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Parliamentary Control over Indian affairs ; Reconstitution of the India Council on representative basis ; Self-Govern- ment for India &c.

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PARLIAMENTARY CONTROL OVER INDIAN AFFAIRS.

In the course of his speech during the debate in the House of Commons on Indian Budget in 1906, Mr. Morley said :—
“In subjecting details of Indian administration to the supervision and criticism of this House, the Indian Government would be exposed to the kind of criticism which would do no good but harm.” And in order to guard against such contingencies, he declared that “Our Government in India must partake and in no small degree of the personal and absolute element.” Reference was also made to the matter during the Indian Budget debate of this year. On the first occasion, Mr. Morley was supported by Sir H. Fowler who said :—“It has been represented again and again that the Secretary of State was a mere tool, that he had no independence of his own, that he had no power and that he was entirely under the control of the Government of India.” Perhaps this was a reflection on Lord Curzon, who was the supreme lord and master of the Indian Empire in whose hands the Secretary of State was a mere tool and the Civil and Military servants of the Crown were a herd of insignificant noodles. He even challenged the authority of the House of Commons. “Parliamentary interference,” His Lordship said “we do not require,”

But continued Sir H. Fowler, "The power of the Secretary of State except in finance, was supreme and final, that where he and his Council differed, his voice prevailed over the whole Council, that where he and the Indian Government differed, the voice of the Secretary of State prevailed over the Government of India, and over the Viceroy. As it was, because of the enormous power and responsibility of the office, which was the virtual appointment of a majority of that House that he had always been very anxious to keep the Government of India as far as possible out of the arena of party politics."

India is called the brightest jewel in the British Crown and its importance in the deliberations of the body politic is beyond question. In his recent speech at Arbroath Mr. Morley said :—"I doubt whether of all the questions that are discussed, perhaps some years to come, any question can be more important than the question of India" and he exhorted his own constituency who were his audience, as also all other British constituencies, to listen to a speech about India, "because" he said "if the Government were to make a certain kind of bad blunder in India...there would be short work for a long time to come with many of those schemes—financial schemes, which you have set your heart upon." So the interests of the two countries Britain and India are intimately bound up in a bond of union requiring uniform treatment in the arena of party politics which is the essential feature of the British Constitution represented by the Parliament.

The relation of the Secretary of State to the House of Commons is that of master and servant ; as he is appointed by the House, he is responsible to them for the exercise of his immense power in the administration of India ; and it is the duty of the House of Commons to exercise sufficient control over him. It is, therefore, inconsistent with obvious propriety to stifle the discussion of Indian

affairs in Parliament—not merely asking questions, that Sir H. Fowler admitted was fully in force then. But even the privilege of the House to ask questions is now at jeopardy, as would appear from the following dialogue which recently took place in the House of Commons:—In a perfectly legitimate and logical question, Mr. O'Grady asked the Speaker: "Whether the Government of India was responsible to the House for its action in the administration of the law, and, if so, whether a Member of the House had not the right to demand, that, definite information should be supplied to him publicly or privately as to the ground for the arrest and deportation of any of His Majesty's subjects?" The Speaker replied: "It is open to any Honourable Member to put any question that comes within the rules of order, and it is equally open to the Minister to decline to give a reply." Surely in declining to answer a legitimate question, the House is dishonoured. Is there no law to check it?

The attempts which are now made to free the Secretary of State from Parliamentary control and make his power absolute, are a retrograde movement, incompatible with law, traditions and opinions of eminent statesmen. In the Grant to the First East India Company of the Island of Bombay, dated the 27th March 1669, it was declared:—"All persons being His Majesty's subjects inhabiting within the said Island and their children and their posterity born within the limits thereof, shall be deemed free denizens and natural subjects as if living and born in England." The terms of the First Grant were extended in it to all British territorial acquisitions in India, which together with Bombay were designated British India, and became an integral part of the British Empire and amenable to its laws and constitution, represented by the British Parliament. The administration of India has since been conducted on constitutional basis. The British Parliament, as Trustees for India, which Mr. Morley

