemporary critiques of the Liberals.

⁵ See, e.g., the following regional studies; D. Hardiman, *Peasant Nationalists of Gujarat*; G. Pandey, *The Ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh 1926-1934*; D. Arnold, *The Congress in Tamilnad*.

evolutionary change and the constitutionalist strain in Congress remained strong throughout the interwar period. The Swarajists and Responsivists, represented the constitutionalist strain that was ultimately successful. Men like Malaviya and Motilal Nehru did not need the Liberals to teach them the importance of working the legislatures.

The third or collaborationist approach is also too simplistic to match the facts. There were Liberals who were tempted by office and the warm glow of official recognition, but the majority of Liberals maintained their integrity as nationalists throughout this period. Liberals clashed with the British, as we have seen, on numerous issues, the most important of which related to repressive legislation, the treatment of the non-co-operation movement, the Indianisation of the services, and the treatment of Indians overseas. In many cases the Liberal contribution to the new legislation was made at the cost of public popularity, personal health and income.⁶ The Liberals differed with the majority in Congress about the best way forward for the nationalist movement. This was, contrary to the views of some historians, primarily an ideological difference and not a matter of personal rivalries or factionalism.⁷

The most fruitful way to see the British-Indian Liberal relations after the First World War is not in terms of some broad over-arching historical explanation, but rather in the specific context of imperial politics and nationalist response at that particular time. The period between 1917 and 1922 was critical for the British Empire. During that period the Empire expanded to its largest extent ever, yet it also faced the most serious threat from nationalist movements that it had faced to that date. The two facts were, of course, not unrelated. The war aim of national

⁶ Sapru is a case in point, he was forced to resign as Law Member due to ill-health and to take on that post he had given up an extremely lucrative legal practice.

⁷ For a contrary view see, Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, p. 131 ff.

self-determination, originally an aim that was restricted to Europe, became extended to the Near East and beyond as a result of the exigencies of the war. In 1917 the British and their allies faced a desperate situation and they used the promise of future national self-determination in the Middle East and India to try and extend their alliances and fortify the existing support for the war in key parts of the empire. The promises that were made to Arab, Jew and Indian alike were notoriously ill-defined, but the important fact was that they had been made, could not easily be retracted, and began to take on a meaning and life of their own in nationalist circles. The power of the concept of national self-determination, pushed to the forefront by Lenin and by Woodrow Wilson, had a force well beyond that intended by British policy makers. Officials, who had previously remained confident in the permanence of British rule, now had to adjust their policies to try and avoid being submerged in the flood-tide of demands for national rights. The fact that simultaneously the empire was patently overstretched, particularly in military terms, gave the nationalists an opportunity to test the strength of colonial rule to the limit.⁸ Finally, the British manipulation of the territorial settlement in the Middle East provoked a major nationalist response in the Islamic world, particularly in Palestine, Iraq and India (the Khilafat movement).

Facing a 'crisis of empire',⁹ an upsurge of nationalism, which marked an unprecedented unity in the nationalist movements and which reached well beyond the urban educated elite which had until that time dominated non-European nationalist movements, the British responded by offering major constitutional concessions. These concessions amounted to an offer of limited independence in Egypt (1922), dominion status in Eire (1922), constitutional reforms in India (1919) and the possibility of a further instalment of reforms if the talk of a round table conference in 1922 had

⁸ See K. Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire, 1918-1922*, Manchester, 1984.

⁹ J. Gallagher's term, 'Nationalisms and the Crisis of Empire, 1919-1922', *Modern Asian Studies*, 15, 3, (1981), pp. 355-68.

materialised. The wider purpose of these concessions was to try to re-draw imperial commitments and priorities in line with the extension of empire and the reduction of finances with which to rule it. The political purpose of these concessions was to re-stabilise the political situation, to 'rally the moderates' to the government side, whilst setting firm limits on 'extremist' ambitions. In the case of India the constitutional concessions had a broader significance as they appeared to envisage a process of the gradual devolution of power through defined parliamentary stages, an exclusive privilege of the white colonies until that time. In all cases the concessions, despite meeting very mixed responses, were enough to allow imperial rule to be re-stabilised, with the image of authority intact and essential imperial powers largely undiminished.

In each colonial situation it was the British who defined who the 'moderates' were who were going to be the recipients of their concessions. It was in the nature of colonial rule that their choice could be somewhat arbitrary; in Egypt Zaghlul Pasha was the beneficiary,¹⁰ in the Middle East the Hashimite dynasty,¹¹ in India the Indian Moderate Party. Of course, colonial officials did not define with any clarity the 'moderates' that they had in mind. In India one can surmise that when most bureaucrats used the term 'moderate' before 1918 they meant a range of Government supporters, including landlords and Muslim traditionalists as well as the more conservative elements in the Indian National Congress. However, it is interesting to see that, increasingly, the British used the term 'moderate' to mean the group of Congressmen who supported the Montford reforms and seceded from Congress in order to do so. In other words, in India the Montford reforms crystallised the Moderate/Extremist divisions. Increasingly British policy-makers, like Montagu,

¹⁰ See E. Kedourie, 'Sa'ad Zaghlul and the British' in *The Chatham House Version and Other Middle Eastern Studies*, London, 1970, pp. 82-159.

¹¹ The literature on this subject is massive, see, e.g., R. Baker, *King Husain and the Kingdom of Hejaz*, London, 1979.

Chelmsford and Willingdon were turning to the western-educated politicians as representative of the middle-ground in Indian politics. This was a substantial advance in British attitudes and marked an important new flexibility in colonial policy-making.

