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COUNCIL OF STATE DEBATES

MONDAY, 18th SEPTEMBER, 1937

Vol. II—No. 1

OFFICIAL REPORT



CONTENTS

Address by His Excellency the Viceroy to the Members of the Council of State
and the Legislative Assembly.

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THE
COUNCIL OF STATE DEBATES

(OFFICIAL REPORT OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FOURTH
COUNCIL OF STATE)

VOLUME II—1937

COUNCIL OF STATE

Monday, 13th September, 1937.

ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICEROY TO THE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE AND THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICEROY: Gentlemen,—It is a great pleasure to me to see you today and again to extend my greetings to you and to the distinguished Presidents of the Council of State and of the Legislative Assembly.

The year which has passed since I last addressed the combined Legislature has been marked by many developments, political and other, of great significance, and of great importance to India as a whole. Of these developments by far the most important is the great constitutional change which took place in the relation of the Centre to the Provinces and in the position of those Provinces on the 1st of April with the introduction of Provincial Autonomy.

Let me touch briefly on certain questions of immediate importance or interest to the Central Legislature.

The problem of middle class unemployment is, in present constitutional conditions, one primarily for Provincial Governments. My Government has however been in close contact with the various Provincial Governments with a view to following up the suggestions made by the Sapru Committee, including the obtaining of statistics of unemployment, the maintenance of employment records, the subsidising of medical practitioners in rural areas, the provision of facilities for secretarial training at the University stage, and the arrangements for recruitment to certain governmental services and posts. Any assistance which my Government can properly lend to the solution of this most important problem will most readily be given.

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[His Excellency the Viceroy.]

In the field of rural development, there have, since I last addressed you, been developments of much importance. Reports of great value have been received from Sir John Russell and Dr. Wright, and will shortly be published. The Jute Committee established last year has held two meetings; a number of schemes have already been taken up; and with the establishment by next year of a Jute Technological Institute and of a Jute Research Station at Dacca, the work will be in full progress both on the agricultural and on the technological sides. The Imperial Institute of Sugar Technology started its operations in October of last year, and I am confident that it can be relied upon to produce results of real and immediate value. In the sphere of marketing, a Wheat Report has already been published and a Cold Storage Survey Report will be published in the very near future. I would like to take the opportunity to refer to the valuable contribution to marketing improvement made by the Central Legislature by the Agricultural Produce Grading and Marketing Act which was passed in February of this year. Steps have been taken to arrange for an enquiry into the possibilities of extending cinchona cultivation in this country with the object of meeting from our own resources the very large demands with which we are annually confronted for quinine.

The results of the appeal which I made last year for donations for the purchase of bulls have been most encouraging, and it is a source of keen personal satisfaction to me that so great an interest in this all-important question should have been manifested throughout India. Let me add with what satisfaction I have also learnt of the response to the appeal which I made at an earlier stage for co-operation in the eradication of the cruel and wasteful practice known as *Phooka*. I am glad to be able to announce that my Government, with a view to providing an added stimulus to the interest which has now been evinced in improving cattle-breeding, have contributed a sum of Rs. 25,000 towards the cost of a Cattle Show which will be held in Delhi in February next in connection with the Annual Horse Show held under the auspices of the National Horse-Breeding Society.

Since I returned to India in April of last year, I have been at pains to make myself familiar with the position in regard to archæological research, and the preservation of ancient monuments in this country. The question is at present under review of how best to further these important objects within the inevitably limited funds available. The monuments of antiquity, eloquent witnesses to the historical and cultural achievements of this great country, constitute a heritage of incalculable value and significance which it must be our privilege to guard and to hand down to posterity.

I have already announced my decision to extend the period of the life of the present Legislative Assembly. This is an appropriate occasion on which to intimate that the date to which I contemplate its extension is the 1st of October, 1938.

The disturbances in Waziristan have been a source of much anxiety to my Government during the last few months, and they have resulted in heavy expenditure. I am glad to say that there are now distinct signs of a settlement, and of the acceptance by the tribes of the very

moderate terms which have been imposed upon them. And it is my earnest hope that, thanks to the operations of the last few months, the foundation has been laid, of a greater measure of stability in this difficult and disturbed area.

In consultation with the Commander-in-Chief, I have been giving the closest consideration to the question of Army organisation and the re-equipment of the Army in India so as to maintain its efficiency at the highest possible pitch having regard to recent developments elsewhere in the matter of mechanisation, and the like. The expenditure involved is inevitably considerable. I have caused representations to be made in the matter to His Majesty's Government for assistance in carrying out the reorganisation owing to the very heavy cost involved, and it is my hope that we shall receive a favourable reply.