himself admitted, were vested with the rights to legislate for India and control her affairs. They are the highest authority to which Indians can appeal in executive matters as Privy Council is the highest Court of appeal in judicial matters. On several occasions when Native troops rendered valuable service in the battles of the British Empire abroad, the Indians were publicly and officially recognized as sons of the Empire, and for their steadfast loyalty they received official recognition as entitled to the rights and privileges of British citizenship. In a letter to Lord Derby, asking him to draft the famous Proclamation of 1858, Queen Victoria said: "And point out the privileges which Indians will receive in being placed on an equality with the subjects of the British Crown and prosperity following in the train of civilization." The following clause of the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 was probably the outcome of the requisition:—"We hold ourselves bound to the Natives of Our Indian Territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to our other subjects; and these obligations by the blessing of Almighty God we shall faithfully and conscientiously fulfil. And it is Our further will that so far as may be, Our subjects of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to offices in Our Service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability and integrity duly to discharge." Are the rights of the people of India, based as they are on Royal Edicts and supported by law and constitution to be obliterated as water-mark on the destiny of the nation by a mere stroke of the pen, and they are to be subjected to what is called "benevolent despotism" or iron hand in a velvet glove? Preposterous! Constitutionalism has become the life breath of the people of India which it would not be possible for them to give up. They are fully convinced that the control of Parliament over the administration of India is highly beneficial to the country, and would by all constitutional means protest

against its removal, should it ever occur. In the light of Mr. Gladstone's opinion, the duties of Parliament in relation to the Government of India are clear. On a memorable occasion Mr. Gladstone who was the Prime Minister of England said, "It is our business to give to those representing Her Majesty's Government in India ample information as to what we believe to be sound principles of government. It is also the duty and function of this House to comment upon any case in which we think the authorities in India have failed to give due effect to those principles, but in the discharge of their high administrative functions, or as to the choice of means, there is no doubt that, that should be left in their hands." This is a counsel of perfection which the Secretary of State and the Parliament should follow for the good government of India in amity and harmony. In consequence of the present intellectual upheaval in the country as the result of the spread of English education and Western civilization among the people, it would be expedient for Parliament to exercise a more rigid control over the affairs of India, in the deliberations of which it may be assisted by some Indian representatives possessing educational qualification, good moral character and stake in the country, who on acquiring Parliamentary training will not only benefit themselves in the field of politics, but will be a tower of strength both to the Government and the people. The Hon'ble Mr. Gokhale, while on deputation in England as a Delegate of the Indian National Congress, suggested that "the House of Commons should include six Members from India." That is a proper and legitimate course towards which an earnest attempt should be made. It is a pity that at the last Indian National Congress, its Resolution of previous years for the admission of certain Indian representatives into the House of Commons was dropped.

In the course of his speech at Arbroath on the unrest in

India Mr. Morley said :—" In the interest of India, to say nothing of our national honor, in the name of duty and common sense our first and commanding task is to keep order and to quell violence among race and creed and sternly to insist on the impartial application of the rules of justice independent of European and Indian. This is all very fair against which no objection can be taken. The unrest in India is partially due to the excesses of the Indian Extremists who wish for the removal of the British rule from India and for the establishment of Self-Government or *sawraj* in India on national lines independent of British control and suzerainty, and partly to the determination of the British Extremists to rule India despotically by the power of the sword in subversion of the Parliamentary control. Thus the two Extremist parties are the real enemies of the Government and not the educated Indians holding moderate views, who wish for the continuance of the British rule in India on the principles of justice and fairplay, an ideal which is in accord with that of Mr. Morley stated above. The prancing Proconsul Lord Curzon expressed a similar opinion. His Lordship said :—" Unless we can persuade the millions of India, that we give to them absolute justice as between man and man, equality before the law, freedom from tyranny and injustice and oppression, your Empire will not touch their hearts and will fade away. During the time I have been in India, I have taken a strong stand for the fair treatment of our Indian fellow-subjects who are equal with us in the eyes of God and the law." These were words of wisdom, which would bring about a legal status of equality between Europeans and Indians and bind them in a bond of fellowship as subjects of a common Sovereign. Mr. Morley also admitted that as Secretary of State for India he is responsible to the House of Commons. " The Government of India " he said " so long as I am concerned with it and responsible for it to Parliament." ...It is now the duty of Parliament to exercise effective con-

control over the administration of India assisted by some Indian representatives who may be appointed to the House of Commons as Members for India.