The British willingness to work with moderate Indian nationalism marked a recognition of the fact that they could not rely on their old autocratic methods, but now had to survive by playing the political game in the legislative arena. The furore over the Rowlatt Acts and the Amritsar Massacre which followed indicated the impossibility of pursuing a policy of outright repression for any length of time. There were now clear limits of both public revenue and public acceptability of any programme of wholesale repression of nascent nationalism in the Empire.¹²

Playing the political game under the Montford reforms meant British officials learning new tricks: establishing propaganda machinery to put forward the government case in India and abroad, taking Indian politicians into their confidence in policy-making, devolving power at a provincial level to Indian ministers representative of elected members in the legislatures, establishing coalitions of Indian representatives within the legislatures in order to pass important legislation without resort to certification, and even, if necessary, providing support to organise political parties in the legislatures.

This remarkable change in the British role in India was a natural outcome of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms which were designed to politicise both Indians and their rulers. The reforms broke the previous British refusal to establish parliamentary institutions in India, and inherent within this change of policy was the acceptance of moves towards encouraging the formation of political parties in India. The process of making the reforms undoubtedly led to the proliferation of political organisations in

¹² Post-war demobilisation, economic retrenchment and sheer war-weariness set practical limits to any policy of large-scale intervention in the colonies. See Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, pp. 26-36. For the impact of public opinion in limiting the Government's policy of repression in Ireland, admittedly a much more politically sensitive area than India, see D.G. Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles. British Public Opinion and the Making of Irish Policy 1918-1922*, London, 1972, pp. 51-4 passim; also C. Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland, 1919-1921*, Oxford, 1975, p. 170.

India, but these were almost all predicated on lines of sectional interest rather than on ideological bases. This was clearly unsatisfactory to a number of key British policy-makers, but it was one of the clear lessons of the working of the reforms that, until greater responsibilities had been devolved to Indians by the British, such party formation would prove exceedingly difficult. The reforms were both a form of political training and an experiment in democracy. As we have seen, many British officials quickly became disillusioned with the experiment and concluded that the reforms had been based upon the false assumptions that western parliamentary institutions would transfer readily to India.¹³

From the British perspective, therefore, the relationship with the Moderates offered a number of advantages. The Moderates formed a key group within the legislatures, both under the Morley-Minto and the Montford systems, and it was important for the British to be able to gain their support on important issues. On some issues the Government were to be disappointed by Moderate support. The most important example is that of Government attempts to pass counter-terrorism legislation, which not only threatened the Moderate position as nationalists but also challenged their fundamental beliefs in individual liberty and the due methods of legality. But the issue on which the British most needed the support of the Moderates was, of course, that of pressing ahead with constitutional reforms. The Moderates gave the reforms an image of acceptability to reasonable Indian opinion, which was a vital ingredient if Montagu was going to succeed in passing the reforms through a Cabinet which included such imperialists as Curzon, Milner and Balfour and through a Conservative majority in both Houses of Parliament.¹⁴ The Moderates were also

¹³ C.A. Kincaird to E. Cotton, 28 Jan. 1925, Cotton MSS, IOLR.

¹⁴ Interestingly, the die-hards seemed to realise this. See Indo-British Association pamphlet, *The Political Situation in India- The Defection of the Moderates*, London, 1919: 'The salient fact for the British public to realise is that the whole "moderate" movement is fundamentally artificial. It is a purely ephemeral offshoot of the Montagu-Chelmsford proposals designed to deceive Parliament into the belief
(continued...)

important to Montagu in pressing his case with the Government of India to widen the scope of the reforms even further, perhaps even to include the central government in the devolution of power to elected Indians. The Moderates, therefore, gave the reforms an imprimatur which became more and more important to the British as it became clear in the last half of 1920 that Congress was going to boycott the new Councils. The Congress boycott had the effect of driving the British and the Moderates more firmly into each other's arms. An important effect of this was that the relationship became steadily less one-sided. The Government soon became remarkably dependent on Moderate support to maintain an image of constitutionality which was becoming increasingly important in view of the growing attention paid to imperial affairs across the globe. As we have seen, the Government of India made a series of important concessions to Moderate demands in order to maintain their support and to keep the Reformed Councils working with a minimum of resort to the Viceroy's power of certification. Under Reading's regime, important concessions were made on issues such as finance, the repeal of repressive legislation, the status of Indians overseas, Indianisation of the services, and the treatment of the leaders of the non-co-operation movement. Indeed, Reading went much too far for the shaky Lloyd George coalition to tolerate. Concessions to Moderate nationalism in Ireland and Egypt had stretched Conservative support for the coalition to the limit, and India was now seen as the final straw. Montagu's resignation was the price that was paid for Reading's continuance in office, and thereafter British rule re-stabilised itself in India and returned to some of its old ways. As the Gandhian non-co-operation movement collapsed, the Government became less reliant on the Moderates and took actions in 1923, such as the certification of the increase in the salt tax, the Kenya decision, and

¹⁴ (...continued)

that there is in India a large and influential body of broad-minded and sagacious men, opposed to extremism and anarchy and prepared to assist them in the increasingly complex task of administering the country, men who can be fully trusted to support all reasonable and legislative acts.'

the appointment of the Lee Commission, which seemed to undermine their position. The Moderates quickly became disillusioned and demoralised and were heavily defeated in the elections at the end of 1923. The relationship with the imperial ruler had been fatal to their public image as nationalists. They could offer none of the appearance of vigour and self-sacrifice that the Swarajists could offer the electorate, they merely appeared as government lackeys.

