

INDIA (GOVERNMENT POLICY)

HC Deb 06 March 1947 vol 434 cc663-776[663](#)

§ Order read for resuming Adjourned Debate on Amendment to Question [5th March]: That this House takes note of the Statement on India made on 20th February by the Prime Minister and approves the policy set out therein."—[Sir Stafford Cripps.] Which Amendment was, to leave out from "House," to the end of the Question, and to add: while re-affirming its determination to provide for the orderly attainment by India of self-government as soon as possible, is unable to accept His Majesty's Government's latest declaration on Indian policy, Command Paper No. 7047, which, by fixing an arbitrary date, prejudices the possibility of working out a suitable constitutional plan either for a united or a divided India which ignores obligations expressed, to minorities or sections of opinion, which contains no proposals for security or compensation for members of the Indian Services, and which offers no help, to, or association with, India in her hour of destiny."—[Sir John Anderson.] Question again proposed, "That the words proposed to be left out stand part of the Question."

§ 3 47 P.m.

Mr. Churchill (Woodford)

When great parties in this country have for many years pursued a combined and united policy on some large issue, and when, for what seemed to them to be good reasons, they decide to separate, not only in Debate but by Division, it is desirable and even necessary that the causes of such separation and the limitations of the differences which exist should be placed on record. This afternoon we begin a new chapter in our relations across the Floor of the House in regard to the Indian problem. We on this side of the House have, for some time, made it clear that the sole responsibility for the control of India's affairs rests, of course, with His Majesty's Government. [664](#)We have criticised their action in various ways but this is the first time we have felt it our duty as the official Opposition to express our dissent and difference by a formal vote.

Let us first place on record the measure of agreement which lies between us, and separate that from the differences that now lead us into opposite Lobbies. Both sides of the House are bound by the declaration made at the time of the British Mission to India in March, 1942. It is not true to suggest, as was done lately, that this decision marked a decisive change in the policy of the British Parliament towards India. There was a long story before we got to that. Great Britain had for many years been committed to handing over responsibility for

the government of India to the representatives of the Indian people. There was the promise of Dominion status implicit in the declaration of August, 1917. There was the expansion and definition of Dominion status by the Statute of Westminster. There was the Simon Commission Report of 1930, followed by the Hoare-Linlithgow Reforms of 1935. There was the Linlithgow offer of 1940, for which, as head of the Government in those days, I took my share of responsibility. By this, the Viceroy undertook that, as soon as possible after the war, Indians themselves should frame a fully self-governing Constitution. All this constituted the preliminary basis on which the proposals of the Cripps Mission of 1942 were set. The proposals of this Mission were not, in fact, a departure in principle from what had long been growing up, but they constituted a definite, decisive and urgent project for action. Let us consider the circumstances in which this offer was made.

The violent irruption of Japan upon East Asia, the withdrawal of the United States Fleet to the American coast, the sinking of the "Prince of Wales" and the "Repulse," the loss of Malaya and the surrender of Singapore, and many other circumstances of that time left us for the moment without any assured means of defending India from invasion by Japan. We had lost the command of the Bay of Bengal, and, indeed, to a large extent, of the Indian Ocean. Whether the Provinces of Madras and Bengal would be pillaged and ravaged by the Japanese at that time seemed to hang in the balance, and the question [665](#) naturally arose with poignant force how best to rally all Indian elements to the defence of their native land.

The offer of the Cripps Mission, I would remind the House, was substantially this: His Majesty's Government undertook to accept and implement an agreed Constitution for an Indian Union, which should be a Dominion, framed by an elected Constituent Assembly and affording representation to the Princes. This undertaking was subject only to the right of non-acceding Provinces to receive separate treatment, and to the conclusion of a treaty guaranteeing the protection of religious and racial minorities. The offer of the Cripps Mission was not accepted by the political classes in India who alone are vocal and to whom it was addressed. On the contrary, the Congress, led by Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Nehru, did their utmost to make a revolt intended to paralyse the perilous communications of our Army in Burma and to help the fortunes of Japan. Therefore, the National Coalition Government of those days made a large series of mass arrests of Indian Congress leaders, and the bulk were kept in prison until the end of the war. I was not myself present in the Cabinet when these decisions were taken. I was at Cairo preparing for the operations which opened at Alamein, but I highly approved of the action which was taken in my absence by the then Deputy Prime Minister, the present Prime Minister, who sits opposite, and which I think was the only one possible on that occasion.

Therefore, it is quite clear that, what ever was the offer of the Cripps Mission, it was not accepted. On the contrary, it was repudiated by the parties to whom it was addressed. In fact, on his return from India, the President of the Board of Trade—the right hon. and learned Gentleman who made such a careful statement yesterday—said: I stated when I left India that, in default of acceptance, the draft Declaration must be considered as being withdrawn."— [OFFICIAL REPORT, 28th April, 1942; Vol. 379, c. 842.] I have taken the trouble to verify the quotation. I, for my part, have never bowed nor do I make any reflection upon him—to the dictum "Ease would retract vows made in pain as violent and void." Returning to this country later in the year, I stated on 10th September, [666](#)1942, with the full assent of my colleagues: The broad principles of the declaration made by His Majesty's Government, which formed the basis of the Mission of the Lord Privy Seal to India, must be taken as representing the settled policy of the British Crown and Parliament. These principles stand in their full scope and integrity."— [[OFFICIAL REPORT, 10th September, 1942; Vol. 383, c. 302.](#)] That is where I stand now. Both sides of this House are bound by this offer, and bound by all of it, and it is on the basis of this offer being an agreed matter between the parties, and on that basis alone, that our present and future controversies arise. If I am bound by the offer of Dominion status and all that it implies, the Prime Minister is equally bound, or was equally bound, to the conditions about agreement between the principal communities, about the proper discharge of our pledges about the protection of minorities and the like. The right hon. Gentleman has a perfect right to change his mind. He may cast away all these stipulations which we jointly made, and proceed only with the positive side of the offer. He has the right to claim the support of his Parliamentary majority for any action he takes, but he has no right to claim our support beyond the limits to which we are engaged by the Cripps declaration.

A statement was made during the period of what is called the Caretaker Government, of which I was the head, by the then Secretary of State—the Secretary of State for India throughout all this business, Mr. Amery—to which frequent reference has been made as if it implied some further advance, but that is not true. I was not consulted on the exact terms of this statement, as I certainly should have been if the Secretary of State had intended to make a further advance upon the position established by the Cripps Mission in 1942. It was Mr. Amery who said: The offer of March, 1942, stands in its entirety. That offer was based on two main principles. The first is that no limit is set to India's freedom to decide for herself her own destiny, whether as a free member and partner in the British Commonwealth or even without it. The second is that this can only be achieved by a Constitution or Constitutions framed by Indians to which the main elements in Indian national life are consenting parties.... That, I may say, is an affirmation, not only of our own loyal purpose, but of the inescapable fact of the Indian situation. We can only transfer our

ultimate- [667](#)control over India to a Government or Governments capable of exercising it....Our responsibilities to the people of India themselves forbid that course, and, indeed, our responsibilities to the peace of the world forbid it."— [OFFICIAL REPORT, 14th June, 1945; Vol. 411; c. 1838.] I have ventured to ask Mr. Amery whether his statement was intended to make any new declaration beyond the limits of that of the Cripps Mission, and he wrote to me: I cannot see anything in it which affects, one way or another, the argument which you have used with regard to the sequence in which the Indian Constituent Assembly or an Indian Dominion might declare in favour of separation. In my statement, I simply recalled the two main principles on which the 1942 offer was based, one of which was that no limit is set to India's freedom to decide for herself her own destiny, whether as a free member and partner in the British Commonwealth, or even without it. At that time, none of us had considered the possibility of an Indian Constituent Assembly being invited to declare for or against separation before the Constitution had been accepted by Parliament here, and I cannot imagine that my definition of the principle could have been taken at the time as suggesting or inviting a different sequence to that which we had always contemplated.

[§The Minister of Defence \(Mr. A. V. Alexander\)](#)

What is the date of that?

[§Mr. Churchill](#)

That was written to me two days ago, because the point was made against me that some new declaration had been made during the time of the interim Government while the election was going on, and I am anxious to show that there is nothing which has been said by us, consciously, which in any way carries the matter—[Interruption.] There is nothing controversial about it; I am only trying to lay down the basis on which we can agree to differ—the basis of 1942 and the present time. Before this latest pronouncement of theirs, His Majesty's Government had already departed from the Cripps Mission declaration of 1942, and they had departed from it in three major aspects. First, they had eliminated the stage of Dominion status. The Cripps Mission expressly said that the objective was the creation of a new Indian Union which would constitute a Dominion associated with the United Kingdom and the other Dominions by common allegiance to the Crown, but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinated in any aspect of domestic or external affairs.

That stage was entirely cut out by the Prime Minister in his speech sending out [668](#)the Cabinet Mission a year ago. I was not in the country at the time, or I would have drawn attention to the serious change, but it may well be that all my hon. Friends on this side of the House do not regard that particular change

as so serious as I do. I am laying out the facts that justify the Division that is to take place tonight on what has been an actually pursued policy. If the Dominion status procedure had been involved, in my view, the new Indian Dominion would have been perfectly free to leave the Commonwealth if it chose, but full opportunity would have been given for all the dangers and disadvantages to be surveyed by responsible Indian Ministers beforehand, and also for the wishes of the great mass of the Indian people to be expressed, as they cannot be expressed now. It would have been possible to insert in the Dominion Constitution the necessary safeguards for minorities, and for the fulfilment of the British pledges to the various elements of Indian life, notably the Depressed Classes. This would have been a part of the agreement between the Indian Union and Great Britain, and would have been embodied in the necessary British legislation on the lines of the [British North America Act](#), to which the great free Dominion of Canada has always attached importance, and still does. So the second departure from the Cripps Mission declaration was the total abandonment by His Majesty's Government of all responsibility for carrying out its pledges to minorities and the Depressed Classes, as well as for fulfilling their treaties with the Indian States. All these are to be left to fend for themselves, or to fight for themselves as best they can. That is a grave major departure.

The third departure was no less grave. The essence of the Cripps Mission declaration was that there should be agreement between the principal Indian communities, namely, in fact, the Muslims and the Hindus. That, also, has been thrown overboard. But I state, as it is my duty to do when we take a step such as we are going to take tonight, of great formality and solemnness, that it is the Government who have broken away from the agreement which has been reached between parties, and has so long subsisted between parties, and that it is not we in the Conservative Party who have, in any way, gone back on our faithful undertaking. To these departures from [669](#)our principle, there must be added a formidable list of practical mistakes in handling the problem during that past year since the Cabinet Mission was sent out. Some of these mistakes may have been made by the Government, and some of them by the Viceroy, but they are both jointly responsible for all.

First there was the attempt to formulate a Constitution and press it upon the Indians, instead of leaving the Indians, as had been promised, the duty of framing their own proposals. That action, however well intended, has proved to be devoid of advantage, and must be rated as a mistake. Secondly, there was the summoning of a so-called Constituent Assembly upon the altogether inadequate and unrepresentative franchise, an Assembly which was called into being, but which had absolutely no claim or right to decide the fate of India, or any claim to express the opinion of the great masses of the Indians. That is the second mistake. The third mistake was the dismissal of the eminent Indians

composing the Viceroy's Council, and the handing over of the government of India to Mr. Nehru.

This Government of Mr. Nehru has been a complete disaster, and a great degeneration and demoralisation in the already weakened departmental machinery of the Government of India has followed from it. Thirty or forty thousand people have been slaughtered in the warfare between the two principal religions. Corruption is growing apace. They talk of giving India freedom. But freedom has been restricted since this interim Nehru Government has come to power. Communism is growing so fast that it has been found necessary to raid and suppress Communist establishments and centres which, in our broad British tolerance, we do not do here, and have never done in India. [Interruption.] I am illustrating the steps to freedom which, so far, have been marked by every degree in which British control is relaxed, by the restriction of the ordinary individual, whatever his political view. It was a cardinal mistake to entrust the government of India to the caste Hindu, Mr. Nehru. He has good reason to be the most bitter enemy of any connection between India and the British Commonwealth.

I consider that that must be regarded as the third practical administrative mistake, apart from those large departures in principle which may be charged against [670](#)the present British Government in this Indian sphere. Such was the situation before the latest plunge which the Government have taken was made, and it is this plunge which, added to all that has gone before, makes it our duty to sever ourselves altogether from the Indian policy of His Majesty's Government, and to disclaim all responsibility for the consequences which will darken—aye, and redden—the coming years.

I am offering the House an argument concerning the steps we are going to take, which I and my friends have regarded as most serious and most anxious steps. I have stated where we agree, and I am now proceeding to show the differences of principle and mistakes of administration due to Government action. The Viceroy, Lord Wavell, has been dismissed. I hold no brief for Lord Wavell. He has been the willing or unwilling agent of the Government in all the errors and mistakes into which they have been led, and which I have just described, but I have no idea why he has been cast aside at this juncture. The Prime Minister has refused to give the slightest indication of the differences which must have arisen between the Government and the Viceroy. It is not possible for us to form an opinion on many aspects of the Indian controversy while this concealment is maintained. It is most unusual for great political severances of this kind to take place in time of peace without statements being made both by the Government and the dismissed functionary, to justify their respective positions. I had some argument the other day with the Prime Minister about this. It is quite true that in war many Ministers were removed

from their offices without their wishing to make any explanation to Parliament, but if they had wished to do so, or if there had been any demand in Parliament for an explanation, such as we have made in this case, I should certainly have felt it my duty, as Prime Minister, to facilitate such a process—I am not in the least afraid to defend any action in my public life, here in this House, if it is challenged in due course—provided, of course, that military plans were not exposed or compromised.

Before the war, statements for the reasons justifying the resignations of Ministers or functionaries were a common place. My right hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Mr. Eden) [671](#) resigned in 1938. We all approved his action—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I content myself by saying that opinions were divided on that question, as upon so many others. He and Lord Cranborne resigned; they both made full explanations and were answered by the Prime Minister of the day. Going back over the years in English history, we know all the great statements that have been made on the resignations of Ministers and important persons upon great public differences, and this is what they owe to themselves today. When Sir Ben Smith resigned the other day, I was astonished that he did not make a statement about differences which were known to exist, although I am not quite so astonished about it now. It is an unwholesome way of conducting public affairs in time of peace that Ministers or Viceroys should be dismissed or should resign, and should not feel it necessary to their self respect to explain to the nation the reasons for their departure. However, I understand that Lord Wavell will be free as soon as he returns to this country. Is that so?

[§The Prime Minister \(Mr. Attlee\)](#)

indicated assent.

[§Mr. Churchill](#)

That is so. Certainly it will be expected of him to make a statement. There is one point, however, on which we ought to have some information today, because it is material to the issues before us. Was the Viceroy in favour of the time limit, or was he not? I hope that we should have some information on that point, at least.