• RECONSTITUTION OF THE INDIA COUNCIL ON REPRESENTATIVE BASIS.

• If on the other hand the British Parliament shirks its own responsibility towards India and shuts its door against Indian representatives, it is desirable that it should delegate to the India Council the powers which are at present vested in it for the control of the Indian affairs. The India Council should be reconstituted on representative basis, the members of which would be elected in equal proportion by the House of Commons from among its members and by the Legislative Council of the Governor-General of India. It will be a sort of Indian Parliamentary Committee. The Secretary of State, representing the Crown in the India Council, shall like a Judge charging a jury, sum up the proceedings of the Government of India in any particular case which may come up before the Council for their consideration and accept the verdict of the majority of the Council and give effect to it. In the event of the number of votes being equal on either side in a matter of dispute, the Secretary of State shall have the casting vote. When the India Council was constituted in the place of the Board of Control which was an independent body, it was supposed that it would consist of retired Indian Civilians, Military men and others, merchants &c., possessing expert knowledge and Indian experience who would assist the Secretary of State with their advice and independent views on Indian questions and exercise a wholesome check on him from going wrong in the absence of personal knowledge of India. But the members of the India Council not being appointed on any representative principle but on mere nomination by the Secretary of State,

are apt to lose all vigor and independence and become mere paupets. The power of the Secretary of State is absolute, over which their voice cannot prevail.

SELF-GOVERNMENT FOR INDIA.

If it be not possible to reconstitute the India Council on representative basis, the people of India would be justified to apply to His Most Gracious Majesty the Emperor of India and to the British Parliament for the grant to them of self-government under British paramountcy. From the following extract of his speech, it will be seen that His Majesty who delights to call himself a Constitutional Monarch, seems disposed to grant the boon of self-government to India:—"It is my earnest hope that in these Colonies as elsewhere throughout my dominions the grant of free institutions will be followed by an increasing prosperity and loyalty to the Empire." Mr. Harrison, Professor of Jurisprudence and Examiner for the Bar Temple, who often found Indian students in the front rank of their year equal to the best men from the English Universities said:—"And to-day a nation eight times as numerous than that of Japan quite as intelligent as versatile as conscious of all they are, and all they might become, are awaiting their political transformation, their coming of age, their national life...Are we to be told that the far vaster masses of India are utterly incapable unfit unprepared for a collective appeal to a Constitutional King—an Emperor bound by the promises of the late Queen in 1858?" Lord Macaulay in a famous speech made in the House of Commons said:—"The time may come when our present system of Government will outgrow itself and when the people of India will demand representative institutions and claim a larger share in the administration of the country." There is in this a prophetic ring in which the finger of God is clearly visible and which is about to be fulfilled. The idea

of a self-government for India loomed perhaps in the mind of Elphinstone when he said, "But we are now doing our best to raise them (Indians) and to instil into them the liberal opinions in government and policy which have long prevailed in this country, and it is vain to endeavour to rule them on principles only suited to a slavish and ignorant population." The *Tribune* stated that "government by the British in India could not hope to resist the demand for self-government. It depends upon us whether self-government is extorted by a raw people with inexperienced leaders or conceded gradually to an educated nation and its leaders trained in administration." The *Crown*, an English paper, thus writes on the situation in India :—"India must be governed with more regard for native opinion and feeling. The young men of that country are being educated at our Universities and Inns of Court, and learning increasingly the science of government. We must make the educated Indians more and more partners with ourselves in the government of that great country, and treat the natives there less as vassals and more as fellow-subjects of King Edward." Sir Henry Cotton, the steadfast champion of the Indian cause, pertinently observed :—"Instead of taking the educated classes into our confidence and giving them a fair share in the administration of their own country, an unwise Government has quite gratuitously alienated their affection by insulting suspicions and retrograde legislation." The *Daily News* says, "By promoting education and facilitating admission to the Civil Service, providing constitutional machinery so that the self-government agitation may become effective at the proper pressure, we must show our fellow-citizens in India that self-government is not an event we dread, but a triumphant result for which our work in India is undertaken. The Revd. C. F. Andrews says, "I am for one prepared to subscribe to the ideal which Mr. Gokhale has said is entertained by the majority of educated Indians, the ideal, namely that India should some day take her place among

