

(January 24, 1933)

Address

BY THE MARQUIS OF ZETLAND, P.C., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

PRESIDENT CHALMERS:—Your Honor, Your Grace, My Lord Bishop, it is the privilege of the Canadian Club to-day to have as its guest the Most Honorable Marquis of Zetland who will address us on the subject of Home Rule in India. Before I introduce His Lordship to the audience I should like to say it gives us very great pleasure to-day to welcome to the Club for the first time since his appointment His Honor the Lieutenant Governor. His Honor is a member of this Club and we feel very proud in his appointment, and perhaps he will permit me to say that we are to have the pleasure of an address from him which he has graciously consented to deliver at an early date.

The Marquis of Zetland, who is our guest and who will speak, is the type of those distinguished and loyal sons of Britain who have down the centuries created the British Empire as it is to-day. We know him chiefly as the one time governor of Bengal. I believe it is the duty of the chairman to attempt in a few words to catalogue the record if not the virtues of the guest speaker, but when I endeavored to note a few of the interesting and important things I might say about His Lordship, I found I had assumed an overwhelming task. He has achieved a well deserved reputation in a number of diverse fields, such as travel, writing, biography, geography. He is a former president of the Royal Geographical Society of India; he is a former president of the Royal India Society. I am told he is even an expert on farm management, and he has been Steward of the Jockey Club, and a number of things like that. It seems to me his career, his rich full life, are

typical of the lives that are led by the men in Great Britain who go out to the furthestmost parts of the Empire and create a commonwealth such as we have to-day. As a writer on India, as a former governor of Bengal during the very critical and serious years of 1917-22 and as a member of the British delegation to the round table conference on Indian problems, His Lordship is eminently qualified to discuss any phase of the Indian question. I have the greatest pleasure in calling upon him to address you.

THE MARQUIS OF ZETLAND:—Mr. Chairman, Your Honor, and gentlemen, I am afraid that after listening to the words from your chairman you will be expecting something in the nature of a great address. But it will give me great pleasure to talk to you for a short time on this really momentous question of conferring Home Rule upon India. Now on August 20 in the year 1917 a declaration was made in the British House of Commons which was perhaps as momentous as any declaration which has ever been made throughout the centuries in that historic chamber. For it was laid down for the first time that the intention of Great Britain towards India was to confer upon the peoples of that country the parliamentary system of government.

Consider the magnitude of a task of that kind, to confer parliamentary government upon three hundred and fifty millions, speaking many languages, practising many religions, living their lives upon many and very different planes of civilization, comprising amongst them communities who have evolved widely differing social systems. For such a state of affairs history provides no parallel. We must be content to take it as we find it, a vast experiment in the science of government being carried on before our eyes in the strangely equipped laboratory of the east in a manner and on a scale never before contemplated and for which no precedents can be invoked.

Now if you wish to appreciate at a glance the nature of the difficulties which stand in the way of establishing a democratic form of government in India ask yourselves what are the conditions in this country where parliamentary government may be said to be not exotic but an indigenous

institution, and whether it may be said to have achieved such a measure of success as may properly be claimed for it. Then compare those conditions with the conditions in India. A paramount condition surely has been a reasonable degree of uniformity on the part of the people. The peoples in those western lands where parliamentary government has been born have usually spoken a common language. They have inherited a common religion and common social customs. Whatever their racial origin may have been, they have been subjected to that centrifugal force which nationhood gives and they enjoy therefore a common outlook which the possession of a common civilization gives. Now compare those conditions with the conditions in India. In India there is not uniformity; but a bewildering and an overpowering diversity of race and religions, of language, of social customs, of civilization is the outstanding characteristic of the Indian people. We must remember for example that of the two hundred and seventy million people who inhabit British India two hundred and forty-eight million are illiterate. That is two hundred and seventy million of people speak as I have said many different languages, they practice many different religions, they comprise amongst them adherents of innumerable sects, of not less than nine religions and we must remember that not one of the hundred and seventy-eight million Hindus strictly speaking may marry any one of the sixty-seven million Moslems, and finally that the Hindus themselves are separated by an exclusive caste system into a number of water-tight compartments whose members are cut off from one another by an elaborate system of inhibitions and religious taboos. That those religious cleavages are real obstacles in the way of establishing a democratic form of government is sufficiently obvious from the fact that they have proved sufficiently powerful to compel those who are responsible for the existing system of government in India to concede more than one of the great communities in India the right of separate representation in the different legislatures by means of separate electorates. Thus throughout India the Moslems represented in the different legislatures in the provinces and