Let me now turn from the dismissed Viceroy to the new Viceroy. I do not think that the 14 months' time limit gives the new Viceroy a fair chance. We do not know what directives have been given to him. No explanation of that has been provided. Indeed, we are told very little. Looking on this Indian problem and having to address the House upon it, I am surprised how many great gaps there are in information which should be in the full possession of the House. We

are told very little. What is the policy and purpose for which he is to be sent out, and how is he to employ these 14 months? Is he to make a new effort to restore the situation, or is it merely Operation Scuttle on which he and other distinguished officers have been despatched? The Prime Minister should deal with this [672](#) and should tell us something of the purpose behind all these movements. Parliament has its powers, but it may use them wrongly and unwisely if it is not given information which, in all other periods that I have known, would have been placed at its disposal—except, of course, in time of war when we must not tell the enemy what we intend to do.

Everyone knows that the 14 months' time limit is fatal to any orderly transference of power, and I am bound to say that the whole thing wears the aspect of an attempt by the Government to make use of brilliant war figures in order to cover up a melancholy and disastrous transaction. One thing seems to me absolutely certain. The Government, by their 14 months' time limit, have put an end to all prospect of Indian unity. I myself have never believed that that could be preserved after the departure of the British Raj, but the last chance has been extinguished by the Government's action. How can one suppose that the thousand-year gulf which yawns between Muslim and Hindu will be bridged in 14 months? Here are these people, in many cases, of the same race, charming people, lightly clad, crowded together in all the streets and bazaars and so forth, and yet there is no intermarriage. It is astounding. Religion has raised a bar which not even the strongest impulses of nature can overleap. It is an astounding thing. Yet the Government expect in 14 months that there will be an agreement on these subjects between these races.

I speak in all consciousness of the fallibility of human judgment in regard to future events, of which we are all conscious. Sometimes I have not always been wrong in giving forecasts, though I have often failed to get the support I required at the time when it would have been advantageous. Henceforward in India, in my view, everyone will start staking out their claims and preparing to defend them; and they have the assurance of the British Government that they will recognise them and treat with them if they only make enough noise and establish themselves. They have only to make enough demonstration of their identity and right to separate existence and consideration. That will not lead to a melting of hearts, which will throw them all together and sweep away this centuries old, this millennium old, division. On the [673](#) contrary, it is inviting them to take advantage of the time that is left to peg out their claims, and to take up strong ground to defend their rights, which they value more than life itself.

No arrangement has been made about all the great common Services. My right hon. Friend the Member for the Scottish Universities (Sir J. Anderson) yesterday, in a speech instinct with deep and slowly acquired knowledge of the

problem, dealt with the question of the common Services. There are very many: Defence, foreign affairs, communications by road, rail and air, water, the waterways, with great rivers that flow from one territory into another, some greater than the Danube and the Rhine in Europe. All these manifest themselves, and come into vast populations and the broad territories of Hindustan. There are the so-called Imperial Services; that is to say, the Indian Civil Service, the Indian Police, the Customs and Tariffs; there are subsidies for many Provincial activities like education and development, both industrial and agricultural, the finding for the above purposes of reserve powers for Provinces in case of some emergency; provision for paying pensions, earned in many parts of India by Indians, by some of the bravest fighting men in the world for their loyalty to successive emperors and the British Crown, and for their bravery in the war. What guarantee have they, when divisions are to be made in this manner?

India is to be subjected not merely to partition, but to fragmentation, and to haphazard fragmentation. A time limit is imposed—a kind of guillotine—which will certainly prevent the full, fair and reasonable discussion of the great complicated issues that are involved. These 14 months will not be used for the melting of hearts and the union of Muslim and Hindu all over India. They will be used in preparation for civil war; and they will be marked continually by disorders and disturbances such as are now going on in the great city of Lahore. In spite of the great efforts which have been made by the leaders on both sides to allay them, out of sheer alarm and fear of what would happen, still these troubles break out, and they are sinking profoundly into India, in the heart of the Indian problem—[Laughter]—the right hon. and learned Gentleman ought not to laugh. Although of fanatical disposition, he has a tender heart. I am sure [674](#) that the horrors that have been going on since he put the Nehru Government in power, the spectacle we have seen in viewing these horrors, with the corpses of men, women and children littering the ground in thousands, have wrung his heart. I wonder that even his imagination does not guide him to review these matters searchingly in his own conscience.

Let the House remember this. The Indian political parties and political classes do not represent the Indian masses. It is a delusion to believe that they do. I wish they did. They are not as representative of them as the movements in Britain represent the surges and impulses of the British nation. This has been proved in the war, and I can show the House how it was proved. The Congress Party declared non-co-operation with Great Britain and the Allies. The other great political party, to whom all main power is to be given, the Muslim League, sought to make a bargain about it, but no bargain was made. So both great political parties in India, the only forces that have been dealt with so far, stood aside. Nevertheless, the only great volunteer army in the world that fought on either side in that struggle was formed in India. More than three and a half

million men came forward to support the King-Emperor and the cause of Britain; they came forward not by conscription or compulsion, but out of their loyalty to Britain and to all that Britain stood for in their lives. In handing over the Government of India to these so-called political classes we are handing over to men of straw, of whom, in a few years, no trace will remain.

This Government, by their latest action, this 14 months limitation—which is what I am coming to—cripple the new Viceroy and destroy the prospect of even going through the business on the agenda which has to be settled. This can only be explained as the complete adoption of one of Mr. Gandhi's most scatterbrained observations, which I will read to the House. It was made on 24th May, 1942, after the Mission. He said: Leave India in God's hands, in modern parlance, to anarchy; and that anarchy may lead to internecine warfare for a time, or to unrestricted dacoities. From these a true India will arise in place of the false one we see. There, as far as I can see, is a statement indistinguishable from the policy His [675](#)Majesty's Government are determined to pursue.

I wish to pursue this matter and, with the great respect, indulgence and kindness I always receive from the House, to unfold a connected argument to them in all its stages. I must compare, with bewilderment, the attitude of His Majesty's Government towards India and towards Palestine. There is a time limit for India, but no time limit for Palestine. I must say, that astonished me. Two bottles of powerful medicine have been prepared, but they are sent to the wrong patients. The policy in these two places taken together is incomprehensible. I do not understand how they can have originated from any coherent human brain; and even from a Cabinet which, no doubt, has many coherencies in it, it is incomprehensible. Can the House believe there are three or four times as many British troops in little petty Palestine as in mighty India at the present time? What is the idea behind such a thing? What is the point and sense of this distribution of our forces, which we are told are so limited? I do not know where the sustained effort we are making in Palestine comes from, or what element of obstinacy has forced this peculiar assertion in the midst of general surrender and scuttle of British will power in Palestine. I do not know where it comes from, but evidently some very powerful Minister has said he is going to have his way in it, and nobody has dared to withstand him. I cannot tell who it is. I have only my surmise.

The sustained effort we are making in Palestine, if applied in India, would have enabled the plan of the Cripps Mission to be carried out, fully discussed with full deliberation and firmness; and we should have kept all our pledges, and we should have gone steadily forward through this crisis. It is indeed a paradox that the opposite courses should be taken, and that here, in India, where such vast consequences are at stake, we are told we must be off in 14 months;

whereas, in this small Palestine, with which we have been connected but 25 years, and hold only on Mandate, we are to make all these exertions, and pour out our treasure, and keep 100,000 men or more marching around in circumstances most vexatious and painful to them.

Well, I have made the case of the reasons and grounds why the Opposition, [676](#)the Conservative Opposition, feel it necessary to dissociate themselves from the further progress of the Government on this road to ruin. I have given, I think, good grounds for the step which we now take, and which we are not taking without a great deal of heart-searching and consideration. But before I sit down, I should like to touch upon another aspect. I read this morning in the OFFICIAL REPORT the speech of the hon. Member for Gateshead (Mr. Zilliacus). I do not know whether he is in the House.

[§Mr. Zilliacus \(Gateshead\)](#)

Here.

[§Mr. Churchill](#)

We do not often find ourselves thinking on similar lines—not in agreement.

[§Mr. Kirkwood \(Dumbarton Burghs\)](#)

The right hon. Gentleman will have to watch himself.

[§Mr. Churchill](#)

David, keep quiet. [Laughter.] We are old allies, and do not interfere with each other when we are in action. As I say, I read the speech of the hon. Member for Gateshead. We do not often find ourselves in agreement or thinking along similar lines. Nor am I in agreement with much that he said last night. But it is a fact that I had already intended myself to strike the note of the United Nations being brought into the Indian problem. I have for some time pressed upon His Majesty's Government that, if they are unable to carry out their pledges in Palestine or keep order there, they should return their Mandate, or, at any rate, invoke the aid of U.N.O. to help them in their work; and that, after six or seven months' delay—a needless delay—they have actually done. Now, is it not difficult to resist the feeling that the same train of reasoning applies on a far greater scale and with much stronger force to India? We are told that we cannot walk out of Palestine because we should leave behind us a war between 600,000 Jews and 200,000 Arabs. How, then, can we walk out of India in 14 months and leave behind us a war between 90 million Muslims and 200 million caste Hindus, and all the other tribulations which will fall upon the helpless population of 400 million? Will it not be a terrible disgrace to our name and

record if, after our 14 months' time limit, we allow one fifth of the population of the globe, occupying a region nearly as large as Europe, to fall into chaos [677](#)and into carnage? Would it not be a world crime that we should be committing, a crime that would stain—not merely strip us, as we are being stripped, in the material position—but would stain our good name for ever?

Yesterday, the President of the Board of Trade and other speakers brought into great prominence our physical and military weakness. How can we keep a large Army in India for 15 or 20 years? He and other speakers stressed that point; and, certainly, it is a very grave point. But he might as well have urged that in our present forlorn condition we have, not only not the physical strength, but not the moral strength and will power. If we, through lack of physical and moral strength, cannot wind up our affairs in a responsible and humane and honourable fashion, ought we not to consider invoking the aid or, at least, the advice of the world international organisation, which is now clothed with reality, and on which so many of us, in all parts of the House, base our hopes for the peaceful progress, freedom, and, indeed, the salvation of all mankind?

I say to His Majesty's Government that, if they feel it right in the case of little Palestine to lay their difficulties before U.N.O., what conceivable reason can there be for not following a similar course in the case of this vast sub-continent of India? Granted the position to which they have carried affairs by their actions, if they cannot, through their weakness and moral prostration, fulfil their pledges to vast, helpless communities numbered by scores of millions, are they not bound in honour, in decency, and, indeed, in common sense to seek the aid of the wider instruments and authorities? I say that if all practical hopes of Britain's discharging her task have vanished—it is not my view, but it is the prevailing mood: it is the mood of those who are all powerful to day—if they have all vanished, then, at least, there is this new world organisation, brought into being by the agonies of two devastating wars, which should certainly not be overlooked or ignored.

The hon. Member for Gateshead spoke of the precedent of the multi-national membership of the United Nations, he instanced the Soviet Union and spoke of the possibility of affording those safeguards for minorities which, we are assured [678](#)by His Majesty's Government, Britain has lost the strength and will power to provide. He spoke of the right of minorities to appear before the Permanent Court of International Justice. I must say that I do not think such aspects should be overlooked in this position, in this period of British depression and eclipse.

I thank the House for listening so long and so attentively to what I have said. I have spoken with a lifetime of thought and contact with these topics. It is with deep grief I watch the clattering down of the British Empire, with all its glories

and all the services it has rendered to mankind. I am sure that in the hour of our victory, now not so long ago, we had the power, or could have had the power, to make a solution of our difficulties which would have been honourable and lasting. Many have defended Britain against her foes. None can defend her against herself. We must face the evils that are coming upon us, and that we are powerless to avert. We must do our best in all these circumstances, and not exclude any expedient that may help to mitigate the ruin and disaster that will follow the disappearance of Britain from the East. But, at least, let us not add—by shameful flight, by a premature, hurried scuttle—at least, let us not add, to the pangs of sorrow so many of us feel, the taint and smear of shame.

§4.40 p.m.

§The Minister of Defence (Mr. A. V. Alexander)

On this great and historic occasion when we discuss the latest major step which has been taken to give long-promised self-government to India, I should have liked this Debate to have proceeded on the same practically non-party lines as those on which previous Indian Debates have been conducted. But this afternoon a challenge has been thrown down. Quite clearly, the Leader of the Opposition, whose war leadership and many aspects of whose personality I have never ceased to respect, has thrown down a challenge on this great issue, which I am quite certain those who support His Majesty's Government are in no way afraid to take up. He has made one of his usual speeches, and from the point of view of language, perhaps one of the best phrased speeches of his lifetime. It will be recorded, and it may well be history will decide that perhaps his speech has been the principal factor in preventing the parties in India coming together.

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§Mr. Quintin Hogg (Oxford)

That will be your alibi.

§Mr. Alexander

I would say to the hon. Member for Oxford (Mr. Hogg) that I have listened in silence to the right hon. Gentleman's carefully phrased and prepared speech. He has not minced his language, and I do not think, therefore, that I ought to be subjected to that kind of noisy interruption.

§Mr. Hogg

Do not lose your temper.

§Mr. Churchill

We are not likely to lose our tempers with each other.

§Mr. Alexander

The right hon. Gentleman opened with one or two remarks concerning the historical background to the present situation, and what has happened since 1917. I must say, while a good deal of it was historical and factual, the contrast he drew from his historical examination, between the build-up of past negotiations on Indian self-government and our present proposals, will really not bear examination. One would have thought, from what he said, that the proposals of 1942 and the statement, in 1945, of Mr. Amery, the then Secretary of State for India, had no relation at all to the kind of policy we now pursue, which is inherent in the offer we now make. For example—I take his actual words—he said there was a great difference between Mr. Amery's statement and our approach to this matter as to whom we should hand over power. One would have thought, from what the right hon. Gentleman said, it was absolutely incumbent upon us, in the light of the Amery statement, to hand over to a single Central Government. That is not so. I drew that deduction from what the right hon. Gentleman said. Mr. Amery said: We can only transfer our ultimate control over India to a Government or Governments capable of exercising it."—[[OFFICIAL REPORT, 14th June, 1945; Vol. 411, c. 1838.](#)]

§Mr. Churchill

I read out the statement. There is no difference— to a Government or Governments capable of exercising it.