Under the colonial situation probably no political relationship between ruler and ruled is going to work entirely satisfactorily.¹⁵ If the Government fails to support its proteges it is accused of indifference, whilst if it intervenes on their behalf it is accused of creating collaborators. It was an error of British policy-makers in this period to imagine that they could build up a 'government party' to whom they could look for support in the legislatures whilst that party would retain its image of independence and integrity. It is a tribute to the Moderates that they did, on the whole, maintain their integrity and independence, even under the very trying circumstances of these years.

Moderate support for the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms allowed the liberal reforms to survive a very difficult period. It was obviously the intention of Montagu and Chelmsford that if reforms proved a success that there should be a further devolution of power in India at an early stage. In other words, the reforms set the goal of British rule and the impetus for future moves towards that goal. It was an inherent part of the liberal assumption that the reforms would build up their own dynamic for change: as Indians came to taste the fruits of power they would inevitably demand further concessions, and the fact that Indians had proved their capability of

¹⁵ Studies of British relations with two Indian groups in particular support this view. On relations with the princes see Ramusack, *The Princes of India*; S.R. Ashton, *British Policy Towards the Indian States 1905-1939*, London, 1982. On relations with the landowners in the United Provinces, see F. Robinson, 'Consultation and Control. The U.P. Government and its Allies, 1860-1906', *Modern Asian Studies*, 5, 4, (1971), pp. 313-36; and also the writings of Peter Reeves.

working the new constitutional machinery soberly and successfully would satisfy their rulers that it was politic and practical to transfer more power. The transfer of power within an imperial framework would therefore have a self-perpetuating momentum which would grow exponentially. In these crucial years after the War, the British had had to come to terms with the temporariness of their rule in India and the implications of that realisation. Plans had had to be drawn up which envisaged an ultimate transfer of power within a generation. The fact was that by 1923 the British had come a very long way from the cautious considerations that marked their thinking in 1916.¹⁶

The fact that neither British or Indian Liberal hopes for an early transition to self-government within the empire came to fruition was the fault primarily of the circumstances in which the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms came into operation and of the fundamental and unresolved tension that remained within British policy-making between the liberal and paternalist approaches.¹⁷ The non-co-operation movement, especially the boycott of the Prince of Wales' visit, convinced influential British politicians that concessions to Indian nationalists had gone too far and their determination to 'hold the fort' in India strengthened the views of those administrators in India who had never been convinced that dyarchy was workable. The whole concept of the devolution of responsibility to Indians, on which the reforms had been based, was undermined as it was argued from the experience of the first and second councils that the necessary signs of Indian responsibility had not yet emerged. The constitutional process, however, remained intact, only very much slowed down in its implementation.

The Moderates could take some pride in the maintenance of the constitutional transition in India, but it should not be supposed that it was in any way the sort of

¹⁶ Clear evidence of this can be found in Sir Frederick Whyte's assumption that India would in the foreseeable future be governed by a Parliamentary Executive and a constitutional Governor General. *Observer* article, 10 June 1923, enclosed in diary entry 16 June 1923, Whyte MSS, IOLR, vol. 5.

¹⁷ See ch. 1., section 1.

constitutional transition that they and Montagu had envisaged when the reforms were conceived in the winter of 1917-1918.

Appendix 1- Biographical Notes

[Names in bold print were members of the Indian Liberal Party in this period]

ALI, Mohammed (1878-1931). Educated at Aligarh and Oxford University; failed ICS & Allahabad bar examinations; Opium agent, Baroda, 1904-12; Pan-Islamist journalist; interned May 1915-Dec. 1919; Khilafat leader; interned 1921-3.

ALI, Shaukat (1873-1937). Elder brother of Mohammed; Pan-Islamist journalist and politician; interned with Mohammed as above.

AIYER, C.P. Ramaswamy (1879-1966). Madras lawyer; Gen-Sec. INC 1917-18; Moderate delegation to England 1919; Advocate-General, 1920-23; Law Member, Madras Executive Council, 1923-28.

AIYER, Sir P.S. Sivaswamy (1864-1946). Lawyer/educationalist; Advocate-General, 1907; Madras Executive Council 1912-17; I.L.A. 1920-1923 (Tanjore & Trichinopoly); Indian delegation to League of Nations, 1922; President, N.L.F., 1919 & 1926; particularly interested in army matters.

BAJPAI, Girja Shankar (1891-1954). ICS; Under-Secretary to U.P. Government, 1920-21; private secretary to V.S.S. Sastri at Imperial Conference, 1921, & at Washington Conference, 1921-22.

BALFOUR, Arthur James (1848-1930). Prime Minister, 1902-05; Foreign Secretary, 1916-19; Lord President of the Council, 1919-22.

BANERJEA, Surendranath (1848-1925). Kulin Brahmin, ICS 1871 to dismissal in 1874, educationalist, journalist and politician; President INC, 1895 & 1902; Calcutta Corporation, 1876-1899; leading role in movement against partition of Bengal; Member, Bengal Legislative Council, 1920-23 (24 Parganas North); Minister, Bengal Government, 1921-23; knighted 1921.26

BASU, Bhupendranath (1859-1924). Kayastha; Bengali lawyer; Bengal legislature, 1909-12; President, INC 1914; Member, Council of India, 1917-23; Member, Bengal Executive Council, 1924.

BESANT, Annie (1847-1933). Political activist, social reformer, journalist and politician in Britain before moving to India as a Theosophist in 1893; established Central Hindu College, Benares, 1898; 1907 elected President of Theosophical Society and moved to Adyar, Madras, her new headquarters. Joined INC in 1914; founded Home Rule League, 1916; interned by Madras Government 1917, President, INC, 1917.

BUTLER, Sir Spencer Harcourt (1869-1938). ICS 1888; Member G/I, 1910-15; LG/Burma, 1915; LG/United Provinces Feb. 1918 (Governor, Jan 1921- Dec. 1922).