in the center are elected by an exclusive Hindu electorate and a similar concession has been guaranteed the Sikhs; and we must remember further side by side in India are to be found all kinds of social evolution from the prehistoric to the ultra modern, from the stone age to the twentieth century. At one end of the scale you will find the fine flower of two thousand years of culture, men who are capable of holding their own with the finest brains of any other nation, men like Rabindranath Tagore in the sphere of letters, C. V. Raman in that of science and many others. But at the other end of the scale you find tribes still steeped in barbarism, tribes whose religion has not yet outgrown the stage of the crudest superstition. There came before me a little more than ten years ago in my official capacity the case of a man who had actually sacrificed his small daughter to a pagan Goddess and it was only during the past century many of these aboriginal tribes were persuaded to give up their more heinous practices and particularly the practice of female infanticide. The men of the tribe were told by the Sun God whom they worshipped that, perceiving the really deplorable results which followed from the creation of feminine nature, they should bring up so many females only as they could not prevent inflicting on a suffering society.

Now bearing these difficulties in mind, let us look briefly at what has already been done in the way of conferring self government on the millions of India and what is now in process of being done. Politically the Indian continent falls into two main categories, British India on the one hand and the native states on the other hand. For the moment I am going to speak only of British India. For purposes of Government and administration British India is divided into nine main provinces, each with its own government. The ordinary administration and control of education, of public health, of local self-government, of agriculture, of forests, irrigation, and then again the control of the police, jails and law courts, is in the hands of the provincial governments. At the center, exercising general supervision over the whole, is the Government of India, with the Vice-

roy at its head, dealing with such matters as naturally fall within the sphere of a central government, communications, telegraphs, foreign affairs, postal, and so on.

As a result of the declaration of August 20, 1917, we have promised to establish both in the provinces and at the center a parliamentary form of Government. The declaration of 1917 was followed by an act of the British Parliament in 1919 which gave effect to the policy laid down in the declaration. I am not going to trouble you with the details of the situation established in the Act of 1919. Of course it was an attempt of a transitional character but the act itself contained a provision which laid it down that in ten years time a commission should be sent out from Great Britain to investigate the working of the system in India and make recommendations for the future. That commission duly went out under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon. Sir John Simon and his colleagues very soon made up their minds that, if the question of the future situation of India was to be dealt with on broad statesmanlike lines, the native states should not be left out of the covenant. How did these native states arise? In this way. In the old days of the East India Company, when the tide of annexation was flowing ever onwards gradually taking in the peninsula of India, there were islands of territory over which the East India Company did not impose itself in direct authority but which it left to the control and government of native rulers known to this day as the ruling princes, and these native states at the present time cover not far short of two-fifths of the total area in India and embrace not far short of one-quarter of its population. They are for the most part autocratically governed by their own rulers who in their turn are in treaty relations with the British Crown. This question presented itself to Sir John Simon and his colleagues: how were a number of semi-independent autocratically governed native states to be fitted into a situation, the avowed object of which was to democratize still further the system under which the provinces of British India already enjoyed a measure of self government? To solve that question Sir John Simon suggested to Prime Minister Ramsay Mac-

donald that representatives of the ruling princes and of the Indian politicians in British India should be invited to discuss the question around the table with the British government. And that was the origin of the Indian Round Table Conference.

Now a conference of that kind had been very popular in Indian Nationalist circles for some time past and you would have thought therefore that when the invitation was actually extended to them to take part in such a conference they would have welcomed it heartily. A great many of them did but the more extreme Indian nationalists, who were grouped together in an organization known as the Indian National Congress, were at that time in a very difficult mood. They were in that sort of mood in which they were prepared to oppose any proposal which the British Government made. There were many contributory causes for that. I need not go into them all. I mention only the main contributory cause which undoubtedly was a clash of temperament between the Englishman and the Indian.