§Mr. Alexander

I am going on to show what deductions the right hon. Gentleman drew. He said that our present line of saying we will get out of India on a given date, if necessary before a Central Government is set up, will mean that everyone will be staking out his claim, and [680](#)there will, therefore, be a lot of different authorities. Mr. Amery contemplated that there might be more than one Government too, and his statement was made on behalf of the Government of which the right hon. Gentleman was Prime Minister. I cannot see that there is any serious point to be made against us on that. Let us take his remarks about the setting up of the Interim Government. The right hon. Gentleman the Member for the Scottish Universities (Sir J. Anderson), in his speech yesterday, said that he was sharply critical of our having set up the Interim Government, which the right hon. Gentleman called the Nehru Government, before a Central Constitution had been agreed on. What is the position there? Mr. Amery made it

quite clear in his statement. He said: It is proposed that the Executive Council should be reconstituted and that the Viceroy should in future make his selection for nomination to the Crown for appointment to his Executive from amongst leaders of Indian political life at the centre and in the Provinces, in proportions which would give a balanced representation of the main communities, including equal proportions of Moslems and Caste Hindus.

§Mr. Churchill

That was the body you dismissed.

§Mr. Alexander

Not at all. This was the proposal of Mr. Amery, and he went on to say: His Majesty's Government feel certain that given goodwill and a genuine desire to co-operate on all sides, both British and Indian, these proposals can make a genuine step forward in the collaboration of the British and Indian peoples towards Indian self-government and can assert the rightful position, and strengthen the influence of India in the counsels of the nations."—[[OFFICIAL REPORT, 14th June, 1945; Vol. 411, cols. 1835–1837.](#)]

§Sir John Anderson (Scottish Universities)

May I ask whether the right hon. Gentleman does not see the essential difference between the Viceroy making his selection from a list of persons suggested by Indian leaders, and handing over executive authority to leaders in their capacity as leaders? Does he not realise that the profound difference between the Amery proposition, and the plan favoured by His Majesty's Government, is well illustrated by the consequences that have followed from the action of His Majesty's Government?

§Mr. Alexander

That is a very long interruption on that point.

[681](#)

§Mr. Sidney Marshall (Sutton and Cheam)

Rather a puzzling one.

§Mr. Alexander

I do not think anyone is puzzled except the hon. Member. I suppose that the interruption of the right hon. Gentleman means that, if he, with his Indian experience, had been Viceroy in these particular circumstances, he would not

have used the word "selection" on any other basis than going around himself, choosing somebody, and putting him up to the Crown

§Sir J. Anderson

Not at all.

§Mr. Alexander

This was intended to cover proper consultation with the leaders of all the Indian parties as a step forward, genuinely offered by a Government such as there was then—

§Sir J. Anderson

I do not wish to interrupt the right hon. Gentleman unnecessarily, but we are now dealing with a matter of fact. I was associated—and I do not think the right hon. Gentleman was—directly with the discussions that resulted in the Amery statement, and I am quite certain that nothing of the kind that has come about under His Majesty's present Government was in contemplation at that time.

§Mr. Alexander

That may sound a very ponderous statement. It is true that I was not in the Caretaker Government, but I was in the Government shortly afterwards, and the right hon. Gentleman knows that that statement was followed by the Simla Conference. The Viceroy, at that Conference, put this up and did his best to secure agreement, and nearly did so. As my right hon. and learned Friend the President of the Board of Trade has just pointed out, the procedure was laid down in the statement. I, therefore, submit that the point made by the right hon. Gentleman, in this respect, is not a sound one at all. An extraordinary situation develops when, two years afterwards, at this very late stage in our Debates, in connection with the offers made by the present Government, the right hon. Gentleman produces a letter from Mr. Amery, only a few days old, to explain exactly what he meant by his statement. When you have the printed word of an official Government statement in 1945, and you take it to the Indian leaders with whom you negotiate, they put their interpretation on the written [682](#) word as it stands, and not on a letter written two years afterwards by the then Secretary of State. We have acted on that statement, made on behalf of the Caretaker Government, and kept up the sequence of endeavours to bring self-government to India in good faith. It is a great pity that these reflections are now made against our action on that point.

The right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill) said, a little later in his speech, that we had totally abandoned all our pledges to the

minorities, that we had thrown them overboard, that one of the main reasons why they have come down to party division today is because—as he feels—it is our Government, and nobody in India, which has broken away in any respect from the pledges. In the case of the minorities, the position that we have always taken up is that in any Constitution framed by Indians, there ought to be provided proper protection for the minorities. I think it is only fair to both the leading parties in India to say that never at any time during our negotiations have they taken up any other line, but are anxious and willing to make the fullest legal protection for the minorities, of whatever class they may be. At the Simla Conference, in 1946, both parties pledged their word on this matter. I ask the House to consider the terms of the resolution passed by the Constituent Assembly, defining the objects of that body. It lays down that in the Constitution to be framed that there shall be guaranteed and secured to all the people of India justice, social, economic, and political equality of status of opportunity before the law, freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, and association of action subject to laws and public morality. Adequate safeguards have been provided for the minorities in the backward and tribal areas, and the Depressed Classes and backward classes. I give just as much appreciation to the good faith of Indians in a pledge of that kind, in a public Constituent Assembly, as I would give to a pledge given in my own country. I believe that they intend to form a Constitution which gives this protection, and I should very much regret it if it was to be reckoned that when members of all parties settled long ago that India ought to have self-government—and we have all professed at one time or another that they [683](#) should be given self-government—we were now to doubt the bona fide of the people who drew up that statement, as regards their desire to protect minorities.

The remarks of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford with regard to the work of the Cabinet Mission in India, were, I thought, in some respects, unfortunate. I should like to ask him, for example, what he means by his words that when we were in India last year we attempted to formulate a Constitution, and force it on the Indians? I wrote down the words which the right hon. Gentleman used. When did the Cabinet Mission attempt to formulate a Constitution and force it on the Indians? Not at all. For weeks we talked to them to try to see how much progress we could make in getting the two sides together. All we did then, as we carefully explained in our White Paper on 16th May, was to make suggestions as to the procedure which might be followed to get where they want to get in having a Constituent Assembly, and in having a Constitution drafted by Indians for Indians. So far from settling a Constitution for them, it was never in our minds, or actions, and there has never been any attempt by this Labour Government, to force a Constitution at any time on the Indians.

§Mr. Churchill

I did not use the word "force." I used the word "press." I have not my notes with me now, but at any rate there is not much in it.

§Mr. Alexander

If my shorthand is so bad that I took "force" for "press," then I accept the correction at once, but at any rate, the idea was that we were going to push it on them.

§Mr. Churchill

The right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues did make a great constructive contribution in the shape of a plan, both of procedure and long-term results. Whether they forced or pressed this on them we need not argue about, but they no doubt commended it to the Indians with all the address they had.

§Mr. Alexander

I think I have said enough to make it clear in the official record that we do not accept the view which the right hon. Gentleman put forward in his speech.

The next point in the right hon. Gentleman's speech to which I would like to refer is this: He said that this Constituent [684](#)Assembly had been set up on a totally inadequate franchise, that the decision of that franchise could not be regarded as right and proper for the future, that there were many people outside the franchise who had the right to be consulted, and so on. I do not know whether the House remembers that at the time of the despatch of the Cripps mission to India there was a Debate on this matter, and it was decided that the basis we adopted in our suggestions for setting up the Constituent Assembly was the one to be acted on. The position is of course that the elections for the Provincial Assemblies were held under the 1935 Act, an Act passed by a Conservative Government. They settled the basis of the franchise, they settled the special community voting, they settled the very system under which many minorities complain now that they do not get adequate representation. In 1942, after Debate, it was settled that that should be the basis for proceeding with the election of a Constituent Assembly. That is all we have done. I think it is a very great pity therefore that the right hon. Gentleman should have expressed the views he did to the House.

The right hon. Gentleman referred again to the great mistake that we made in setting up the Interim Government. As he was making that part of his speech I felt that it was very unfair to my comrades on this side of the House, who were faced with a situation, in November and December, 1945, of which it might be

said that the Indian authorities were literally sitting on the top of a volcano, and that as a result of the situation which had arisen after the war the outbreak of revolution might be expected at any time. Ever since then, the Government and their supporters have laboured incessantly to try to get an agreement from India which would avoid a great outburst of that kind. In the same part of his speech, the right hon. Gentleman delivered an attack on Mr. Nehru. I do not know whether he intended it as an attack, but certainly in places his language about Mr. Nehru was pretty forcible. I have not written it down, but we will look at HANSARD in the morning. I must say that whilst in the past we have had cause to regret Mr. Nehru's attitude in the pursuit of his own conscience in regard to the leadership of his party in India and the Home Rule policy for which he was often willing to go to prison, nevertheless he is a [685](#) most able, cultured, experienced person to be at the head of the Interim Government which has been set up. I believe that he and his colleagues, if they are given a fair and reasonable opportunity to co-operate with the other great communities in India, will be able and willing to lead in bringing India through her present difficulties into realms of power, influence, prosperity and peace. I therefore, much regret the reference that was made.

[§Mr. Churchill](#)

I said nothing about Mr. Nehru except that he had very good reason to be a bitter enemy of all connected with Britain—very good reason. [HON. MEMBERS: "Men of straw."] That did not specially refer to Mr. Nehru, but it does refer to the political leaders, of all the Indian parties, who have no authority. I have certainly not made any personal attack upon Mr. Nehru, except to point out that he has good reason to be our bitterest enemy in that he has been for 10 or 12 years interned in gaol.

[§Mr. Alexander](#)

I should be very glad if at any time the right hon. Gentleman repented a little of some of the attitudes he has taken.

[§Mr. Churchill](#)

I do not repent at all. I went out of my way, when I spoke on the last occasion on India, to draw attention to Mr. Nehru's courageous action in ordering the troops to fire on his own co-religionists in Bihar when the Government officers had failed in their duty. I have not said anything derogatory to his character, but he is an enemy of this country, and has every right to be if he chooses. That, I think, it is perfectly proper to say.

[§Mr. Alexander](#)

I hope the right hon. Gentleman will think again and look at his words again in the light of the fact that what we want, and what I am certain the British people want, is to have longstanding friendship and brotherhood with the Indian people. After all that has happened so far, for the right hon. Gentleman to get up in the House, in the position of responsibility and authority that all his great government experience carries with it, and talk about leaders of this kind—with whom we have negotiated and with whom we have got more closely together in the last 12 months than ever before—as enemies of this country, is not a proper thing to do.

[686](#)The right hon. Gentleman referred again this afternoon, as he did when our statement was first made, to the position of the Viceroy. I shall be content to leave it to my right hon. Friend and leader to make a general reply to that part of the right hon. Gentleman's speech, but in view of the explanation given at the time the statement was made, I must say that I, who in the course of our Indian mission came to form a great personal friendship for Lord Wavell, resent the terms in which the right hon. Gentleman referred to him, both on 20th February and today. I feel bound to say, here in public, that I am most grateful to Lord Wavell for all that he has done to try to help us in the crisis through which we have been passing. The reason for the change was stated, and I shall leave the Prime Minister to say anything further about it which he may wish to say. But I do want to place on record my own gratitude to Lord Wavell for the services he has given. I feel quite confident that when the records of our country come to be written, he will be found among those men who have earned the right to go down to history as having displayed, at all times, the great British spirit.

I must say a word also about the rather sneering aside the right hon. Gentleman made when he referred to my right hon. Friend, my colleague, as he used to be, Sir Ben Smith. One would have thought from what the right hon. Gentleman said that one who had been in a Labour Government would be the only person ever to take an office of profit in a public organisation. I do not think the right hon. Gentleman would have to search very far back in political history to find many precedents in his own party for the procedure which has been followed in that direction. The suggestion made by the right hon. Gentleman that this Government seek to take advantage of the cover of brilliant war figures—I think those were the words he used—to cover melancholy and disastrous transactions was quite unworthy. Is that so? We shall wait and see, I suppose, what will be the final conclusions of the right hon. Gentleman on the change from Lord Wavell to Lord Mountbatten. We shall wait and see, but certainly we did not appoint Lord Wavell. The right hon. Gentleman opposite appointed him when he was Prime Minister—or, rather, he made the recommendation for his appointment. We certainly seek no cover We [687](#)are the responsible people, and we take the responsibility to this House

and to the British people for our actions as a Government. In just the same way we take responsibility for whatever, has to be done in what we hope is the concluding phase of the process of handing over self-government to India under a new Viceroy. I have not yet met anybody—I was glad to see how well this was taken in the House yesterday—who does not wish well to Lord Mountbatten in the great task which he has voluntarily accepted, and who, I am quite certain will be in accord with the wishes of the Government in this matter.

There was a suggestion in the right hon. Gentleman's speech that the political parties in India do not represent the masses. It may well be true that there are large numbers of the political masses who have not yet got the franchise and do not hope to get the franchise until there is a new Constitution, but a great many of those masses who have not yet been given the franchise are certainly well behind the two political parties, according to what their particular communal association may be. Therefore, when it is said that the political parties do not represent them, I do not think that can be proved at all. I was very glad to hear the right hon. Gentleman pay a tribute to the fact that a great volunteer army was raised in India. It gave magnificent service. It is the best reply that could be given in this Debate today to the somewhat slighting reference made last night by the hon. Member for Bury (Mr. W. Fletcher) to India's war service, when he suggested that they had done very well out of the war, and, indeed, had done a good deal of profiteering.

§Mr. Molson (The High Peak)

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury (Mr. W. Fletcher) is not here, but I listened to his speech, and I think the right hon. Gentleman should withdraw what he has said. My hon. Friend paid a tribute to the Indian soldiers. He referred to other people as being those who were going to receive the benefit of the sterling balances.

§Mr. Alexander

There are a great many people in India who will, I suppose, take their respective shares of the sterling balances and things of that kind, but I must say that the general reference to the Indians last night was, I repeat, slighting.

§Mr. Molson

It was not.

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§Mr. Alexander

I am only saying that the hon. Gentleman's leader, I am glad to say, has given the best answer today by referring to the volunteer services of that Indian Army and Navy. The right hon. Gentleman then asked why it was that the Labour Government have come to a time limit.

§Mr. Molson

If I may intervene again—I appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's courtesy in giving way—may I say he has been most unfair to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, who said: I am not saying that in any way as a reproach to India. Her fighting war record was a magnificent one.

§Mr. Alexander

I will read the next sentence: But anyone who was in India during the war will bear me out when I say that the profit motive, which was limited in this country, was certainly not limited in India."—[OFFICIAL REPORT. 5th March, 1947; Vol. 434, c. 583.] I have stated my position and answered the interruption, and I do not propose to pursue the matter. I come to the next point that was made by the right hon. Gentleman, who asked why there is a time-limit for India and no time-limit for Palestine. I must say that I found it difficult to understand why the right hon. Gentleman asked the question in that way. One would think the circumstances were entirely the same. Are they? In the case of Palestine, we are acting under a Mandate, and we must go to the body that has succeeded the body which gave us the Mandate before we can change the position. That is what we propose to do. If it is said that there is no time-limit in the case of Palestine, all I can say is that we are going to refer the matter to the next General Assembly, and, therefore, that is in one respect a time-limit. We have given them warning that if they will not agree among themselves, we will take the matter to the General Assembly, and that that will be the next step. I hope that there may be preliminary studies going on under the United Nations even before the General Assembly has had the matter put before it.