the self-governing Colonies as an autonomous unit of the British Empire." The Revd. Canon Brown of the Oxford Mission, Calcutta, speaking at the Mission festival, expressed warm sympathy with the strivings after political freedom and ultimate desire of the people of India for a form of Government modelled on that of the Colonies. The Bishop of Calcutta, who was present on the occasion asked, "Is it to be supposed that the Englishmen who themselves value so much freedom and self-government shall shrink, even though it may be at considerable loss to their own personal interests, from granting that for which our own education has created the desire?" Dr. Morison said, "But if the British Empire in India is to endure, it must adapt itself to its altered surroundings. There must be an end of looking upon the intellectuals as the enemies of English rule, confidence must take place of distrust and co-operation in administration, must be not only invited but made possible" Mr. Keir Hardie told the members of the Manchester and Salford Independent Labour Party :—"I want to see for myself what the actual conditions are. Whatever the recent Tory Government may have thought and whatever the present Liberal Government may think, the people of this country generally and the working classes in particular desire the people of India to have the largest possible form of Home Rule." Sir William Wedderburn said :—"As regards India, His Majesty has confirmed the Great Queen's Proclamation of 1858, which is the Magna Charta of Indian people. I say that, we, as the loyal subjects of the King-Emperor, must call upon his servants in this country to maintain the spirit of that Proclamation and to fulfil the pledges they have given. I say that if the British Government maintains the spirit that is breathed in that Proclamation and if it fulfils the pledges not superficially but thoroughly as they were meant to be fulfilled, it would cease to be a foreign rule and will become a National Government. Because, if it does that,

the Government will be based upon the only true foundation, upon the prosperity, contentment, happiness and affection of the Indian people." Noble words are these which galvanise life into the dead bones of India ; to her England's pledges, unfulfilled as they are for the most part, remain only as a monument of foolish illusion and disappointed hope given to the ear but broken to the heart, and a problem awaiting solution with a sigh. Sir Charles Dilke said, "Government in this country could never be allowed to forget the existence of India. Outside the 12 millions of people in the self-governing Colonies, there were 300 millions in India for whom we here were responsible as trustees. We could take care of ourselves, but India was dependent upon us alone, and she had first call upon us for attention not only in respect of free trade and preference, but also in respect of those distant arrangements for closer union and future organization." Sir William Hunter said :—"The whole aim of British policy in India should be to prepare and fit the people of India for self-government, to lift India to the position of a series of self-governing colonies like the colonies of Australia or Canada." The *Wednesday Review* referring to an account published by Mr. Andrew Carnegie, an American millionaire and philanthropist of his tour in India a few years ago, says :—He admits that he had been struck by a peculiar feature about British rule in India which is that, Indians have a decided preference to the British as against any other foreign power. Notwithstanding this sentiment, he observes a tendency among the educated classes that they should one day rule the country themselves. Mr. Carnegie does not dread this sentiment ; in fact he welcomes it. He welcomes it, because in the very nature of things, the education and training which the British have given to the people must prepare them for that consummation and because the Britishers cannot colonize the country. The English are not like the slave-dealers of America who wanted to keep their slaves in ignorance, they have educated them and

the fruit of education they must reap. Mr. Carnegie therefore wants British statesmen to properly guide the forces at work in India by which no violent revolution need be feared. The true policy of Britain is to say some day soon to India as she said to Canada and Australia. This is light under a bushel which would illuminate dark quarters.

REFORM SCHEME.