The Indian is an emotional person. He is very sensitive of any suggestion of inferiority. The Englishman generally struts about the world very conscious of his own superiority over other people and is by no means loath to letting other people know his opinions on the subject. And I remember so well reading in the pages of an American writer, an admirer of the British people and their ways, R. W. Emerson, in which it seems to me this was well illustrated. There was current in the circles in which he moved in England, on the occasion of one of his visits, a story which, he explained a little superficially perhaps, was obviously intended to make clear the superiority of the Englishman in those characteristics which were admired, courage, chivalry and so on. And the story was as follows: An Englishman and a foreigner quarreled and they were persuaded by their respective supporters to put their differences to the test of a duel and in accordance with the practice of those times it was agreed that the duel should be fought with pistols and in the dark. The protagonists therefore were escorted to the upper room of a well-known tavern. They were armed

with pistols; a table was placed between them; they were placed facing one another and the candles were blown out. The Englishman in his chivalrous determination to do the foreigner no harm fired his pistol up the chimney—and brought down the foreigner.

You can quite understand in times when feeling is running high there is a considerable clash between two such temperaments—the temperament of the Englishman and the temperament of the Indian, and that undoubtedly was one of the causes which led the Indian National Congress to refuse the invitation of the Indian Round Table Conference. Nevertheless the Indian Round Table Conference met and a fairly representative body of Indians came. I won't delay you by detailing the work of the conference; during the first session it accomplished some extremely valuable work and perhaps the most valuable of its conclusions was that the Indian native states and the provinces of British India should be brought together in some form of federation. In other words that the future government at the center should consist of a federal legislature consisting of representatives of the British Provinces and the Indian Native states, with an executive then to be selected from amongst the members of the federal legislature, which would be responsible to it in the same way that the cabinet is responsible to parliament in our own countries and should have control of the ordinary internal administration of the country, over and above the provincial governments which would be given a complete parliamentary form. Certain reservations were made. It was agreed that for some time to come the control of the army and the flying force of India and certain aspects of the finances of India should be beyond the control of Indian parliament and should be vested in the viceroy as representative of the Imperial Government. That in brief was what was agreed to at the Round Table Conference. Before the second session took place Mr. Gandhi, who had been leading the Indian National Congress, effected a truce with the then viceroy Lord Irwin and agreed to attend the second sessions of the Indian Round Table Conference.

Now Mr. Gandhi is a very curious person. He is in some respects, I suppose, unique. But he has influence over the masses of the Indian people, not so much due to his politics as to the extreme asceticism of his life in the eyes of the mass of Indian people. Gandhi represents the very embodiment of their religious ideal, the ideal of renunciation. Mr. Gandhi has been imbued with the teaching of Tolstoi. He would like to turn the hands of the clock back two thousand years. He hates modern civilization and you can understand therefore that Mr. Gandhi is not a very easy person to deal with in the matter of a democratic constitution and things of that kind. However he attended the second session of the conference and I should like briefly to paint for you a picture of the final sitting of the second session at the conference.

It was a day of dramatic and historic interest. At the center of the great oblong table sat Ramsay Macdonald, the Prime Minister. At his immediate left sat Shah Nawaz, the Indian poet and politician, an impressive figure in her Indian robes, her dark eyes telling the fire which burned within. On her left sat two of the native dignitaries, and beyond, different representatives of the different Indian communities. At the right of the Prime Minister sat the British delegates, and beyond, the representatives of the ruling princes, making splendid figures in their long colored robes, their turbans, and their jewels. At the inner layer of the plenary table facing the Prime Minister was Dr. Ambedkar, the very able representative of the depressed classes. Next to him Mr. Joseph, representative of Indian labor and the thorough going champion of adult suffering for the three hundred and fifty million on the Indian continent. Next to him, Sir Hubert Carr, representative of British commercial interests and at the outer layer of the great plenary table sat the representatives of the eighty million Moslems of India.