§Mr. Pickthorn (Cambridge University) rose—

§Mr. Alexander

I think I have been fairly reasonable in giving way to hon. Members. Because of the arrangement of [689](#)the Debate, I have been prevented completely from making the considered speech which otherwise I would have made, but I think it is essential, when the right hon. Gentleman has made these important statements, that they should be answered immediately, as far as possible.

§Mr. Pickthorn

I think the right hon. Gentleman—

§Mr. Alexander

The hon. Member is a very learned gentleman, but I have expert advisers also, although they do not all come from Cambridge. [Interruption.] I wish that some hon. Members opposite would give me the same consideration as I have given them. [Interruption.] Hon. Members are doing their best to stop my speech being delivered. I was dealing with the time-limit and the comparison between Palestine and India. I pointed out that there is, in effect, a time-limit in the case of Palestine. There is a time-limit up to the time when the United Nations make a decision upon the matter when we lay it before them. The right hon. Gentleman said that if we had had the kind of sustained effort in India that was being made in Palestine, something on the lines of the Cripps plan could have been forced—the right hon. Gentleman may not have used that word, but that is what he intended to convey—upon India, and that, at least, it could have been pushed through under the threat of force. That was what the right hon. Gentleman intended to convey. He said that, instead, we were on the road to ruin. I am as certain as I stand at this Box that if we had proceeded like that, we certainly would have been on the road to ruin. The possibility could always have been canvassed, by those who did not want immediately full and free self-government in India, of trying to hold India down. That possibility would always have been there to be canvassed and experimented with.

But I understand that is not the general view of Members of the party opposite, except for a very small section of them. All the time the right hon. Gentleman was speaking this afternoon, I felt, bearing in mind the Debate in another place a few days ago, and bearing in mind the different opinions that have been expressed in these Debates by hon. Members opposite, that the principal thing that was happening was the marshalling once more, if he could possibly arrange it, of a united party on India on those lines. That was [690](#)the great object of the speech. I am quite certain the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. R. A. Butler) could not have agreed with a great part of that speech, otherwise he would have been completely inconsistent with previous speeches he has made in the House. Certainly, if one considers the expressions from Conservative Benches, as well as other Benches, in another place in the Debate last week, one could see that there were very serious rifts in the ranks. It would have been very much better if the Conservative Party had had second thoughts about this matter, in the other direction, as they had in another place last week. It would be very much better indeed. The attitude of a former Viceroy—and Lord Halifax was a great Viceroy—on this matter, was far more likely to lead to peace, concord and co-operation in India than the kind of speech that we had from the right hon. Gentleman. The noble Lord put himself

into the position of saying that he was not exactly sure whether the policy of fixing a date was right. It might be right or wrong.

§Mr. Churchill

On a point of Order, Mr. Deputy-Speaker. I should very much have liked myself to refer to Lord Halifax's speech in the other House, but I understood the rule was that we could not make references to speeches in another place. I should be glad if the rule were relaxed.

§Mr. Deputy-Speaker (Mr. Hubert Beaumont)

I was expecting that this point might be raised. I did not hear the right hon. Gentleman use any words which were used or quoted from a speech made in another place. Up to this point, therefore, the right hon. Gentleman is in Order.

§Mr. Alexander

The noble Lord to whom I was referring has had great experience in India. He took the general line that although he might not agree with the fixing of a date he could not very well object, unless he had some better alternative to propose. What better alternative was proposed by the right hon. Gentleman this afternoon? What is his constructive policy? [HON. MEMBERS: "None."] It is said that the period of 14 months which will remain from the time that the new Viceroy takes over is insufficient for a Constitution to [691](#)be set up. Is that so? I suppose it might well be that the very difficult matters which are bound to be dealt with—the right hon. Member for the Scottish Universities (Sir J. Anderson) quite rightly referred to those difficulties—will take a considerable time, but this case is not in any sense parallel to those of many of the countries referred to yesterday. We have for years in this country been helping to do all the preliminary work on a new Constitution for India. There have been the Round Table Conference, the five years to which the hon. Member for Farnham (Mr. G. Nicholson) referred last night taken for building up to the 1935 Government of India Act, the Cripps Mission, all the work of the Cabinet Commission, and the drafting of the plan of 16th May. There are actually in being Provincial Governments elected under the Act of 1935. Undoubtedly this is a different situation to that which obtained in many other countries who have had to form a Constitution. If the people of India will come together at this stage and cooperate, in the light of the circumstances I have mentioned, it is perfectly possible for them to complete the drafting of a Constitution within 14 months.

There may well be certain matters of administration and the like which will call for adjustment and might not be finally settled on the date fixed, in June, 1948, but if they wish now to come to a settlement, that Constitution can be formed

and can be sufficiently advanced for a Provisional Government at the Centre to be set up. Adjustments can be made afterwards. Beyond that, I am not prepared to speak at the moment.

[§Mr. Lipson \(Cheltenham\)](#)

Has the Constitution to be approved 'by this House?

[§Mr. Alexander](#)

I think we have said in our White Paper that one of the necessary steps is that we shall lay the necessary legislation before Parliament. That is already in the White Paper.

I had hoped to refer to many of the speeches which were made yesterday, but time has gone very quickly and there have been many interruptions. I am grateful to the leader of the Liberal Party for the careful and considered speech which he made and which, with the helpfulness given by the noble Lord in another place [692](#) who belongs to his party, will do a great deal to strengthen the co-operative spirit in India which we need at the present time.

I hope that the hon. and gallant Member who spoke for County Down (Sir W. Smiles) will not now come under terrible disciplinary measures from the Conservative Front Bench for the very courageous and experienced speech that he made last night. If I may say so to the right hon. Member for the Scottish Universities, who is an old friend and is very experienced, I would probably be prepared to put the opinion of the hon. and gallant Member for Down about the present state of India, in regard to trade, commerce and legislation, before anything I have heard from that side of the House in this Debate.

I have known that hon. and gallant Member for many years. I have known of his connection with India's productive trade, in which I myself have had to take a considerable interest. I know of his experience, not only in trade but as a Member for many years of the Legislative Assembly of Assam. If we had any real regard for the future connection of this country with India, for building up a constant, continuing co-operation and for the development of trade we should do far better to follow the advice of the hon. and gallant Member for Down than be guided by what has been said from the Front Bench of the Opposition. The hon. and gallant Member has obviously lived with the people, helped to govern the people and has produced for the people. He knows a great deal more about the subject than anybody I have heard speak in this Debate from that side of the House. I hope that he will accept thanks from this side of the House for a great effort to promote a settlement. That is what he did last night. I hope he will not suffer for what he has done. I do not know what the right hon. Member

for Saffron Walden thinks about it. I have been in the House for many years and I have seen Members of the Conservative Party receive discipline. I have heard many grumbles about the discipline of the Conservative Party.

We have had, of course, to take a very difficult decision. Everybody knows that we are doing our best to get the parties together but the gap to be bridged between them is very great. How long was this to go on? What would be the result? Were we prepared to stay in India and [693](#)to hold down India? That would have been a very grave decision to take, and we were not prepared to take it. We thought not only that it was a decision which would not be in accordance with the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and of the Atlantic Charter, with the formulating of which the right hon. Gentleman had so much to do, but it would also have been a decision that we ought not to face in the light of our present resources. Above all, it would have been one to which my hon. Friends on this side of the House would never have consented. The desire of the Government is that the two parties—[An HON. MEMBER: "Indian parties."]
—the two Indian parties will come together. I hope very much that they will. The consequences if they do not come together must be very grave in deed for India. I hope that those who speak in this Debate during the rest of the day will do their best to induce them to come together, and not make statements which are likely to keep them apart.

It is true that we have, in the end, come to put suggestions to the House and to India which will take the "bridging of the gap," if it can be accomplished, in one jump. I once heard the right hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. C. Davies) quote in private something which was said by the late Earl Lloyd-George to the effect that "When you have to jump a chasm, you cannot do it in two hops." I would say to the right hon. Member for the Scottish Universities that I perceive no fundamental difference in what he has in mind, except that we should wait a considerable time longer—at least a certain measure of time longer—to see whether they came together, before taking the kind of action which we are taking now. In fact we have been doing our very best, since December, 1945, at least, to find out if they will come together without having to take such action as this. In the meantime, the services have been running down, and the position has become more difficult. If we do not take this action now, the position is bound to deteriorate. I hope and pray that we shall all in this country do our best to see that this action is received in such a spirit as to bring the two great sides in India together; and if so, I can promise them from this Box that it will always be the intention and practice, I think, of whatever Government is [694](#)leading this country to give them the utmost good will and to give them at all times the utmost co-operation. Whatever help it is within our resources to give, we shall be only too glad to give.

With regard to the future of defence after June, 1948, we shall also be glad, if in the course of the Treaty which we hope to make on the transference of power, they will agree to co-operate with us in that respect, subject only to the limitations of each contracting party to the provisions of the United Nations Charter.

§Vice-Admiral Taylor (Paddington, South)

The question of the defence of India was not mentioned by the President of the Board of Trade in his speech yesterday. This question of defence and of maintaining law and order is of vital importance to the peoples of India. In June, 1948, we withdraw all our troops from India, including those, of course, from the North-West Frontier. Are the Government satisfied that when we withdraw all troops in June next year, the Indian authority to whom we transfer our governance will give to India that security from invasion by the hill tribes on the North-West Frontier, or by invasion from any other source, which we have given to India and which has been so vital to the peace of India?

§Mr. Alexander

I would refer the hon. and gallant Gentleman on the question of the external defence of India to the statement made in reply to a Question by the Prime Minister on 25th February. He has already referred to what is the actual position. Of course, with regard to the defence of the Frontier, much will depend on whether the parties come together in such a way that they can maintain that splendid unity and integrity of the Indian Army.

§Vice-Admiral Taylor

The point is—

§Mr. Alexander

It is for that reason, among others, that I beg hon. Members of this House and all parties in this country to do their best at this time not to divide India but to help to unite the parties in India in the acceptance of the plan which we have put before them, so that they may obtain unity and co-operation at the earliest possible moment; and in doing so we wish them God speed.

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§5.30 p.m.

§Sir Ralph Glyn (Abingdon)

I am quite sure that no one on this side of the House or, indeed, in any part of the House would want to say a single word that would prevent the Indians from coming together. I believe that the speech delivered yesterday by the right hon. Member for the Scottish Universities (Sir J. Anderson) impressed the House, because it was a speech constructive and delivered by one who has very great practical experience. There is not such a great difference between the policy of His Majesty's Government and the suggestions put forward by the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the Scottish Universities. It seemed to me, when we heard the Leader of the Opposition today, that he emphasised what is surely necessary—that our pledges and obligations must be met, otherwise a situation is created for which we are responsible, and which we cannot possibly throw off—the responsibility of this House and of Parliament for the situation in India.

I think that this whole question has caused every one of us a great deal of perturbation and consideration as to what the right course should be. I have listened to the Debate in another place, and I must say that the speeches there, most of them delivered by people of unique experience, confirmed me in the view that the whole problem is really whether the people of this country are willing to accept the responsibility of continuing to be charged with the great task of government in India; and it is quite impossible for the instrument of government, which is derived from Parliament, to carry out its task unless it has the backing of the people of this country. I am firmly convinced that people of all parties in this country have a genuine wish to see India flourishing and contented with a form of Government which fits its own peculiar problems, and one which I hope will be prepared to enter into Dominion status.

There is one matter which I feel is of paramount importance. I do not think that the problems of India are ever sufficiently considered by this House. The opportunities are very few, and yet we have this tremendous responsibility. There was previously a Standing Joint Committee for Indian affairs, which represented the strength of the parties in this House, and on which sat Members [696](#) of another place. The fact that such a Standing Joint Committee was in existence enabled Parliament here to be kept in close touch with events in India, and, even more important, it gave the feeling in India that Indian affairs were being looked at and studied by Parliament here. I wish that His Majesty's Government would again consider the possibility of setting up a Standing Joint Committee for Indian affairs, so that during the intervening period of 14 months, Parliament would be kept in close contact with the events taking place in India. During the period of British occupation in India advances have been made, and we have to realise that India herself is presenting new and vital problems which I doubt very much whether Indian civil servants as administrators will be able to deal with effectively if a crisis arises. For instance, the famine of last year produced a situation which caused a great

embarrassment to one of the Provincial Governments, and it was only effectively dealt with by the intervention of the Central Authority and the assistance of British troops and transport. The result of all this was that the damage done by that famine was to a great extent alleviated.

Another position which I think should never be forgotten is that owing to the improvement in health conditions the population in India is increasing at an astonishing pace. During the last 25 years the numbers added to the population are equivalent to the population of the United States and yet the size of India does not expand. That, surely, does mean that there will have to be most carefully thought out plans so that India can produce more of everything to raise the standard of living of its people. We heard the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the Scottish Universities suggest that the date of 14th June, 1948, should be the date on which we should say, "If you cannot set up a Government truly representative of the great races of India, then we must consider reviewing the position and ensuring a proper administration by handing over the Government of the country to one or several authorities."

I do not think that it is appreciated that the number of people in India really interested in politics at all is small. The great masses are illiterate, and all they want is a form of Government which will ensure justice and order, and will see that [697](#) they are going to get that to which they are entitled, which is the right to live, the right to education, and the right to improve their position. As trustees the one thing we must ask ourselves is: can we be absolutely confident that under the plans of His Majesty's Government that situation can, in fact, exist? That is the thing that I am beginning to doubt. I entirely agree that we cannot go on drifting. The situation is becoming intolerable, and we are putting a burden on British Administration out there under which the people sent by Parliament cannot possibly continue to carry on. Clearly there must be a definite advance, but we are trying by the device of fixing a date to bring people up with a jolt and get them to realise that we are in earnest over this, it will be a terrible thing if the result is very great misery, civil war and general chaos.

I always felt when I went about in India that during all those years of British administration we ourselves have altered the factors of administration in the country. I believe it to be a fact that we established the Governors' Provinces, which are few in number, comparatively speaking, far fewer than existed in the days of the Mogul Akbar, when India was divided into 25 areas. Now I think it is 11. I doubt very much—and this has often been told me in India—whether there are Indian officials with the capacity to administer such very vast Provinces as Bombay and Bengal, and if we could possibly divide them up it would ease the administration and it would lead to that union or federation which would enable a Central Government to continue to be responsible for

defence, communications and all the other reserved services. If there were smaller divisions I believe it would be easier.