CARMICHAEL, Sir Thomas David Gibson-Carmichael, created Lord Carmichael of Skirling, 1912 (1859-1926). G/Madras, 1911-12; G/Bengal, 1912-17.

CHAMBERLAIN, Rt. Hon. Austen (1863-1937). Son of Joseph Chamberlain. Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1903-05; Chairman of Royal Commission on Indian finance and currency, 1913; SSI, 1915-17; member of War Cabinet 1918-19; Chancellor of Exchequer, 1919-21, Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of

Commons, 1921-22.

CHELMSFORD, Frederic John Napier Thesiger, (1868-1933) 3rd. Lord and 1st Viscount (created 1921). Fellow of All Souls; Barrister; London School Board, 1900-04, G/Queensland, 1905-09; G/New South Wales, 1909-13; Viceroy and G/G of India, 4 April 1916- 2 April 1921; First Lord of Admiralty, 1924.

CHINTAMANI, C.Y. (1880-1941). Telegu Brahmin; editor of the *Leader* (Allahabad); Member, U.P. Leg. Council, 1916-23; Minister, U.P. Government, 1921-23; Gen-Sec., N.L.F. 1918-20; 1923-29; President, N.L.F., 1920 & 1931.

CHIROL, Sir Valentine (1852-1929). Traveller, journalist, author; in charge of foreign department of the *Times*, 1897-1912; frequent visitor to India; knighted, 1912; Member, Royal Commission on Indian Public Services, 1912-14; defendant in libel case brought by B.G. Tilak, 1919. Chirol's views on India became considerably more liberal between his *Indian Unrest* (1910) and his *India Old and New* (1921).

CHITNAVIS, Sir G.M. (1863-1929). Kayastha Prabhu; leading landholder in Nagpur, Central Provinces; President, Nagpur Municipality, 1896-1918; landlord representative in C.P. Council, 1907-16; Nominated Member, Viceroy's Legislative Council, 1918; President, C.P. Legislative Council, 1921-25 .

CHURCHILL, Rt. Hon., Winston Spencer (1874-1965). Colonial US/S, 1906-08; President of Board of Trade, 1908-10; Home Secretary, 1910-11; First Lord of the Admiralty, 1911-15; Minister of Munitions, 1917, S/S for War, 1919-21; Colonial Secretary, 1921-22; leader of die-hard opposition to 1935 Indian reforms.

COTTON, H. Evan. A. (1868-1939). Member of an old India family; long-standing Calcutta barrister and member of the Calcutta Municipality; L.C.C. councillor, 1914; Liberal M.P. July-Nov. 1918; County Alderman, 1919-22; Hon. Sec. Indian Reforms Committee; served on advisory committee in India Office on 1919 Act; President, Bengal Legislative Assembly, 1922-25. His experience in dealing with Swarajist obstruction soured his views on the constitutional reforms.

CRADDOCK, Sir Reginald H. (1864-1937); ICS, 1884; Commissioner/Chief Commissioner Central Provinces, 1902-12; Home Member of Viceroy's Executive Council, 1912-17; L/G Burma Feb. 1918-Dec. 1922; Member, Lee Commission on Civil Services of India, 1923-24. Formidable right-wing critic of reforms.

CURTIS, Lionel (1872-1955). Member of Lord Milner's 'kindergarten' in South Africa in first decade of twentieth century; Fellow of All Souls Oxford; founder of the *Round Table* journal to advocate the federation of the self-governing territories of the British Commonwealth; took prominent part in discussions on Indian constitutional reforms during the First World War and in 1920 published *Dyarchy*.

DAS, Chitta Ranjan (1870-1925). Calcutta lawyer; despite doubts about boycotting councils, he allied with Gandhi, 1920, and led Bengal non-co-operation; founder with M. Nehru of Swaraj Party, 1923.

DUKE, Sir F. William (1863-1924). ICS, 1882; Member, G/Bengal, 1910-14; Member, India Council, 1914-19; Member, Montagu's deputation to India, 1917-18; US/S for India, Jan. 1920-1924. An influential figure in drawing up the 1919 reforms.

DWARKADAS, Jamnadas; Gujarati dye importer; Home Ruler and follower of Mrs

Besant; edited *Young India*, 1916-19; Member, Bombay Municipal Corporation; India Tariff Commission, 1923.

DWARKADAS, Kanji (1892-?). Treasurer and Secretary of All-India Home Rule League, 1917-19; Gen-Sec., National Home Rule League, 1919-33; Member, Bombay Legislative Council, 1921-23; follower of Mrs Besant and active social reformer.

DYER, Brigadier-General Reginald E.H. (1864-1927). Indian army, 1888; responsible for Amritsar massacre, 1919; forced to retire; received sizeable collection from supporters.

GAIT, Sir Edward (1863-1950). ICS, 1882, served Assam & Bengal; L/G, Bihar and Orissa 1915-20; member of S/S Council, 1922-27.

GANDHI, Mohandas Karamchand (1869-1948). Lawyer and political activist in South Africa 1893-1914; follower of G.K. Gokhale, but was refused membership of Servants of India Society in 1915. Led first nationwide satyagraha in 1919 against the Rowlatt legislation and began non-co-operation movement in September 1920 until he called it off in Feb. 1922.

GOKHALE, Gopal Krishna (1866-1915). Chitpavan Brahmin; university teacher and journalist; Member Imperial Legislative Council, 1901-15; founded Servants of India Society, 1905. Leader of Moderates.

HAILEY, Sir Malcolm (1872-1969). ICS, 1895; served in the Punjab; Chief Commissioner, Delhi, 1912-18; Finance Member, 1919-22; Home Member, G/I, 1922-24; G/Punjab, 1924-28.