The valuable recommendations made by the Wedgwood Committee are, as you are aware, under examination. I have watched with close attention the railway returns during the last year, for there is no surer barometer of the prosperity of a country. Nothing, I am glad to say, could have been more encouraging than those returns up to the present date. The revised estimates submitted to the Legislature in February for the year 1936-37 anticipated a surplus after meeting all obligations of Rs. 15 lakhs. The final figures show in fact a surplus of about Rs. 120 lakhs, and, thanks to a substantial decrease in working expenses, the year 1936-37 shows a net betterment of over five crores. I am not without hope, dangerous as it is to speculate in a matter of this nature, that that figure will be maintained, and indeed materially enhanced, during the current year, for the approximate earnings up to the end of August are some 2.75 crores better than over the same period of the previous year.

I cannot pass from this subject without a reference to the disaster which occurred at Bihta in July. We all know how heavy was the loss of life and how long the list of casualties in that disaster. I am glad to think that this shocking accident should be so wholly exceptional in character; and that during the five years ending March, 1936 the average number of persons killed in India per annum in collisions or derailments of trains should have been no more than eleven, a figure of great significance when it is remembered that during each year 525 million passengers are carried, and 125 million train miles run.

My personal concern for the improvement of conditions in the rural areas has always been close and immediate; but I would not have you think that because of that I am in any way indifferent to the claims of industry or in any way oblivious of the vital importance to the future of this country of lending all aid that properly can be lent to the development of industries. Here again the matters involved are now in a very considerable degree matters for Provincial Governments; but I have taken pains to ensure that all such action shall be taken as can appropriately be taken by the Central Government for the encouragement and the development of industries. In particular I would refer to the work of the Industrial Research Organisation. That organisation is now in its third year. It has, I am satisfied, proved its utility beyond any question, and my Government will in due course recommend to you that it should be placed on a permanent footing from the beginning of the next financial year. Another aspect of this matter which is of substantial importance, but which equally must depend to a very large

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extent, if not entirely, on provincial co-operation, is the question of industrial surveys. That question was considered both by the last Industries Conference and by the Industrial Research Council at their meeting in July, and it is being actively pursued. I need not stress the direct relation of investigations such as these, and of the development of industry as a whole, to the problem of middle-class unemployment. The next Industries Conference which will be held at Lahore in December will be asked to consider the question of training and assisting young men to start and conduct small industrial enterprises.

I referred in my speech last year to the position and the difficulties of Indians overseas. No one is more conscious than I am of the keen interest with which this question is watched by Indian public opinion, or of the close attention which has always been paid to it by the Indian Legislature. The past year has not been free from questions of considerable difficulty and complexity. Those questions are by no means yet in all cases finally resolved, but in any area in which they arise, the Government of India are in the closest touch with the situation. The most important of these questions, and the only one to which I propose to refer today, is that of Zanzibar. In the case of Zanzibar I will only say that in my judgment the scheme now proposed, while I am well aware that in certain respects it has fallen short of the expectations and of the demands of Indians in Zanzibar, holds out very definite possibilities and very definite advantages; and I would make an appeal to those concerned that it should be given a fair trial. It is my own belief and my earnest trust that with the co-operation of the Zanzibar Indians it should prove of definite benefit to those concerned.

When I last addressed you, India stood upon the verge of constitutional changes the profound significance of which it is not possible to overstate. I ventured then to say to you that we could hardly hope to compass the developments at that time imminent without some difficulty and some degree of anxiety. Since the inauguration of Provincial Autonomy on the 1st of April of this year, the course of political events has varied between Province and Province, a tendency which we may be sure is destined—having regard to the differing conditions obtaining in the various Provinces—to become more marked as time goes on.

To one feature of the elections, common to every Province, I feel I must refer. The smoothness with which arrangements were carried out for polling nearly 35 million people, over vast tracts of country, and in areas in which frequently communications were difficult to a degree, left nothing to be desired; and the first evidence of the solid interest of that immense electorate in the political problems confronting the new India, of its discipline and its self-restraint, was given by the orderly manner in which the process of polling was effected. Nothing could have been a greater tribute to the electorate and to those responsible for the organisation of the elections.

Speaking now within six months of the launching of this great experiment, it would plainly be premature to attempt any detailed appraisal of the working of the scheme of reform. Indeed, when it is remembered that we are witnessing changes which include the enfranchisement for the first time of very large sections of the community, we may

be sure that the full political consequences of these changes will not be discernible for many years to come. Meantime it is enough to claim that together we have overcome at least the most serious of the difficulties that have so far confronted us. By the early days of August there were established in office in every Province of India Ministries enjoying the support of a majority of their respective Legislatures. The decision which has brought about this happy position does high credit to all concerned. One of the great turning points of our political history has been successfully negotiated, and we face now a future that in my judgment is full of promise. I have entire confidence that Ministers in every Province will find in the Public Services a body of men willing and anxious to support their political chiefs by every proper means in their power, and zealous, under the direction of responsible Ministers, to continue to the best of their ability to serve their several Provinces. Nor do I doubt that Ministers will at all times be found ready to protect the just rights and interests of every servant of Government. There can be no stronger bond of mutual regard and understanding than that of labours shared—of constructive work done together. It is in this field of common aspirations and common endeavour that we see exemplified the first fruits of that new relationship which it is the prime purpose of the Constitution to establish and to foster.