There is another matter about which no mention has been made so far in the Debate, and it concerns the Indian States. These States are of a very peculiar kind, and in the original Proclamation we did promise that when they were formed these treaties, in the language of the Proclamation, are by us accepted, and will be scrupulously maintained. This is something quite apart from the problems of British India, and I am very disturbed, because I really do not know and we have not been told what is the [698](#)present attitude of the Chamber of Princes or individual Princes since the declaration of the Prime Minister on British policy. In the newspapers I see reports that the leader of the Chamber of Princes has said that as a result of that statement he wishes to reconsider his position. I do not know whether that is true, but there has been no official statement. I believe that the future of India after the British Government has left will be very largely guided by the proper administration by the Indian Princes and their advisers in those States who will strive to show that the Indians are competent to govern.

[§Mr. A. V. Alexander](#)

I am particularly grateful to the Chamber of Princes for the helpful attitude which they have adopted during the last 12 months. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Abingdon (Sir R. Glyn) has seen the joint communique that was issued on 2nd March after the negotiating committee set up by the Chamber of Princes had had a conference with the corresponding committee of the Constituent Assembly. It shows that progress is being made, although, of course, they have not come to an official decision.

[§Sir R. Glyn](#)

I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, but I do not think that the statement of 2nd March made it clear whether the Chamber of Princes were reserving their action to a future time or whether they are looking to the date in June to take the lead in assisting the formation of an Interim Government. It surely is obvious that there must be, if we are going to carry on at all, a relationship of friendship and of good will towards Indians which I hope will always exist and will assist them in their development, industrial and otherwise. Surely it is absolutely essential that the relationship which exists between the Crown and the Princes by separate treaties should be utilised in a way which will make a contribution towards the total change affecting British India.

I am also naturally very much concerned about the position of places like Assam. I do not know how far that has been cleared up. Nothing will be lost if

the proposal of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the Scottish Universities is considered further by His Majesty's Government, because I see but little distinction between what is proposed by the Government and what has been suggested [699](#) by the right hon. Gentleman. After all, nobody here assumes that His Majesty's Government definitely want to pursue a policy which will lead to civil war and confusion. If, therefore, it is possible to adopt the proposal put forward by the right hon. Gentleman with all his experience, it would help greatly because it seems to me to be a constructive idea and one which would achieve the object which His Majesty's Government want and which, I think, would be more readily understood in India. All of us get communications from our friends in India and they say, "When you go away what is our protection? Where do we stand?" I think that that attitude of mind is likely to provoke a great deal of disquiet not so much among the people who read but those others who do not, because rumours which spread through the villages of India are hard to deal with. I fear that there is going to be a famine owing to the shortage of rice and other crops, and surely it is generally known what terrible distress occurred last year. Are we satisfied that before June, 1948, the country will be in that condition that we will be able to go?

That is one of the things I am puzzled about, and I do not believe that it would be the wish of this country that we should go out and leave India if she is being stricken with disorder. India has done so much for us in the late war. We all have friends who are Indians and I am quite certain that the old régime cannot possibly go on. There are still thousands of villages without even a hard road, and in some cases no communication at all: When the monsoon season comes it is quite impossible to get to some of them. Not many have wireless sets but nearly every village has a man in it who has served overseas to help us in the war. Those men have gone back and have talked to their friends and relations in the villages. I do not feel that I know, or that the Government of India know, what are the real feelings of the peasants in the villages. I wish I did. I know that it was one of the desires of the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, that he should improve conditions in the villages and he did all he could by wireless and by other means because he knew perfectly well that all these men returned from their service overseas to make comparisons between sanitation, health and housing conditions [700](#) in other countries. Who is to help these people? Who is it that has helped them before? It is the self-sacrificing officer of the Indian Civil Service who has put all else aside and given his whole life's work and who is a real friend of the people—uncorrupt and a real saviour and ally. When they go what a gap is left. To whom will these poor people turn?

Those are the things which, I feel, we in this House must face and nothing, even though it may be a convenient way of getting round an awkward corner, should weigh in the balance against all that past volume of work which has been done by these people, missionaries included. I am so afraid of this tiny

minority of politicians of all types in India who are a kind of froth upon the surface of a sea, and all these great movements underneath—caste, race and creed. I have tried to read something about Brahminism and I believe that the influence of the Brahmin is the strongest force in India and that it is something which keeps Hindu India together. Caste is the thing which is the equivalent in India of social services here. We have to remember that when we were painted blue with woad India had a great civilisation. It therefore seems to me a little presumptuous to assume that all our ideas must be the right ideas for India.

That is why, to my mind, it is so vital that India should herself accept the burden of responsibility for governing as soon as possible, although not so soon as to produce disorder, chaos, misery and retrograde action in place of what has been built up after all these years of devoted service by those who have served us so well in India. We have tied so many knots in India during these years, and when one goes to any part of India and stays with a forest officer or a police officer and travels round, all the people are friends. I think we have to be very proud that through all these years we have had British soldiers and sailors walking about the streets of India and I have never yet met a single Indian who was afraid for the virtue of his women folk because British people were there. What other race would respect them as we have done?

[§Mr. Gallacher \(Fife, West\)](#)

That is all boloney.

[§Sir R. Glyn](#)

That is what I feel. By the natural and simple character of British civil officials and soldiers we have [701](#) established something in India which I do not believe any other country could have done. It may be that one is perhaps proud of the people of our own race who serve us, and there may be some in this House who do not think we are as good as other people.

[§Mr. Gallacher](#)

In view of that remark, may I say that I think that the people of this country are as good as those of any other country, and that those of any other country are as good as ours. I do not like to hear anyone blowing so much about his own people.

[§Sir R. Glyn](#)

The hon. Gentleman will not, perhaps, think it inappropriate that, at a time when we are considering winding up British affairs in India, one should pay a tribute to the great service which has been rendered by all manner of people

servicing this country there. We have had the opportunity and I do not think we have abused it. It is going to take a long time to untie all these knots to which I have referred. As I see it, the proposal of the Government is rather like cutting those knots all at once so that the whole thing will crash. I would prefer to have sufficient time to untie them one by one and to be quite sure that when we do untie them the Indians themselves are able to hold up the weight. I believe that we should not say definitely that whatever the conditions and whatever the circumstances we are coming out at a definite date, but, as was suggested by my right hon. Friend the Member for the Scottish Universities (Sir J. Anderson) we should rather set a political date by which time they must have agreed among themselves. Afterwards we shall have to hand over to this, or another form of Government.

The only other thing I would say is that it is not only India which is at stake but the peace of the East. I am certain that that is so, and while India is going through all the contortions that she undoubtedly must go through before she finds her own level in the East there are certainly great dangers all around—in China, Siam, Malay and everywhere. The East is on the move. One knows that, and nothing will stop it rolling along in the same way. All we can do is to try to canalise that force in the part where we are responsible, and see that it does not overflow its banks and cause ruin and devastation elsewhere. I hope that when the Prime Minister replies on behalf of His [702](#)Majesty's Government, something will be said about reinforcing the Civil Service by asking those who know India to go back if necessary, because we have allowed the Services to run down too much, and that is very unfortunate. It is absolutely vital that during this period we should ask those who have served in India if they would be willing to go back and give a hand. They have formed friendships and attachments, and could render very great service—

[§Mr. Alexander](#)

I am obliged to the hon. Member for reminding me. That point was raised by the right hon. Member for the Scottish Universities (Sir J. Anderson) yesterday. There was an invitation to all who were available in 1944. As will be recognised, throughout the war we could not reinforce these services. Many of these service grades stayed in India under great hardship and worked under great strain, and they were so run down at the end that there is not any real prospect of recruiting from them because they are really not able to go back.

[§Sir R. Glyn](#)

The only point I would add is that it is a pity not to be able also to recruit promising young men. Let these people have an opportunity of going to other branches of the Civil Service out side India. We must not at this stage lose the

high standard of efficiency and character which has always existed in the Indian Civil Service.

Some of my hon. Friends and I have been in great doubt as to the proper course to take tonight. I do not like voting against this proposal, and I have thought about it very deeply, but I am absolutely convinced that the suggestion made by the right hon. Member for the Scottish Universities is a practical and constructive one. His Majesty's Government have put down a Motion asking us to say that we approve of everything. I cannot say I approve of everything, because I do not know enough about it. I do not want to shirk my responsibility but I want to support what has been put forward in such an able way and with such a weight of experience by the right hon. Gentleman. Therefore I feel that we should be justified and acting in a proper manner in voting for the Amendment. At the same time I very much hope that His Majesty's Government may be able to say something tonight which will show that the difference between their point of view and that of [703](#) the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the Scottish Universities is not so very great.

[§6.3](#) p.m.

[§Flight-Lieutenant Crawley \(Buckingham\)](#)

The hon. Member for Abingdon (Sir R. Glyn) always makes speeches to which I at any rate listen with great sympathy. Today he concentrated mainly on what he called "the great masses in India," and, obviously, they are the people to whom at the back of our minds we are all devoting our attention and for whom everything we are now discussing is designed. The difficulty we are all up against is that those masses have quite articulate leaders who can sway them, and if we ignore those leaders, the results could be worse than they may be in the future. We cannot ignore the articulate leadership which has risen up in India, even though it may be, and often is, at some distance from the masses which it represents in a rather indefinite way.

Like many other hon. Members who have spoken in this Debate, I come to the subject with a feeling of oppression. Whatever decision is made and whatever Constitution is finally formed in India, there are bound to be immense difficulties and there may be bloodshed. One's sense of oppression is increased by the fact that the decision we are now taking may cause bloodshed not among our own people, but among distant people and among people, the obligations for whom we have assumed as the result of conquest. They are not assumed by agreement but as a result of a rule we have imposed on India by conquest. If one has conquered a people and ruled them and incurred during that rule obligations, it seems to me that one has an even deeper sense of responsibility towards them when one comes to the time for removing that rule

than when dealing with people with whom one has had a measure of agreement on equality.

We have had speeches from hon. Members with great experience. My experience of India is only too little. I was there at the time when the right hon. Member for the Scottish Universities (Sir J. Anderson) was Governor of Bengal. This is a matter on which everyone who has any knowledge of India believes that one must make up one's own mind on the merits of the case as far as one is able to under- [704](#)stand it. It is not a party matter at all. I submit to the House the reasons why I have come to the conclusion that the policy which His Majesty's Government are putting forward is the right and only policy at this time.

The question is really this: can we fulfil our pledges? I put it in that way because, having read the Debate which took place in another place and listened to the speech of the right hon. Member for the Scottish Universities, I cannot help thinking that that is what has been in the minds of most of those who approach the subject from an impartial point of view. At one point in his speech the right hon. Member for the Scottish Universities talked about pledges. He seemed to imply that, in his view, and in the view of all of us, a pledge was a most serious undertaking, and that, in his view, even if circumstances had changed so much from the time when one made the pledge to the time when one came to fulfil it and it was almost impossible of fulfilment in the same form, none the less one was bound to do all one could to fulfil the pledge in its original form. I hope I am not misquoting the right hon. Gentleman. The question of the character of pledges is a very important one, not only in India, but in many other problems at this time. The character of the pledge is a reservation in it. The fact is that many pledges cannot be, and have not been, fulfilled in history, as in private and public life. Many pledges have proved to be incompatible. We have the example of Palestine which makes that abundantly clear. The people who gave the pledges in Palestine and in other cases have not been dishonourable, but it was humanly impossible to fulfil them. That is the reservation which is implicit in a pledge. If circumstances which one believes will obtain at the time one gives the pledge simply do not obtain, and if it is not possible to fulfil the pledge in the sense in which one made it, one is bound to state what the exact circumstances are and reconsider and modify one's given pledge.

Some of the pledges, and the main pledges which we have given to the Indians, have in fact become incompatible in very much the same sense that the pledges given in Palestine did because of the interpretation put on them becoming wholly incompatible. Let me take the two main pledges. The first pledge, on which [705](#)we are all agreed, is the pledge that India should receive its independence, but always attached to that pledge has been the proviso that

before India receives its independence there should be agreement among the various parties in India as to the Constitution under which they were to assume their independence. Implicit in that proviso is the second pledge, which is to protect the minorities in India. It was Lord Halifax in another place who really made the point I shall make next. There has always been behind all this history of Indian affairs the possibility—in recent years the probability—that the time would come when those two pledges became incompatible, and when we would have to face the fact that we would not get agreement between Indian parties and that we would either have to give them independence without agreement or, in order to fulfil the second of the two pledges towards the minorities, to abandon the pledge of giving them independence and stay in India.

I suggest that the time has come. So long as we remain in India, it is evident, just as it has been evident in Palestine, that there is no prospect of the Indian communities agreeing. Everything that happens goes to confirm that view, although they may come closer together. While we are there, as the ruling power, we are not merely a scapegoat for all sides that differ but we are a residual party which they always have in power, for which they compete, and to whom they appeal completely when the crucial moment of coming to a compromise or of making an agreement actually comes. I think it was Lord Linlithgow in another place who made it plain not long ago that in his view, if we stayed in India, over and over again that crucial moment would arise, and always with the same result, and that was our great difficulty.

So it seems to me we have all to face the fact that either we remain in India indefinitely, because there will be no agreement while we are there, and, if we keep our second pledge, we must maintain force to safeguard the minorities, or we must go. If we go, we must give a date because, if we do not, nobody in India will accept the fact that we are going. That is the point which it seems to me hon. Members opposite have refused to face. It seems to me also the point which even the right hon. Member for the Scottish Universities really evaded because, [706](#) earlier in his speech, he said that he thought the giving of a pledge might very well increase the forces of separatism in India, and yet he wishes to give a date by which, if the parties are not united, we shall then consider how we can hand over power. I agree with him that the forces of separatism are very strong but, surely, the effect of that would only be that they would know either that the date which the right hon. Gentleman would give was rigid—that he would then have to do exactly what we are now doing and give another date, whatever the situation was, by which time he would hand over to them however chaotic the situation might be—or, at the back of his mind would be the threat that he would not leave India if the situation was so chaotic by the time his date was reached and it was found impossible to hand over to the powers to whom he wished to hand over. The only difference in his suggestion from the Government's suggestion is really in that implied

threat, because he will give a date by which he hopes the communities will agree but, when he comes to that date, if he intends to get out of India he is bound, however chaotic the situation, to give another date, or none of the communities will believe in his intent to get out of India.

§Sir J. Anderson

If I may interrupt the hon. and gallant Gentleman, my objection has always been to a fixed date for carrying through processes which depend on uncertain factors. I would not fix a second date unless I had taken stock of the situation, knew what I had to do, and was satisfied that I could do it in an orderly fashion and with due regard to the pledges of His Majesty's Government by whatever date it might be. My objection is to fixing a date in advance for the completion of all the necessary processes involved.

§Flight-Lieutenant Crawley

I do not think I was misrepresenting the right hon. Gentleman.

§Sir J. Anderson

I think the hon. and gallant Gentleman has misunderstood me.