HARDINGE, Charles, 1st. Baron Hardinge of Penshurst (1858-1944). Diplomatic service; Permanent US/S, Foreign Office, 1906-10, 1916-20; Viceroy & G/G of India, 1910-16; Ambassador at Paris, 1920-22. A Viceroy with a popular touch but no Liberal, as his private letters attest.

HIRTZEL, Sir F. Arthur (1870-1937). India Office career, 1894-1930; Political Secretary, 1909-17, Assistant US/S, 1917-21; Deputy Under-Secretary, 1921-24; Permanent Under-Secretary, 1924-30. A Christian imperialist.

IYER, L.A. Govindaraghava (1867-1935). Madras barrister and politician; President, N.L.F., 1921.

JINNAH, Mohammed Ali (1876-1948). Barrister, President of the Muslim League, 1916, 1920; supporter of Lucknow Pact, 1916; leading Bombay politician; opposed Gandhian non-co-operation.

JOSHI, Narayan Malkar (1879-1955). Member of Servants of India Society; Bombay Municipal Corporation, 1919-23; nominated Member, I.L.A., 1921. Trade unionist and social reformer.

KELKAR, Narasimha Chintaman (1872-1947). Pleader, then Tilakite journalist, and politician. Editor of *Kesari* and *Mahratta*; Councillor, Poona Municipality, 1898-1924; member, Home Rule deputation to London, 1919; Member, ILA, 1923 and 1926.

KHAPARDE, Ganesh Srikrishna, (1854-1938). Pleader from Amraoti, C.P.; follower of Tilak and opponent of Gandhi's non-co-operation.

KUNZRU, Hirday Nath (1887-78). Kashmiri Brahmin; Agra lawyer and small zamindar; joined Servants of India Society, 1909; Member, U.P. Legislative Council 1921-23.

LEE, Arthur, Lord Lee of Fareham (1868-1947). Chairman, Royal Commission on Civil Service in India (1923-4).

LLOYD, Sir George A. (1879-1941); MP, 1910-18; G/Bombay, Dec. 1918-Dec. 1923; created Baron, 1925; High Commissioner in Egypt, 1925-29; led opposition in House of Lords to 1935 India Act. A Curzonian imperialist.

LLOYD GEORGE, Rt. Hon. David (1863-1945). Solicitor; Liberal MP, 1890-1945, President of the Board of Trade, 1905-08; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1908-15; Minister for Munitions, 1915-15; S/S for War, 1916, Prime Minister, 1916-22.

LYTTON, Victor Alexander George Robert, Lord Lytton (1876-1947). Son of a former Viceroy of India; Under-Secretary at India Office, 1920-22; G/Bengal, Mar. 1922-Mar. 1927.

MACLAGAN, Sir Edward D. (1864-1952); ICS, 1883, served in Punjab; Secretary to G/I in revenue & agriculture department, 1910-14, and in education department, 1915-18; Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab, 1919-21 and Governor, 1921-24.

MALAVIYA, Madan Mohan (1861-1946). U.P. lawyer, educationalist, journalist and politician; Member I.L.C. 1910-19, President, INC 1909, 1918; founded Benares Hindu University, 1916. Hindu revivalist.

MARRIS, Sir William. S. (1873-1945); ICS, 1895, served in U.P.; lent to Transvaal, 1906-07; involved in working on the making of constitutional reforms, 1917/19; Home Secretary, G/I, 1919-21; G/Assam 1921-22; G/U.P., 1922-28.

MEHTA, Pherozeshah Mehta (1845-1915). Parsee, Bombay barrister, leading figure among Congress Moderates.

MESTON, Sir James S. (1865-1943). ICS, 1883, served in U.P.; lent to Cape Colony & Transvaal, 1905-06; Secretary to G/I finance department, 1906-12; L/G U.P., 1912-28; on deputation to Imperial War Conference and Cabinet, 1917; Finance Member, 1918; retired, Nov. 1919.

MONTAGU, Rt. Hon. Edwin S. (1879-1924). Liberal MP, 1906-22; Private Secretary to Asquith, 1906-10, US/S.India, 1910-14; Financial Secretary to the Treasury, 1914-15; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1915-16; Minister for Munitions, 1916; S/S for India, July 1917- March 1922.

MUDDIMAN, Sir Alexander P. (1875-1928). ICS, 1897, served in Bihar; Secretary to the Legislative Department G/I, 1915-21; officiating Law Member, 1919; President, Council of State, 1920-24. Home Member, G/I Executive Council & Leader of Legislative Assembly, 1924-27. Chaired Committee reporting on working of 1919 reforms, 1924-5.

NAIR, Sir C. Sankaran (1857-1934). Lawyer; opponent of Madras brahmins; education member of G/I, 1915-19; member S/S Council, 1920-21.

NARAYAN, Pandit Jagat. Liberal lawyer from Lucknow; politician, member of Hunter Committee on Punjab events, 1919; Minister, Government of U.P. 1921-23.

NATESAN, G.A (1873-1949). Publicist and publisher. Editor of *Indian Review*.

NEHRU, Pandit Motilal (1861-1931). Kashmiri brahmin; highly successful advocate at Allahabad; played leading part in Congress sub-committee investigating Punjab atrocities, 1919; gave up legal practice at time of 1st. non-co-operation movement, 1920-22; founded Swaraj Party with C.R. Das, 1923.

NEHRU, Pandit Jawaharlal (1889-1964). Son of Motilal; U.P. barrister and politician; played active part in U.P. kisan movement.