The Provinces are now set upon their own courses, and the extent to which this Legislature and the Central Government are concerned with their affairs is very precisely conditioned by the terms of the Constitution Act. But it will not, I think, be held inappropriate that—with, I am confident, the whole-hearted support of all those who are present today—I should send to those Provincial Governments a message of cordial goodwill and of encouragement in confronting the many problems that lie before them.

I turn now to the next and final stage in the Constitutional Reforms, the introduction of the Federation of India. Since last I addressed you, my representatives have toured the States and held discussions with the Ruling Princes and their Ministers; and replies from almost every State to my letter of enquiry of last August have been received, expressing their views on the matters connected with Federation in which they are particularly interested. The work of collating and analysing these voluminous replies is nearing completion, and after decisions have been taken on the many difficult and complicated questions of policy arising therefrom, a process now far advanced, it will be possible to enter on the next phase of the programme, namely, that of placing the complete and final picture before the Ruling Princes and then formally addressing them in regard to their accession.

I am well aware that the scheme of Federation laid down in the Constitution Act gives rise in some quarters to doubts and criticism. I have done my best to make myself familiar with the nature of that criticism and I think I can say with complete truth that everyone of the grounds upon which it is levelled was before my colleagues and myself upon the Committee of Parliament at the time we made our recommendations. We saw clearly the difficulties of setting up a Federation composed of disparate units, and we were fully seized of the implications that must follow an arrangement of that kind. We were conscious

[His Excellency the Viceroy.]

as well of many other difficulties. Nevertheless, upon the best judgment of which we were capable, there were two considerations which in our view must be held to outweigh all others. The first, that the early establishment of a constitutional relationship within the federal sphere between the States and British India is of the utmost importance from the stand-point of the maintenance of the unity of India ; the second, that the existence of a Central Government capable of formulating economic policies affecting the interests of the sub-Continent as a whole is of direct and immediate relevance to the economic circumstances of the India of today.

With regard to the first of these considerations, I will only say that, while no one, so far as I am aware, is disposed to question the strong desirability of achieving a Federation of India at the earliest moment possible, the anomalies to which I have referred are the necessary and inescapable incidents, not merely of the introduction of an All-India Federation at this moment ; but of its introduction at any time within the measurable future.

To the economic aspect of this question, too little attention has, in my opinion, been given. The commercial and industrial development of the sub-Continent stand now at a point where progress is in many respects definitely prejudiced by the absence of uniformity at present existing in, for example, Company Law, Banking Law, the Law of Copyright and Trademarks, and the like. Again, it is most desirable that there should be established without delay over the whole fiscal field the greatest possible degree of unity and uniformity. It goes without saying that, from the stand-point of British India as well as of the Indian States, substantial advantage is likely to result from the establishment of a system under which tariff policies which affect every part of India should no longer fall to be constructed by a Central Government in whose counsels, for historical and constitutional reasons, wide areas of India at the moment enjoy no direct representation. And I am myself confident that the achievement of Federation will presage an early and substantial modification of those disparate conditions the existence of which today, unavoidable, for the reasons I have mentioned, as it may be, tends in so many ways to hamper the growth of trade and commerce and the full development of our natural resources.

Finally, let me say that I hold it as a matter for profound satisfaction that at a time when, over wide areas of the world, political liberty is being increasingly curtailed, we should witness in India the establishment, upon foundations patiently prepared, of a new and vigorous system of parliamentary government. Differences of opinion there may be upon the merits of this or that provision of the new Constitution. Yet I cannot but think that we shall be wise, in the circumstances of the world today, to make a supreme effort to concentrate our gaze rather upon points of agreement and of common interest than upon those things in which complete accord is yet to be reached. We have many things in common that are infinitely precious to both peoples ; and many of these things are in grave jeopardy today. We love peace, and peace is threatened over half the world. Violence we both abhor, and the rule of force is in evidence in three continents. To democratic principles of government both countries are deeply attached, and those principles are, at this time, under question and even challenge in wide regions of the world. The

regimentation of the human mind proceeds apace, freedom of opinion is systematically suppressed, and the right of the individual to live as he wills in the quiet and peaceable enjoyment of the family circle is a thing denied to half mankind. It is a common affection for these things, today in dire peril of destruction—a common determination to protect the elementary decencies of human life upon this planet—that holds together the people of the British Commonwealth of Nations in loyalty to the British Crown. I believe with every fibre of my mind that India at heart is loyal to those same ideals, and that her highest destiny lies within that brave sisterhood of States which stands today as a bulwark against forces that threaten the very soul of man. (Applause.)