§Flight-Lieutenant Crawley

In my opinion, if we stay in India there is no chance of there being agreement between the main parties, and so I still say that if the right hon. Gentleman gives an indefinite date, he will never be able to get out of India if he still wishes to fulfil the [707](#) various other pledges in the strict form in which he regards them. May I, for a moment, consider the other alternative which is the one which most hon. Members opposite entertain, that we should stay in India indefinitely.

§Brigadier Low (Blackpool, North)

Whoever said that?

§Flight-Lieutenant Crawley

The right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill) did not give us a policy—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Let me develop my point. He did not give us a policy; he gave one suggestion only, which was in relation to U.N.O., that certain things might be done through U.N.O. which would help, but he said quite definitely that unity, in his opinion, in India was impossible without the

British Raj. At the same time he made it a condition of the removal of the British Raj that there should be unity.

§Brigadier Low

No, agreement.

§Flight-Lieutenant Crawley

I mean agreement about unity.

§Brigadier Low

Or disunity.

§Earl Winterton (Horsham)

Agreement between Muslims and Hindus.

§Flight-Lieutenant Crawley

He said that in his opinion there would not be agreement without the British Raj. [HON. MEMBERS: "Unity."] I may have the word wrong but, none the less, I think most of us know that the right hon. Gentleman in all his attitude towards India would like to preserve the British Raj. He would like Dominion status. He would like to preserve the British connection. In fact, the Indians repudiate that suggestion and always have; they do not want Dominion status. None the less, the right hon. Gentleman is prepared to go no further in his offers to the Indians now. The right hon. Gentleman said quite clearly today that he and his party had never gone beyond Dominion status, and we know that India rejected it.

§Vice-Admiral Taylor

The hon. and gallant Gentleman has said that Indians do not want Dominion status. I do not think he is right in that respect. The Congress Party may not want Dominion status but certainly the remainder of India does.

708

§Flight-Lieutenant Crawley

I think there were sufficient pronouncements of opinion on this by leading Indians of many other parties beside the Congress Party to show that the majority of educated or political opinion in India does not want Dominion status either. My point is that all the reservations which hon. Members opposite made

about our pledges to the minorities mean, as I shall show in a minute, that we should have to stay in India indefinitely, that you cannot, as an outside Power, ensure anything. You can write into a Constitution, jointly framed, certain safeguards but it depends on the spirit of the people who carry out that Constitution how minorities are safeguarded. When hon. Members opposite say that the one thing they feel they cannot desert and which invalidates all the suggestions made by His Majesty's Government—

§Earl Winterton

Does or does not the hon. and gallant Gentleman deny that His Majesty's Government have given pledges to the minorities?

§Flight-Lieutenant Crawley

I agree that we have given pledges to the minorities, but what I have said is that those pledges have become incompatible with the other pledge of handing over India to the Indian people. We have to do what we can to see that, in handing over, we get written into the Constitution every safeguard we can for the minorities, but we have to face the fact that if we hand over India to the Indians, the fulfilment of those pledges to the minorities depends upon the good will of the people of India who will carry out that Constitution. Any other outlook simply means that if we are to try to safeguard the minorities we will in fact have to stay in India and maintain force on behalf of the minorities. In examining the possibility of the British staying in India to try to safeguard the interests of the minorities, we first have to consider whether, in fact, we have resources to stay against the express will of all the political leaders of India.

The position would deteriorate very rapidly. Although I know that two divisions can maintain a semblance of order over a big area, an enormous number of men would be required, and, as the position deteriorated, more troops would be required from this country. Our manpower position would become much 709more strained. Is any policy which involves that risk possible at this time? Is it politically possible to handicap our manpower position even further? Can we expect the people of this country to accept that? At present one cannot get people to understand and think sufficiently of the displaced persons in Europe who are, Heaven knows, suffering great distress, but when one thinks of the De pressed Classes in India it is impossible to think that the people of this country would accept any arrangement involving large forces being kept there at great sacrifice to this country. If we had to stay for 15 years we would meet with tremendous opposition, and I do not believe that in the face of world opinion we would find it politically possible.

Right hon. and hon. Members opposite, who envisage our staying in India, must have some idea of what type of rule we should maintain. A fact about the Indian Services which they seem to ignore is that they are largely Indianised. Can they really expect the Services, Indianised to the extent of 80 or go per cent., to carry out their policy any longer? Is it not true that in any situation that is likely to arise in India now, if the British remain without a definite date being given for withdrawal, every single Indian member of the Services, will, in the mind of all politically conscious Indians become a political collaborator? We have seen that in Palestine where Arab hates Arab and Jew hates Jew if they think they are collaborating with the British. How could we get the Indianised part of the Services to carry out a policy which, in the view of all political Indians, is anti-Indian? The only conceivable way in which we could stay even for seven years in India would be by instituting a type of rule which we in this country abhor more than any other—a purely dictatorial rule based upon all the things we detest most, such as an informative police, not for an emergency measure, but for a long period and imprisonment without trial. I see no hope of carrying out such a programme, because the Indians would never believe in our intention to get out, but would oppose us at every turn. Would we in fact be able to protect minorities, or would not our very presence there, and the fact that we were linked with the minorities, bring such odium that the position of the minorities might be even worse?

[710](#)Not only can we not stay in India, but even if we are only partly honouring the pledge to the minorities we have to make up our minds which pledges we are honouring fully. We must get out, and get out soon, giving a date, not only because of the psychological effect of doing so, but because, if we do not give a date, we will mislead the Indians, and the minority who are trying to believe we will be able to protect them. That would be the most fatal thing of all. If we do not say definitely when we are going out, they will believe we are going to stay indefinitely and we will be offering something which, in my opinion, we have neither the physical force nor the moral power to give. That would be the most dreaded thing for the people we seek to protect.

[§6.27](#) p.m.

[§Sir Stanley Reed \(Aylesbury\)](#)

I intervene with some reluctance in this Debate because of its enormous complexity. I speak, as almost everyone who has addressed the House has spoken, with a very high and grievous sense of responsibility. I have a sense of responsibility to my political friends, but that is the least of all. In relation to India I know no party; only what conduces in my opinion to the welfare and prosperity of India. I owe a certain responsibility to this House lest views based on long experience in India might mislead it. My overwhelming responsibility is

to my Indian friends. Looking back over the years of my life there, I remember all the kindness, generosity, humanity, and sympathy I received from scores and hundreds of Indians in all parts of the country. When I came to this House I had no prospect of any political ambition being fulfilled because I had none.

But I was hoping for one thing more than anything else—that I might be able in this House to assist towards an understanding of the Indian position which might in some measure repay those rich gifts of friendship and kindness I received during my lifework there. Among my Indian friends, particularly those not specially associated with political parties, those who took an active part in public life, I found an overwhelming desire for an equal status among the nations of the world. That came up in all sorts of odd ways. May I give an instance? Some years ago, before political passions were [711](#) so great as they are today, I was speaking to an old business friend, a man whom we met on terms of entire equality for years, and a companion, the Chief Minister of an Indian State, remarked: "Now, Lalji, why don't you go to London?" My friend flushed, and said "Never as a slave." I said, "What nonsense you are talking; they will deal with you in England as you are, as a man, irrespective of the political status of your country."

Again he repeated "Never as a slave." That impressed me greatly because if that was the feeling of men of this character and position it seemed to me to indicate the state of affairs and a political system which must give us pause. Now, this equality of stature can come in only one way, by placing in the hands of Indians themselves the governance of their country, and making them entirely responsible for it, so that where-ever they may go they can hold their heads high amongst the nations of the world, as an equal among them, with their immense opportunities and resources behind them.

That is not the main issue before this House tonight. We are all agreed that India shall develop to full self-government. Some of us hope that she will desire to remain within the Commonwealth and Empire. I am convinced that her greatest hope for the future is within the Commonwealth and Empire, but I agree that if she opts to remain completely outside it, independent and in treaty relations with us, that is her business. So tonight we are reaching, very fast the final stage in our political association with India. We are realising within the next few months, not much more, what was said by Munro more than a century ago, and by Macaulay more than a century ago, that the fulfilment of our connection with India must be the entire control of their own affairs and their own destiny by the Indians themselves. There is one aspect of this progress which has been mentioned in the course of this Debate, and about which I think it is worth while refreshing our memories tonight. The first real step towards the establishment of an independent Indian Government was taken in 1917, when some of the sloppy Liberalism which had governed our

progress from time to time, came to a definite issue when, for the first time, the [712](#)House accepted the principle of the establishment of responsible government in India. It is rather interesting to recall who took that great decision. It was taken by Austen Chamberlain and the word "responsible" was written in the hand of George Nathaniel Curzon. I say that that was sound Conservative doctrine.

I mention 1917 for a specific reason. It is now 1947. A whole generation has passed, and has grown up in India before we are now reaching the final stage in that policy. If the Government be charged with precipitancy or undue haste, surely the answer is that 30 years is a big span in the life of nations, and a whole generation cannot pass without being moved profoundly in the direction I have indicated, and moved under no ordinary circumstances. We had the 1914–18 war, and its doctrine of self-determination. We have had the recent war, with the Atlantic Charter, and that applies to India as much as to any part of the world. We have had that great tidal wave of the Japanese invasion sweeping across the whole of Eastern Asia, right through Malaya, until it broke upon Imphal, and there it was stayed. Think on these things. We had taken upon ourselves the immense responsibility for the protection of these huge areas, and ask yourselves if any people could be other than profoundly moved and stimulated by the gigantic events that have taken place under our own eyes.

Now we have reached a time when the Government of the day have declared their firm decision to hand over, in June next year, to Indian hands entirely, the main responsibility, if not the sole responsibility, for the governance of their country. That is a great decision. I feel bound to say that it is a tremendous decision. Who in this House can have a greater and more intimate knowledge of the conditions in India today than the Government of the day; and in particular those Members of it who went to India in the Cabinet Mission? We must pay due regard to that very special inside knowledge to which none of us can make equal claim. The Government are acting in this direction, I am convinced, with the highest sense of responsibility. I have known the work of the Prime Minister, from the time of the Simon Commission, too well to have the slightest doubt, whether we agree or differ, that [713](#)he is animated in all his relations with India by the most sober and the most impregnable responsibility for the task he undertakes. Therefore, although I, as everyone else, can see the tremendous nature of this decision, while I and everyone else can see vast issues which may accrue from it, I, for one, am not prepared to criticise the Government for coming to that decision, for it is clear to everyone that the situation in India is rapidly deteriorating.

Some of us have an idea, but only the Government know, how rapid has been the change, so rapid that even the Punjab, which has stood like a rock through

all these difficult days, free from communal strife, progressing rapidly, just as rapidly as any part of India, is now torn by communal strife, and the Muslim League is perhaps succeeding in disrupting the ministry of unity which has carried it through these days. Has it succeeded, or will it succeed, in setting up a stable Government to take its place? I only mention these facts to show how swift has been this process of deterioration, and how it must evidently have influenced, and perhaps forced the Government to the rapidity and definiteness of the decision which they have taken in fixing this final transfer of power in general for next year.

The time is desperately short; should we be any nearer a solution if the Government had said two years hence or three years hence? Would not that time have been spent in futile wrangling, jockeying for position, hair-splitting, and, in the final issue, would not the decision have to be taken more or less in the same space as that which has now been fixed? Therefore, I cannot see that if we had drifted another year or two we should be any nearer a decision than we are now. In another House, a noble Lord, who is very greatly respected by his old colleagues here, and to whose work at the India Office was paid ungrudging tribute by those who knew it, said that it took seven years to fashion the 1935 Act, and yet it failed.

Are we going to fashion an Act for India in these 18 months? I think the reply would be that the Act of 1935 failed in its main purpose because it took seven years. Therefore, the only chance of success now is a speedier decision. All through those weary years of waiting—the two years for the Simon Commission, three years for the Round Table Conference in London, 18 months the Joint Select [714](#)Committee and then a further delay before it was endorsed—I myself, working in conjunction with those actively associated with this constitutional task, felt their spirits, their hopes and anticipations fall down and down as the dreary years passed before any decision was reached—and then cold disappointment.

In the result, one of the greatest Acts in the history of Parliament, one of the greatest Measures for the renunciation of power that we were competent to exercise, failed in its full effect because of these delays. If it had not failed in its full effect, we should not be discussing any Indian problem today, because that Constitution contained within itself the seeds of expansion and development sufficient to meet the growing needs of the country as they arose. So I say again with all the doubts and dangers we see as we look ahead, I cannot criticise the Government for imposing a time factor now, for time is the essence of any solution we can hope to reach. As I cannot find a clear, definite and workable policy other than that which the Government have made out, I, for one, cannot oppose them in the action they are taking.

The whole House listened with profound respect to the notable address of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the Scottish Universities (Sir J. Anderson) yesterday. I listened perhaps with special interest—I was almost inclined to say reverence—because it was my privilege to see something of his work as Governor of Bengal. If it does not seem impertinent to say so, he had a grip of the administration of that difficult Province which has never been surpassed. He had a more firm knowledge of its problems than has ever been held by any Governor from England in any Province in India at any time. Much more than that, behind this great administrative grip, there was a truly liberal mind. While we have the right to expect from him high administrative qualities, he being a man whose whole working life has been spent in an administrative direction, it was gratifying to find the broad liberal spirit which animated him and which, I know, will animate him now.

I listened to that great speech in the hope of finding an alternative policy to that which the Government have pro pounded. I failed to find it. I failed to find any alternative except that he wants to proceed by two stages instead of one. [715](#)That, indeed, in a thing which demands consideration. At some time we must have an appointed day whether it is the Government's appointed day or the appointed day which the right hon. Gentleman foreshadowed. But in the interval, in the interim, what is to be the state of India? Everyone knows that the administrative machine in India is running down. I do not like to use the word deteriorate—it is running down. It was bound to run down, because the Civil Service has been undergoing great changes for years. There have been great changes through the passing of the time when the Civil Service was responsible for policy as well as for administration. There has been a rapid Indianisation of the Service which had been too long delayed and which is now gathering pace at a very rapid rate. There has been the strain on all classes of the Civil Service, almost without relief, through the difficult and exacting war years. Of course, the efficiency of the Civil Service is declining. Men are tired and worn, and incapable of the elasticity demanded by the occasion. I speak with some experience. I was in India for seven years, during the whole of the war, from 1912–1919, without a break of any sort and I know what was my physical condition then.

How are we to maintain or improve the efficiency of the machinery in the intervening period which may make the appointed day considerably protracted? My right hon. Friend said that we should inject into the Civil Service a special cadre of officials who can refresh and strengthen it. No special cadre of officials could effectively be introduced. Quite apart from the fact that their presence will be unwelcome, there will be no desire to help or stimulate them, but on the other hand, human nature being what it is, to embarrass and make things difficult and unsatisfactory for them. Nor can we hope to reinforce and reinvigorate the police by a large injection of Army officers. The language

question, and others, provide difficulties, and unless we are to supersede the whole of our Provincial Governments from their functions under the Act of 1935 and go back to a period of direct rule where the Governors will take sole responsibility, the police will have to work under Indian Ministers in charge of law and order. That, I [716](#)think, rather convincingly disposes of that question.