O'DWYER, Sir Michael F. (1864-1940); ICS, 1885; L/G Punjab 1913-19; assassinated 1940.

PARANJPYE, Raghunath Purshottam (1876-1966). Chitpavan Brahmin; educationalist; Member, Bombay Legislative Council, 1913-23. Minister, Bombay Government, 1921-23; signed Muddiman Committee minority report.

PEEL, Rt. Hon. William Robert Wellesley, Viscount (1867-1937). Conservative MP; US/S, War Office, 1919-21; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1921-22; S/S for India, Mar. 1922- Jan. 1924, 1938-39.

PENTLAND, Rt. Hon. John Sinclair (1860-1925). MP, 1892-95, 1897-1909; baronetcy, 1909; S/S Scotland, 1909-12; G/Madras, 1912-19.

RAHIMTULLA, Sir Ibrahim (1862-1942). Merchant, millowner and landlord. Khoja Muslim. Member, Bombay Legislative Council, 1899-1912; President, Muslim League, 1912; Member, Government of Bombay 1918-23; President, Bombay Legislative Council, 1923-26; President, ILA, 1931-33.

READING, Rt. Hon. Rufus D. Isaacs (1860-1935); barrister; Liberal MP, 1904-13; Attorney-General, 1910-13; Lord Chief Justice, 1913-21, Baron, 1914; Ambassador at Washington, 1918-19; Viceroy and G/G India, 1921-26.

RAY- Prithwis Chandra (1870-1927). Journalist; Secretary, INC, 1906 & 1911; founder of National Liberal League, Bengal, 1918; member, Liberal delegation to England, 1919; member, Bengal landholders's delegation to England, 1920; editor of the *Bengalee*, 1921-24; somewhat maverick Liberal.

REED, Sir Stanley (1872-69). Editor of *Times of India*, 1907-23; President Publicity Board during First World War; made himself unpopular with European community in Bombay for his criticisms of General Dyer in 1919; Director of Century Mills, Bombay; chaired Bombay Strikes Committee, 1920.

RONALDSHAY, Rt Hon. Lawrence J.L. Dundas, Lord Dundas, later 2nd. Marquess of Zetland (1876-1961); traveller, author, Conservative MP, 1907-16; Member, Royal Commission on Public Services of India, 1912-15; G/Bengal, March 1917-March 1922. Curzon's biographer and himself rather in the Curzon mould. Strongly interested in oriental religion and psychology; author of *The Heart of Aryavarta*, 1925.

SAPRU, Tej Bahadur (1875-1949). Kashmiri Brahmin; U.P. lawyer and politician; Member, U.P. Legislative Council, 1913-16; Member, Imperial Legislative Council, 1916-20; Law Member, G/I, 1920-23; Member, Functions Committee 1918-19; represented India at Imperial Conference, 1923; President, N.L.F. 1923; signed Muddiman Committee minority report. Key figure in Round Table Conferences, 1930-32.

SARMA, Bayya Narasimheswara (1867-1932). Lawyer; Member, Madras Legislative Council, 1906; Member, G/I, 1920-25.

SASTRI, V.S. Srinivasa (1869-1946). Tamil Smartha Brahmin; schoolmaster; member of Servants of India Society since 1907, President, 1915-27; nominated Member of Madras Legislative Council, 1913-16; Member, I.L.C., 1916-20; Member, Franchise Committee 1918-19; Member, Council of State, 1920-24; Indian representative to Imperial Conference and League of Nations, 1921; Privy Councillor, 1921.

SELBORNE, Rt. Hon. William Waldegrave Palmer (1859-1942), succeeded to earldom, 1895; MP, 1885-95; US/S, Colonial Office, 1895-1900, First Lord of Admiralty, 1900-05; High Commissioner in South Africa, 1905-10; President, Board of Agriculture, 1915-16; chairman of Joint Select Committee on G/I bill, 1919.

SETALVAD, Chimanlal Harilal (1866-1947). Advocate and judge, Bombay High Court; Member ILC, 1915-18; Member, Southborough Committee, 1918-19; Hunter Committee, 1919; knighted, 1919; Member, G/Bombay's Executive Council, 1921-23.

SETON, Sir Malcolm (1872-1940). ICS, 1895; India Office, 1898-1933; Secretary, Judicial and Public Department, 1911-19; on deputation with S/S , 1917-18; Assistant US/S 1919-24; knighted 1919.

SINHA, Sir Satyendra Prasanno, (1864-1928). Barrister, Calcutta High Court; Advocate-General, Bengal, 1907-9, 1915-17; President INC, 1915; Member, Bengal Legislative Council, 1916-19; Imperial War Conference and Cabinet, 1917, 1918; Parliamentary US/S, India, 1919-20; created Baron Sinha of Raipur, 1919; G/Bihar and Orissa, 1920-21.

SLY, Sir Frank G. (1866-1928). ICS; Member, Islington commission, 1912-14; Member, Franchise Committee, 1918-19; Chief Commissioner, Central Provinces 1920-21, and Governor, 1921-25.

TILAK, Bal Gangadhar (1856-1920). Chitpavan Brahmin, journalist and politician of Maharashtra. Leader of Extremists. Helped found *Kesari* and *Mahratta* newspapers. Imprisoned 1897, 1908-14.

VINCENT, Sir William H.H. (1866-1941). ICS, 1887, served in Bengal; Judge, Calcutta High Court, 1909; Secretary in Indian Legislative Department, 1911-15; Member, Executive Council of L/G, Bihar & Orissa, 1915-17; Home Member, G/I, 1917-23; Member, S/S Council, 1923-31.