By chance it happened that the day upon which the conference held its final sitting was Mr. Gandhi's weekly day of silence, one of the penances which he from time to time imposes on himself. And hour after hour went by. We

met at ten-thirty in the morning. As hour after hour went by and delegate after delegate got up to make their speeches Mr. Gandhi sat huddled up in his homespun white cotton cloth, a mute, intractable and enigmatic figure. At last at midnight, his day of silence being at an end, he addressed the conference. He was full of racial bitterness. It contained no single constructive proposal of any kind and I think all of us, who knew something of Mr. Gandhi's temperament, realized he had not come to listen and negotiate in a spirit of give and take but he had come to dictate and if he failed in his object, to do what? To smash the works of the conference.

Now let us cast our gaze towards India. In India there have always been a number of young hot-blooded men who disliked negotiating a settlement, men who were anxious to use violence as the solution of the misunderstanding between Great Britain and India. And taking advantage of the economic distress, which was acute in India as it was in other parts of the world, they broke both the letters and spirit of the truce which Mr. Gandhi had negotiated with Lord Irwin before he came to the conference. They started a "no tax and no rent" campaign in India and similarly there was a wild terrorist movement, which has always had roots in Bengal, while affairs on the frontiers of civilization caused the Government anxiety.

What under these circumstances could the government do, with this subversive movement increasing in volume and violence as the days went by? Well, no government, unless it intends to abdicate, can sit by with folded hands while its officials are assassinated, while its authority is disregarded, while its lawful dues are withheld, and its laws held in contempt; and the Government of India under Lord Willingdon took the only step open to them. They armed the provincial governments with these exceptional executive powers which experience has shown to be necessary to deal with a movement of that kind. That was the state of affairs when Mr. Gandhi returned to India. It may well be that Mr. Gandhi found the tide was flowing too strongly for him to be able to control it and he may have thought it

wiser to swim with the tide rather than to display to the world his inability to control it. At any rate he broke the truce himself and put himself once more at the head of civil disobedience and non co-operative movement. Mr. Gandhi was proceeded against and Mr. Gandhi is now, and for some months past has been, under restraint.

Now my last words to you gentlemen are these, what in these circumstances ought to be the policy of the British Government? I have no hesitation in saying that that policy should be to proceed along the path which they of the British nation ever mark out, to be deflected neither to the right nor to the left, not to be influenced by threats of violence into making concessions which they consider to be too great at the present time. On the other hand not to be deterred from continuing to shape the constitution for India which they have agreed upon at the Indian Round Table Conference. That, if I may say so, is the policy which would be pursued by a strong government. Some people seem to think that strong governments consist entirely of marching regiments over the country and making great demonstrations of force. Believe me, in my experience it requires a far stronger government under circumstances such as those which we have had to face in India during recent years, a far stronger government to proceed along the course which is marked out, while at the same time using every power which it possesses to put down unlawful and subversive activities.

The American writer whom I ventured to quote once before found the Englishman to be he who stood firmest in his shoes; he has stamina, he says, and he can take the initiative in emergencies. Those are the qualities which are required on the part of the Englishman in India to-day. And in his continued position out there, I believe, lies the future welfare and prosperity of the millions of Indian people.

PRESIDENT CHALMERS:—Lord Zetland, you have given us a vivid story of the present situation in India and I think you have demonstrated that you hold a deep affection for India and that you have a profound appreciation of the

political problems and also of the character and psychology of the people. I desire to say that we owe this meeting to the National Council of Education, as indeed we have owed a number of meetings in the past. The National Council of Education was responsible for bringing Lord Zetland to Canada. To-morrow evening in Convocation Hall he will address another meeting under their auspices and it may be interesting to point out that he will at that meeting exhibit lantern slides made from photographs which he has taken himself—for that is another of his manifold accomplishments, that of expert pictorial photographer. This afternoon, sir, I suppose you are driving to Hamilton. You will probably drive over the Dundas Highway. That is a family name of the Zetland family. And in Hamilton you will be in sight of the town of Dundas. If you are driving to Montreal you would be driving through Dundas County. Perhaps in Western Canada you may have looked out the window and seen the sign at a small prairie station with the name of the second title your family bears and the title you bear.

We appreciate your address. It has been most interesting and valuable to us. We hope again the National Council will see fit to bring you to Canada so you can on some other occasion bring our information on India up-to-date.