With the greatest respect to the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the Scottish Universities, to whose ability and talents I gave such homage, when I differ from him I ask most profoundly "Where am I wrong?" I cannot follow him in the arguments he made yesterday. If I stood alone I should still feel that I could not accept the position he adumbrates. But I do not stand alone; I stand with others with wide experience, who have held the highest office in India, and who have been fortified since by a wide knowledge of the world seen from the broader platform, and who have taken precisely the same view. I ask hon. Members to read and to read again and again the speeches made in another place on the second day of the India Debate. If it is not too much for their own political prepossessions, I ask hon. Members to read and to ponder upon the first part of a speech made by Lord Samuel as well.

So we come down to this crucial fact. Here is the definite decision of the Government and here is the date fixed for its fulfilment. I want for a few moments to deal with three main issues arising out of it. There is, first of all, the position of the Indian States. I fully accept the principle that the Indian States have a great contribution to make to the future of India. Sometimes I have heard people say, as they pass from the States to British India, that the people look a little happier when they cross the border into Indian State territory. The Indian Princes and States have made their choice. Very little attention was given to a remarkable speech made a few months ago by the Maharaja of Bhopal, in which he declared himself in favour of the full independence of India, and said so in the most uncompromising terms. In the discussions for participation in the Constituent Assembly which are now going forward, we see that the State of Baroda has already defined the terms of its representation. Many hon. Members have spoken of the position of the Muslims. I speak from a personal standpoint when I say that they are among some of my best and warmest friends, and I am convinced that they demand the surest protection for their economic and cultural interests that can be devised. I believe the Muslims made a mistake in staying out of the Interim Government, and I think it will be the greatest mistake [717](#)for them to stay out of the Constituent Assembly, for the work of that assembly must go on, and, if they refrain or resile from it, they will not have their proper share and influence in fashioning India's Constitution.

When we consider the case of the Scheduled Castes, to whom we desire to extend the maximum share of independence, we must feel uneasy. All that we

can do for the Scheduled Castes is to write into the treaty, or seek to write into the Constitution, the principles of their protection, but the ultimate force behind their protection must be in the country itself and in the Government of that country. If we can secure them legislative protection, we cannot secure them social protection, and it is social protection which goes to the root of the matter.

I would like to give the House one instance of what I mean. When I was in Bombay, an Indian came to me and asked me if I could find him a job. He told me that he was a M.A. of one university and that he held a Ph.D. degree from an American university and that he wanted me to find him an outlet for his abilities and energy. When I asked him where he came from, he told me that he was a Baroda State Scholar, and that the Maharaja of Baroda had provided the whole cost of his education. I said to him, "Surely, as the Maharaja of Baroda has made you a State Scholar and paid for your education in America, he can find you some service in his own State?" What was the answer? The Maharaja of Baroda, a very strong and dominant character, and, theoretically at least, a dictator in his own State, could not find this man a house in which to live in his own capital. This was a man of distinction and character, and yet the Maharaja was unable to help him; he was a Chamar. This House would welcome the maximum protection which could be given to the Scheduled Castes, but the final implement and the final force must rest in the country itself and in the Government of the country, to which we are handing over responsibilities. The real measure of protection for the Scheduled Castes is one that is unanswerable and invincible; that is to refuse their labour, when the whole caste system would come tottering down.

We ought to get away from this parrot cry, "Agreement first and progress after- [718](#)wards." There is nothing which causes so much exasperation in India, because it is felt that it is humbug; it is construed into a pretext for holding on to power. I have given these few impressions of mine on the great issue which we have before us. The Government have taken this immense decision, I am convinced, with full knowledge and with the highest sense of responsibility. No one in the House today can say how it is going to work out. No one can say what form of Government will be developed in the few months that remain before we hand over this supreme task to India. No one can even say definitely that there will be Union Government, or what may happen under the second alternative in the White Paper. I do not think we should be wise or equal to our responsibilities if we run away with the immediate conclusion that there can be no central Government to which we can hand over these powers. I clearly see a contingency in which that may be practicable, although not perhaps entirely what we should wish. The responsibility is the Government's. They must bear it. There can be no going back. What should be the attitude of this House towards it? I commend to your earnest consideration the words of one to whose

knowledge and stature I can lay no claim; it is to say to India, "Our service, our aid and our co-operation are with you in the passage to the new order."

§7.0 p.m.

Mrs. Nichol (Bradford, North)

I have been deeply moved, as indeed must all of us, by the speech of the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Sir S. Reed) who spoke with such great sincerity and a profound knowledge of this subject. I am very pleased to be able to take part in this Debate, because I want to express my admiration of the Government for the courage they have shown in the decision they have made. To those of us who for so long have been associated with movements working for freedom and independence in India, this is, indeed, a great moment. I, together with several other hon. Members, was privileged to go to India just over a year ago. Whilst I should very much dislike to present myself in the guise of the omniscient returned traveller, it is, nevertheless, true to say that we were brought face to face, in a most remarkable way, with the surging desire of Indians that the British should quit their country, and leave it to them. We met that desire [719](#)at every turn. Great masses of Indians showed us the warmest friendliness, and many of them showed us the most beautiful hospitality. Nevertheless, they made it very clear that the British had overstayed their welcome. Indeed, their friendliness and hospitality were so splendid that, had I not been sure, deep down inside me, of the complete sincerity and genuineness of this Government's desire to leave India, I could scarcely have borne their kindness.

But it was apparent that, in their minds, there was always the one question, "Yes, you say you are going to leave, but when? There is never a date." There was always the doubt and the suspicion that they were going to be fobbed off again, and always the feeling that their communal and religious differences were being used as an excuse for us to stay longer. If we decided to stay longer, when could agreement be reached? Supposing we did put off our withdrawal from India for another three or five years, in the hope that they would compose their differences, does any hon. Member really believe that agreement would be reached in three, five, or even more years? I feel that the answer to that would be, "No." A definite date must be fixed, and, to my mind, 15 months is not too short a period for the Indians to come to some measure of agreement, and to provide a sound constitutional structure based on general principles.

Suppose that a perfect, or nearly perfect, Constitution on paper were drawn up, not in 15 months, but in this longer period, of, say, five years, and that we then quitted India. The problem of who was to operate the Constitution would still remain. The question is, Who is to operate the Constitution? And the answer is,

the Indians themselves. British bayonets cannot continue to give questionable protection in India. The right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill) became very eloquent on the subject of the depressed classes in India. But how have we, in all these years, been able to resolve that dreadful problem? What have we been able to do all the years that we have been in India?

This is India's problem, and India knows it. It is a problem which she, and she alone, can settle. She will settle it more easily, and more quickly, if she settles it as a free country. There are [720](#) many people in this country, and, I am afraid, among hon. Members opposite, who cannot quite rid themselves, if I may say it without offence, of the "White Sahib" mentality. They insist on thinking what they are going to do for India, or what we are going to do for India. They will not understand that India can govern herself. She wants to govern her self; she insists upon governing herself, and quite rightly.

There is another thing which many hon. Members fail to realise, that we are dealing with a new India, which has been caught up in all the upsurging which is flaring up in other parts of the world. India is seeing, not only the concluding stages of her age-long struggle for independence and freedom, but she is feeling the resurgence which is being felt in many parts of the world. The same impetus which put a Socialist Government into power in this country in 1945, is working like yeast in India today. I know that, because I have met many Indians. When I was there I talked to young students, young men and young women, as well as young workers and young trade unionists. I spoke many times in girls' colleges, where there were from 150 to 200 young women. I used to think that the questions they would ask would be wistful questions, about when we intended to quit India. But I was surprised, and delighted, to find that their knowledge included, not only English literature, poetry and plays, but that they had a profound knowledge of politics, and of what was going on in the world. They wanted to know about our 1944 education, about prefabricated houses, about Indonesia, about Greece, and about all manner of things. They showed a knowledge which it would be difficult to find in comparable places in Britain. These young women are caught up in a great eagerness, and a great desire to get on with the problems which are facing India today.

In the course of this two-day Debate, the seriousness of the problems facing India has been mentioned many times. The Indian leaders know those problems better than we know them. Have they not agonised over them for years, and have not many of them suffered in gaol for years trying to solve them? They know the problems of poverty, of food, of bad housing, of bad. [721](#) sanitation, and of lack of education. They know those things, and they hate them. They want social justice, and they want to build up a fine, strong India. They can do it, but they can do it better when they are free. A great

decision has been made, but, as has been said repeatedly from these benches, it has not been made lightly, and, without care and deliberation.

In the course of his speech yesterday, the right hon. Member for the Scottish Universities (Sir J. Anderson) recalled a conversation he had had with an Indian leader, who said at the end of the conversation, "I hate your Government; I hate your kind of Government, but I like a Government that governs." I think I could say that that sentiment applies to this Government. This Government are governing, and they have, I consider, shown great statesmanship. It is a test of great statesmanship when a time can be chosen as being the moment for a great act which will not only set a country free, but will allow it to take its place in the comity of nations. I felt very hesitant about joining in this Debate because I know that on both sides of the House there are Members with a profound knowledge of India—men who have lived and worked there for many years, who are conversant with the Army side, the Civil Service side and so on. They know India well. But, if I may say so with respect, it is not only a deep knowledge which is necessary in assessing our views on this question. It involves the whole question of feeling and of approach, and there are thousands of people who feel keenly that we are doing the right thing and who know in their hearts that it is the only way. Fix a date. Let the Indians know that we are sincere and genuine. They have waited so long. They have always waited and then been put off. It cannot go on. In making this statement, in being decisive and courageous, the Government are helping India to become strong, great and powerful and, as I said, to take her place along with the other great nations of the world.

Not long ago in this House some of us met a prominent Indian. He was telling us of the great schemes which already many of the Indian leaders have in their minds for India—schemes for electrification, agriculture, education, communications, irrigation and so on. In all these schemes he stressed how much the [722](#)Indians would need our experts, technicians and our men and women of experience. He repeatedly stressed, in the conversation which we had, how much he and the others, who are great names in India today, hope that this great friendship between India and Britain will last, how the two countries will need each other and will be able to use the skill and knowledge which each possesses. It is with great pride that I support my Government in this Motion

[§7.14 p.m.](#)

[§Mr. Niall Macpherson \(Dumfries\)](#)

The hon. Lady the Member for North Bradford (Mrs. Nichol) has spoken with great effect and with deep feeling in this matter. I think the Debate has

proceeded long enough for Members on both sides to realise that those who are speaking in it have thought on these matters very greatly and, in many cases, have reached their decisions, as my hon. Friend the Member for Abingdon (Sir R. Glyn) said, with considerable reluctance. There is no question but that the vast majority of those in this House keenly desire to give India her independence. Indeed, the House is pledged to do so as soon as possible after the war. But we are not today discussing the question of whether or not India should have her independence. One or two hon. Members on the other side of the House indicated that they thought hon. Members on this side were reluctant to give her independence, but that is not the question at all. Hon. Members on this side as well as hon. Members opposite are capable—and, indeed, I believe are better capable—of facing realities, and they know that India must have independence. The question, as the hon. Member for North Bradford said, is a question of feeling and of approach. Is the Government's approach in this matter the right or the wrong one? We are all agreed on the intention which, I submit, is to hand India in an orderly fashion to a Government or Governments capable of exercising the functions of government, and in particular of maintaining peace and respect for minority rights. It is the method alone which is in doubt.

The country at large was undoubtedly greatly influenced by the speech of the noble Earl, in another place. His argument, I thought, ran roughly as follows: there has been no alternative suggestion to [723](#)the Government's plan, therefore, it would be wrong to divide against that plan, because such a division would be misinterpreted in India. He put forward that argument with great persuasion and he convinced my hon. Friends and my self. Since then we have had an opportunity of considering it in the light of the speech of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the Scottish Universities (Sir J. Anderson). It is the duty of the Opposition to point out any defects which may exist in the Government plan, and to vote against the plan in order to reinforce their convictions that the Government should be prepared to change it in the light of the defects revealed. My right hon. Friend's speech put forward an alternative solution. I hope I do not misrepresent that solution; if I do, it will rank as yet another alternative solution. That solution was to fix a date by which the Constituent Assembly should be set up in accordance with the Cabinet Mission's plan, failing which the Government should immediately declare the bodies to whom it proposed to hand over power, and proceed with all possible speed to do so, in an orderly fashion.

The hon. Member for Swindon (Mr. T. Reid), who is not in his place, criticised this as a conditional promise to hand over power. In his view, a firm and categorical promise was required. It is nothing of the sort. What we are saying is this: "In the first place, we are going to hand over power; in the second place, either you agree on the Cabinet Mission's plan or you do not, but we

cannot wait indefinitely for an agreement; thirdly, if you agree, by a given day we shall hand over control to the Constituent Assembly within a specified period—it might be three months, six months, nine months or a year. If you do not agree we shall at that time, on the named day, say to whom we will hand over power, and we shall proceed with the utmost rapidity to hand over power to our designees." That is not a conditional arrangement at all. It says: "Either it happens by a given date or it does not. If it does we shall do this. If it does not we shall do that." There is nothing conditional about it at all.

What exactly does the Government proposal amount to? I ask the indulgence of the House while I examine it a little in detail. It seems to me that the [724](#) Government proposal says this: "Either you agree or you do not. If you agree, good and well, we shall hand over power at the definite date, 15 months ahead. But in any case we mean to hand over power in 15 months." The first objection that comes to mind is this—and I ask the House to give it very careful consideration. At what point in those 15 months will the Government say that the Constituent Assembly has failed to function? When will they say: "You have lost your chance. It is now too late. We shall make our own arrangements"? There must be some time at which they would say that. It might be they would say it in March, 1948. If they did so, leaving only three months for all the subsequent arrangements, it would always be open to the Indians to say: "Here is another example of the bad faith of the British. We, the Indians, claim that the parties were about to come to an agreement. If you had left us until April we should have agreed. Instead of that you are making your own arrangements."

The second criticism is this. The effect of this statement may easily be contrary to the very best intentions of the Government. It may easily give direct encouragement to those who feel they would gain more by standing out of the Constituent Assembly than by awaiting the British announcement of to whom they were handing over power. In other words, there may be a very large section—indeed, one can say straight away the Muslim League—who would say they would rather be British subjects than submit to the dictates of Congress, or the majority of Congress, whichever it be. The third criticism I make is that of vagueness. In this White Paper there is no undertaking at all. The wording is: His Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that it is their definite intention to take the necessary steps to effect the transference... There is no undertaking. They merely make a statement that at present it is their intention to do such and such a thing. The right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Defence said today—I took his words down—that the Indian leaders put their interpretation on the written word as it stands. Where is the written word as it stands? There is a grave risk that this, again, will be interpreted only as an intention and not as a definite undertaking. The reason for that is, it [725](#) is quite

clear we cannot be certain of carrying out, by that definite date, what we say we intend to carry out.