WACHA, Sir Dinshaw Edulji (1844-1936). Parsi mill agent, journalist and politician; Sec. Bombay Presidency Association, 1885-1918 and President, 1915-18; Joint Secretary INC, 1896-1907, Secretary, 1908-13, President, 1901; Member, Bombay Legislative Council, 1915-16; Member, Imperial Legislative Council, 1916-20.

WHYTE, Sir A. Frederick (1883-1970). MP, 1910-18; Parliamentary Private Secretary to W. Churchill, 1910-15; President of the ILA, 1920-25.

WILLIAMS, Laurence Frederick RUSHBROOK (1890-). Fellow of All Souls, 1914-21, Professor of History at Allahabad, 1914-19; on special duty with G/I on publicity, 1917-19; Director, Central Bureau of Information, 1920-26; Secretary to Indian delegation at Imperial Conference, 1920. Author of 'Moral and Material Progress', annual reports, 1917-1925.

WILLINGDON, Freeman Freeman-Thomas (1866-1941). Liberal MP 1900-10, created baron, 1910; G/Bombay, 1913-18; G/Madras, 1919-24; G/G, Canada, 1926-30; Viceroy & G & G/G, India, 1931-6.

Appendix 2 Moderate Party Members and Supporters

calculated from Appendix to Proceedings of the First Session of the All-India Conference of the Moderate Party held at Bombay on 1 and 2 Nov. 1918. [G.I.P.E.]

TOTAL Membership = 790

RELIGION

Hindu	= 585	Jain	= 4
Muslim	= 41	Christian	= 17
Parsi	= 130	Other/N.R.	= 13

CASTE (where recorded)

Brahmin	= 232
Writer Castes	= 108
Kayastha	= 81
Baidya	= 23
Pratare Prabhu	= 4
Trading Castes	= 25
Bania	= 20
Vaisya	= 2
Agrawal	= 3

ctd....

Appendix 2 (National Statistics) continued:

PROVINCE

Bengal	=	177
Bombay	=	380
Madras	=	104
United Provinces	=	56
C.P./Berar	=	60
Bihar/Orissa	=	7
Punjab	=	4
Burma	=	2
<u>TOTAL</u>	=	790

OCCUPATION (Primary recorded occupation) QUALIFICATION

Lawyer	=	254	BA	213
Merchant	=	97	MA	51
Manufacturer	=	12	PhD	9
Landlord/owner	=	71	Medical	27
Educationalist	=	28	Other	6
Doctor	=	23		
Journalist	=	44		
Contractor	=	5		
Other Profess.	=	54		
Servant of India	=	15		
Worker	=	2		
Others/ unrec.	=	185		

LIST OF SOURCES

1. PRIMARY SOURCES

A. Manuscript Collections in Britain

Name	Repository
BUTLER, Harcourt	India Office Library and Records [I.O.L.R.] MSS. EUR. F.116
CHAMBERLAIN, Austen	Birmingham University Library
CHELMSFORD, Lord	MSS. EUR. E.264 [I.O.L.R.]
COTTON, Evan	(a) MSS. EUR. F.82 [I.O.L.R.] (b) Additional papers courtesy of Col. Cotton, London
CURTIS, Lionel	c.o. Sir I. Macadam, London
CURZON, Lord	MSS. EUR. F.111 [I.O.L.R.]
HAILEY, Malcolm,	MSS. EUR. E.220 [I.O.L.R.]
HARDINGE, Lord	Cambridge University
KERR, Philip [LOTHIAN]	Edinburgh University Library
LABOUR PARTY	London
LLOYD, Sir George	Churchill College, Cambridge
LLOYD GEORGE, David	House of Lords Records Office
LOWNDES, Sir George	MSS. EUR. C.224 [I.O.L.R.]
LYTTON, Lord	MSS. EUR. F.160 [I.O.L.R.]
MESTON, James	MSS. EUR. F.136 [I.O.L.R.]

MONTAGU, Edwin	(a) MSS. EUR. D.523 [I.O.L.R.]
" "	(b) Trinity College, Cambridge
READING, Lord (viceregal)	MSS. EUR. E.238 [I.O.L.R.]
" " (private)	MSS. EUR. F.118 [I.O.L.R.]
ROBERTS, Charles	MSS. EUR. F.170 [I.O.L.R.]
RONALDSHAY, Lord	MSS. EUR. D.609 [I.O.L.R.]
SETON, Malcolm	MSS. EUR. E.267 [I.O.L.R.]
SMITH, Dunlop	MSS. EUR. F.166 [I.O.L.R.]
THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY	London
WHYTE, Sir Frederick	MSS. EUR. D.761 [I.O.L.R.]
WILLINGDON, Lord	MSS. EUR. F.93 [I.O.L.R.]
WILSON, Fleetwood	MSS. EUR. E.224 [I.O.L.R.]

B. Manuscript Collections in India

Name	Repository	Period/Comments
AIYER, Sir P.S.S.	National Archives of India, New Delhi [N.A.I.]	1917-24
ANSARI, M.A.	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi [N.M.M.L.] microfilm	1917-23
ALL INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE	N.M.M.L.	1918-22, files 1-10
BESANT, Annie	Theosophical Society, Adyar, Madras	1916-23
BASU, Bhupendranath	N.M.M.L.	1914-22