The educated Indians are absolutely excluded from the scheme of the Council of Notables, and in the reformed Legislative Councils they are a vanquishing point, while a new electorate has been created recruited from the landed and monied classes and from the Mahomedan community. In this connection Mr. Keir Hardie remarked :—
 "I am surprised that no literate test is insisted on for those who have to be advisers of the Viceroy." He further said, "I object and shall continue to object to any proposal of reform which weakens the already attenuated power possessed by the people and transfers it to a small and uneducated section of the community, whose interests are not such as necessarily coincide with those of the masses." Referring to the proposed Advisory Council of Notables in India Sir Henry Cotton observed, "Those territorial magnates of whom the Council is to consist, represent neither the people nor the educated classes of the community." The worst feature of the reform scheme is class and creed representation involving as it does invidious distinction which will produce infinite heart-burning and bickerings among the people. Besides the representatives of classes or creeds who are blind to their own class interests are not expected to look at questions affecting the people generally from the point of view of the public weal, such as the redistribution of taxation which a Mahomedan writer says is urgently called for as "at present a heavy burden lies on the poor which ought to be

borne by commercial and landed aristocracies." How far there is truth in the statement, it is of the utmost importance to enquire; but to entrust the enquiry to the Council of Notables, is as the Bengali proverb says, to confide a helpless child to the tender mercies of a witch. Thus the innovation instead of lessening the unrest in India, will aggravate it and make confusion worse confounded.

DECENTRALIZATION SCHEME.

It would be premature to criticize Mr. Morley's decentralization scheme upon which a Royal Commission are at present sitting, until their report is before the public. The following words of Sir Henry Cotton bearing on the subject which are a counsel of perfection may however be quoted :—"Every deligation of authority is calculated to deprive the people of that exercise of control and check and right of appeal which they regard as a great privilege and safeguard." Lord Curzon also said :—"In the attempt however to relieve the Supreme Government of work and free the Local Government from hampering references or irksome subordination there is real danger to be guarded against....Were each Government to evolve its own standard or to follow its own caprice, a series of conflicting policies would spring up all over India, and the evils of a hierarchy on a gigantic scale would be produced. To have a different educational or police or agricultural or excise or sanitary policy in each province would be most unfortunate and would soon result in the majority of cases in dangerous chaos, while in the other cases it would engender official apathy or neglect." This should serve as a beacon light to warn the Royal Commission of dangerous shoals and rocks ahead.

MONARCHICAL FORM OF GOVERNMENT FOR INDIA.

Some are in favor of monarchical form of Government for India as being suitable to the traditions of the country.

No definite proposal on the subject has however been made yet, beyond a suggestion made by His Highness the Gaekwar of Baroda, His Highness the Aga Khan and Mrs. Annie Basent for the appointment of a Prince of the Royal House as Viceroy of India, and the remark made by Lord Curzon in a speech at Birmingham that, "he was convinced that the Crown would become more indispensable and more important to the Empire, and he anticipated the day when the visiting Sovereign would hold Court in Calcutta." There is also this ominous sign:—The attitude of Parliament to surrender its right of control over the administration of India has led the Secretary of State for India to assert his absolute power independent of Parliamentary control. The Secretary of State was all along responsible to Parliament for the administration of India; but if the Parliamentary control be removed he would become directly responsible to the Sovereign. It would therefore become incumbent on His Majesty to take up in his own hands the control of the Government of India in exercise of the Mogul power vested in him as Emperor of India, which title he inherited from his illustrious mother who was proclaimed Empress of India at the Delhi Assemblage; His Majesty's Coronation as Emperor of India was also performed at Delhi the ancient capital of the Mogul Empire. All relations of India with Parliament will then be cut off and the Indian Empire separated from the British Constitution, shall be the personal property of the Sovereign with which the people of the United Kingdom shall have no concern.

Under the above circumstances, it is for serious consideration whether the Constitutional or Parliamentary government of India should be continued and if necessary improved, or whether there should be monarchical form of Government in India. It may also be considered whether self-government is suited to the present condition of India. The Government

of India is at the parting of ways, it is therefore highly expedient that a deliberate, definite and straight-forward course should be taken instead of running to and fro in utter confusion. All depends on his Majesty's pleasure with the consent of the Parliament.

No. 1, Peary Mohun Paṭṭa Lane,
Calcutta,
The 21st December, 1907.

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