BOMBAY PRESIDENCY	c.o. E.A. Sethna, LLB.,	1917-23, minutes
ASSOCIATION	Secretary, Bombay	
BRELVI, S.A.	N.M.M.L.	1924
BRITISH INDIAN		
ASSOCIATION, Calcutta	N.M.M.L.	1912-17, microfilm reel 10
CHHATARI, Nawab of	N.M.M.L.	1923
CHINTAMANI, C.Y.	N.M.M.L.	1925-6
CHITNAVIS, G.M.	N.M.M.L.	
DECCAN SABHA, Poona	Gokhale Institute, Poona	1920-23, annual
	[G.I.P.E.]	reports, pamphlets
DESAI, Bhulabhai	N.M.M.L.	1921-23
DWARKADAS, Jamnadas	N.M.M.L.	
INDIAN ASSOCIATION,	N.M.M.L.	Microfilm ,1916-22
Calcutta		
JAYAKAR, M.R.	N.A.I.	
JOSHI, N.M.	N.M.M.L.	1920-22
MADRAS PROVINCIAL	(a) G.I.P.E.	1916, report of exec. cttee. CONGRESS
COMMITTEE	(b) N.M.M.L.	1915-17, minutes
MADRAS MAHAJANA SABHA	N.M.M.L.	1899-1924, annual reports
MAHMUDABAD, Raja of	N.M.M.L.	1920
MODY, Homi	N.M.M.L.	1917-20
MOONJE, B.S.	N.M.M.L.	1918-19
NEHRU, Motilal	N.M.M.L.	1919-24
NEHRU, Jawaharlal	N.M.M.L.	vols. 7-9, 10, 11, 22, 28, 45, 66, 81
NATIONAL LIBERAL	(a) G.I.P.E.	annual reports
FEDERATION	(b) B.P.A. -see above	File 1921-23
NATESAN, G.A.	N.M.M.L.	1917-23

PARANJPYE, R.P.	N.M.M.L.	1917-23
PILLAI, P.K.	N.M.M.L.	1917-18
POONA DISTRICT	N.M.M.L.	1916-20
CONGRESS COMMITTEE		
PRAKASA, SRI	N.M.M.L.	
RAO, P.K.	N.M.M.L.	autobiographical articles published in <i>Deccan Herald</i> , 1966-70
SAPRU, T.B.	I.O.L.R.	microfilm; originals in National Library, Calcutta
SASTRI, V.S.S.	N.A.I.	1915-24
" "	N.M.M.L.	donated by S.R. Venkataraman, instalment 1, 1921-23
" "	N.M.M.L.	Sastri diaries , microfilm
" "	N.M.M.L.	donated by P.K. Rao
" "		c.o. S.R. Venkataraman, S.I.S., Madras
SATHAYE, D.D.	N.M.M.L.	1919
SATHAYE, V.D.	N.M.M.L.	1920
SERVANTS OF INDIA	N.M.M.L.	1918-21
SOCIETY, Poona		
SETHNA, P.	N.M.M.L.	1921-24
THAKURDAS, Sir P.	N.M.M.L.	1920-22
TILAK, B.G.	N.M.M.L.	microfilm
VENKATARAMA, T.R.	N.M.M.L.	
VIJARAGHACHARIAR	N.M.M.L.	1917-19
WESTERN INDIA	see B.P.A. (above)	
NATIONAL LIBERAL FEDERATION		

C. OFFICIAL RECORDS IN BRITAIN

i. Cabinet Office Records Public Record Office, Kew, London

ii. India Office Records [I.O.L.R.]

Home Dept. Political Files A Series

B & Deposit series, including fortnightly
reports from the provinces

Judicial & Political Department Records:

L/P&J/6

L/P&J/9 Reforms Dept.

L/R/15 Indian Newspaper Reports

Council of India Minutes

D. OFFICIAL RECORDS IN INDIA

Home Dept. Political Files B & Deposit series, including fortnightly
reports from the provinces, 1917-20

E. PARLIAMENTARY PAPERS

Cd. 9109, 1918 *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms* [Montagu-
Chelmsford].

- Cd. 9178, 1919 *Addresses Presented in India to His Excellency the Viceroy and the Right Honourable The Secretary of State for India.*
- Cd. 9190, 1918 *Report of Committee appointed to investigate Revolutionary Conspiracies in India [Rowlatt].*
- Cmd. 103, 1919 *Report of the Committee appointed by the Secretary of State for India to enquire into questions connected with the division of functions between the Central and Provincial Governments and in the Provincial Governments between the Executive Council and Ministers [Feetham].*
- Cmd. 141, 1919 *Report of the Committee appointed by the Secretary of State for India to inquire into questions connected with the Franchise and other matters relating to Constitutional Reforms [Southborough].*
- H.C. 203, 1919 *Report of the Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill. Vol. i, Report; vol. ii, Minutes of Evidence.*
- Cmd. 681, 1920 *Report of the Committee Appointed by the Government of India To Investigate Disturbances in the Punjab, Etc.. [Hunter]*
- Cmd. 943, 1920 *Report of the Committee appointed by the Secretary of State for India to inquire into the Home Administration of Indian Affairs [Crewe].*
- Cmd. 1261, 1921 *Return showing the result of the elections in India.*
- Cmd. 1474, 1921 *Conference of Prime Ministers and Representatives of the United Kingdom, the Dominions, and India, held in June, July, August, 1921. Summary of Proceedings and Documents.*
- Cmd. 1987, 1923 *Imperial Conference, 1923: Summary of Proceedings.*

- Cmd. 2128, 1924 *Report of the Royal Commission on the Superior Civil Services in India* [Lee].
- Cmd. 2360, 1925 *Report of the Reforms Inquiry Committee, 1924* [Muddiman]
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G. NEWSPAPERS AND JOURNALS

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<i>Indian Review</i>	1918-20
<i>Leader</i> (Allahabad Daily)	1918-21
<i>Servant of India</i> (Madras Weekly)	1918-19

In addition the extensive news-cutting collection in the George Lloyd Mss. has been consulted.

2. BOOKS, ARTICLES, THESES

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