There is a further objection, which has been mentioned already by my right hon. Friend the Member for the Scottish Universities, namely, the time factor. Even if the Muslim League were to join the Constituent Assembly in the near future, the time would be very short—15 months—in which to thresh out a new Constitution, and thereafter make the necessary arrangements to move. It will be within the recollection of the House that it took 100 days for the Constituent Assembly at Philadelphia to form the American Federal Constitution. The task in India is far more complicated, and may well take much longer. In addition, there are the difficulties of the handing over to be negotiated. Suppose that does not happen. Suppose the Constituent Assembly is never properly established. In that case we have, in the intervening time, to carry out all these vastly detailed measures of handing over to those bodies to whom we choose to hand over, whether they be individual States or groups of States, or individual Provinces or groups of Provinces. All that has to be arranged within 15 months. That is a task quite beyond the powers of any Government.

It may be claimed that it would have been better had Parliament been consulted, and had there been a chance of a Debate in Parliament before this definite announcement was made. After all, before the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs went to Moscow there was a Debate in this House to give general guidance. It is not denied that nobody has such intimate knowledge of the question as the right hon. Gentleman opposite and his colleagues. At the same time, it would have been far better had this matter been thoroughly discussed first, in the House, before we on this side were faced with this decision of a definite date. Reference has been made to the question of minorities. The hon. and gallant Member for Buckingham (Flight-Lieutenant Crawley) expressed the opinion that we could no longer fulfil our pledge to the minorities. I was glad, however, that he went on to say that did not, in his view, release us from taking the maximum steps possible to defend the rights of the minorities by writing into [726](#) treaties provisions for their protection, and by giving them, as we have already given in the Cabinet Mission Plan, provision, through an advisory council, for the protection of their rights. In addition, as the hon. Member for Gateshead (Mr. Zilliacus) said, the United Nations organisation has a special responsibility for the protection of minorities. Indeed, the leader of the Depressed Classes has already contemplated measures for putting before the United Nations Assembly the case of the Depressed Classes in India. I am certain that hon. Members on both sides of the House will be anxious to do their utmost and to exert their full influence for the protection of those minorities, as far as in us lies.

The hon. Member for West Leyton (Mr. Sorensen) referred to the motive for the acquisition of India as being one of Imperial greed. Surely, he is aware that successive Governments of this country were reluctant to assume government in India, and that the reason why we did so was to protect our own British subjects out there, and those who were dependent on them.

§Mr. Messer (Tottenham, South)

And the profits of the East India Company.

§Mr. Macpherson

I am talking of territory. It was for that reason that there gradually spread over the whole of India the British influence, which has been beneficent, and has brought India through two wars almost unscathed. The greatest of the blessings we have given to India is the Pax Britannica, and we on this side, ardently hope that India will continue to enjoy that peace; that she will come within the union of the British Commonwealth of Nations, knowing that there is no suggestion of inferiority whatsoever in Dominion status, and that it gives the right to claim a share in the Pax Britannica. We all, I believe, most ardently desire the unity of India, and I believe that that is a governing motive in the minds of all Indians. Nothing is more striking than the way in which, at the present time, despite the communal grievances, despite the differences in the Indian Cabinet, plans are being made for industry, and development plans of all kinds, on an all India basis; and the Muslim members of the interim Government themselves are making such plans. They are all thinking in terms of a united India.

727We all hope profoundly that the Government will be ready, and that the effect of their statement will be to bring together the Congress; and those who are at present in the Constituent Assembly, on the one hand, and the Muslim League on the other. I think it would be a great error to impose any kind of unity on India. Here I would give a counsel to friends in India in the Constituent Assembly. Surely, it is necessary, in accordance with the Cabinet Mission's plans, in the early stages to set up a federation on the loosest possible basis, with the surrender of the minimum powers to the Centre, in sure knowledge that the identity of interests of all Provinces in all parts of India will lead to an ever increasing and developing unity in India, and to increasing co-operation between all parts of India.

Therefore, I hope very much that the Cabinet Mission's plan will be implemented, that there will be formed in the near future a Constituent Assembly. I remember that when starters used to fire guns behind me, and expect me to run it was customary for them to say, "Get on your marks. Get

set. Go," This plan is simply lining up the runners and saying, "Go right on." Surely, it would have been better to give more time to this matter. Or the date for agreement might have been fixed with a smaller interval, provided there were two stages in the operation.

To sum up my objections to the Government's plan, they are these. First, it gives no indication how long the Government will give the Muslim League to come into the Constituent Assembly; secondly, so far from aiding the unity of India, it imperils it; thirdly, it gives no specific undertaking, but is merely a statement of intention, which may unintentionally mislead; fourth, the time is inadequate for the purpose envisaged; and, fifth, it would have been better to have obtained the support of the whole House before making this announcement.

§7.36 p.m.

Mr. Harold Davies (Leek)

As many hon. Members want to take part in this Debate, I shall be very brief. I want to follow one or two points made by the hon. Member for Dumfries (Mr. N. Macpherson). It seems to me that, with two or three honourable exceptions, this House is looking at India and looking at [728](#)Asia in exactly the same way as it looked at them in 1922—especially the right hon. Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill)—and as it looked at them in 1930, and as it looked at them even in 1910. Is it not yet realised by hon. and right hon. Gentlemen on the other side of the House that the form and content of this problem have entirely altered? Is this the time to talk and quibble about dates? Is this the time to talk about jumping the chasm and trying to do it in two stages? As the Minister of Defence said, this is the moment when decision is needed—volcanic decision. The party opposite have accused us of being incapable of making decisions, but it is they who cannot make them. Cannot they see that, at this moment, we have done this for reasons that will help India and the Asiatic peoples to fulfil their destiny?

The hon. Member for Aylesbury (Sir S. Reed) made what I considered one of the finest speeches I have heard in this House. I see sniggers on the faces of one or two hon. Members opposite. But his speech was a sincere speech. We may not agree with hon. Members opposite, but if their speeches are sincere we respect them. That speech did seem to me to be one of the finest speeches in the two days we have had on this Debate. So was the speech of the hon. and gallant Member for Down (Sir W. Smiles). They are men of vast experience, and they made painful decisions. Instead of getting help from the entire party opposite at this critical moment—with the exception of those two hon. Members I have mentioned—we get a tub-thumping speech from the Leader of the

Opposition that was worthy of the year 1910. Those years have completely gone. We ask hon. Members to recollect that their speeches may be read from one end of India to the other. I want to be fair, but, bearing that fact in mind, I must say that the right hon. Member for Woodford, on this occasion as on others, made one of the most irresponsible speeches that he has made in the last two or three years.

I believe that India is the pivot of the Pacific Ocean area. All the peoples of Asia are on the move. Can we in this House, by wishful thinking, sweep aside this natural desire for independence, freedom and nationalism that has grown in Asia from Karachi to Peking, from Karachi to Indonesia and Indo-China? That is all part of that movement, and we [729](#) must recognise it. I am not an Utopian. I know that the change over will not be easy. But there is no hon. Member opposite who has given any concrete, practical alternative to the decision, which has been made by my right hon. Friends. What alternative can we give?

This little old country is tottering and wounded as a result of the wars inherent in the capitalist system. Can we, today, carry out vast commitments from one end of the world to another? Is it not time that we said to those for whom we have spoken so long, "The time has come when you shall have your independence. That time has come; the moment is here"? I should like to recall what Macaulay said: Many politicians of our times are in the habit of laying it down as a self-evident proposition, that no people ought to be free until they are fit to use their freedom. This maxim is worthy of the fool in the old story who resolved not to go into the water until he had learned to swim. India must learn now to build up democracy. I know that independence may not mean complete freedom to the masses of the people at the moment, but I say to the leaders of the Muslims and Hindus that unless they serve their people fairly and build up a democratic system, they will be swept aside, like chaff before the wind, by the trade union movement and other organisations in India. Do not let this House jump to the conclusion that nothing but communalism and religious differences will be found in India. We saw a magnificent Indian Army in Burma. They wiped away some of their differences, and that was only the small beginning. The factory system in Calcutta and some of the other cities also shows a new beginning. We, in this Labour movement of ours, have promised, by the Atlantic Charter, that we will build up a system of society where there will be independence and freedom. We have made this decision, and I ask all sides in India to appreciate the responsibility which has now been put on their shoulders.

Reference was made yesterday to the sterling balances. What is this niggardly amount at a moment like this? If we want India to treat us fairly over the sterling balances, what could be better than this definite concrete gesture? Democracy will break through in India. We talk about the railways we have

built, and about this and that, but I have just one figure to show the unplanned [730](#) industrialism our business system has given to India. The entire output of electricity generated in India in 12 months is equal to the energy generated in the United States in one week, and 50 per cent. of that is given to the four great cities where the white sahibs congregate more than anywhere else.

We are giving India their opportunity today, and I believe this gesture of the Labour movement will be remembered for ever in the history of India. The times ahead may be difficult. Suggestions have been made that we might use the United Nations, but that will depend on India, and on India alone. It is fantastic for us to give niggardly dates and indefiniteness; we have to make decisions. This Government have the courage to make a decision, and I shall be proud to support it in the Division Lobby tonight.

§7.45 p.m

[§Brigadier Low \(Blackpool, North\)](#)

The speech of the hon. Member for Leek (Mr. Harold Davies) has hardly helped me in this problem, and I doubt whether he has helped any of his right hon. Friends. He told us that this country is tottering, and that will be of small comfort to the Foreign Secretary.

[§Mr. Harold Davies](#)

Industrially.

[§Brigadier Low](#)

The hon. Member did not say that. He, and many of his friends, keep harping on the necessity for us to make gestures to India. Why do we keep on having to make gesture after gesture? Does any Indian ever make any gesture to us? As the right hon. Gentleman will remember, I went out with the Parliamentary Delegation to India last year. I have also just been to India again. Until the publication of this statement, I was wholeheartedly in support of the Government's policy. The Cabinet Mission, of which the right hon. Gentleman was one of its members, has played a very great part in making the Indian people and Indian leaders appreciate the sincerity and purpose of this country. If any of my colleagues who were with me in January, 1946, go back to India now, they will, see a great difference, which has been brought about very largely by the Mission, in the attitude of the people of India towards this country. I was convinced that there was no further need for gestures on the part of this country to [731](#) bring about an understanding of our sincerity. I do not believe—if the hon. Member has anything to say I will give way to him.

§Mr. Messer

I only wanted to say that as there have been so many gestures the time has come for action.

§Brigadier Low

I do not believe the need to make a gesture is the reason for the publication of this new plan. I take this to be a departure in policy, and also to be an adoption of the plan put forward to the House in December, when I was not present, by the hon. and gallant Member for Aston (Major Wyatt). I see he is in his place, and perhaps when he takes part in this Debate he will be able to tell us the Government policy we shall be discussing at the next Debate. The right hon. Gentleman has made the claim that this is a new policy. It is worth while reminding the House, that after he had listened to the hon. and gallant Member for Aston, the Minister of Defence stated: Having listened to all this Debate, I have yet to learn of any practical alternative plan."—[OFFICIAL, REPORT, 13th December, 1946; Vol 431, c. 1540.] That means an alternative plan to the original plan of the Cabinet Mission. The right hon. Gentleman listened to the plan put forward by the hon. and gallant Member, which in substance was the same as the statement he has now issued. Perhaps the Prime Minister can tell us something more definite about what has happened since December to make such a great difference. We are also told that though this is a departure, it is a logical end to the policy which this country has pursued towards India in the last 80 years. I see that the right hon. Gentleman nods his head. If it is the logical end, I would ask him whether it was fair and completely honest to invite the support of this House, and to invite my support, in particular, and the support of the people of the country to approve the plan of the Cabinet Mission?

That Mission was understood to have four definite conditions. Those four conditions were that transfer should be orderly, that there should be a measure of agreement between Indians about the new constitution, that our obligations towards the minorities and the States should be fulfilled, and that a treaty should be completed. Those were the four conditions [732](#) on which the provisional plan was based. If the Government are to stand by their statement that that is the logical result of this country's policy towards India then, at the time that they encouraged us to support their plan on those conditions they knew, or ought to have known, that they were misleading us. I would like an explanation of that. The right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Defence may dissent, but it is not an unfair argument; perhaps it will appeal to his right hon. and learned Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

The arguments against this plan have been gone through in some detail, and I want to deal with only two points. The first is that it encourages disunity. I

believe most sincerely that this plan will do that. I do not want to encourage disunity; I believe in the unity of India, and I and most of my hon. Friends hope for it. It is true that the transfer of power to a number of Governments has been contemplated, but the trouble is that we have made no preparations for that. We have, in our whole policy up to last month, prepared for handing over to a Central Government. If we were setting a date for the transfer of power from this country to a definite, known, Central Government then I would be in a very different position tonight. I would have to think over that matter separately. But we are asked to approve a policy of handing over power either to a Central Government or, if there be no Central Government, to some unnamed bodies, for whom we have not prepared in any way. That is the trouble about the whole of this plan as I see it.

What are the things that matter, particularly from the point of view of the unity of India? There is, first of all, the Army. The right hon. Gentleman, I know, appreciates the wonderful services they gave in the war, but he should have added an appreciation of the magnificent services they have given during the past year, especially the last six months, in looking after the internal security of India.

§Mr. A. V. Alexander

Hear, hear.

§Brigadier Low

They have never wavered. Their officers, mostly excellent Indians, have led their men magnificently and impartially, and I think we should pay a tribute to them. That Army is a wonderful machine. It has been built up [733](#) by the guidance of magnificent officers from this country, and we and India are lucky today to have that fine soldier, Field-Marshal Auchinlech as Commander in-Chief. I hope he will remain to the Indian Government so long as they require him. That Army has been built up, too, because of the wonderful physique and latent qualities of the Indians themselves, and it would be a tragedy if all the work of the last 50 years was to be torn up, and this Army scattered to the four winds.

What about the bureaucracy of India? Surely, the whole administration in India is based on the Central Government. If we were to hand over to one, two, or three, sectional Governments then perhaps, given time, we might prepare, or help them prepare, an administration to deal with that problem. But, here, we have a vast organisation prepared only for the Central Government of India. Then there is the problem of finance. Have the Government thought out this question? At the moment, the equivalent of our Government securities are the

Central Government India Loans. What happens to that? What is the position if uncertainty in India continues, about the credit of the Government of India? I raise this matter because I think it is of the greatest importance. I do not want to upset the credit of the Government of India. There is no reason to do that, but this is a matter which requires thinking out, and a clear answer.

I have dealt with unity, and now I would like to come to the question of administrative efficiency. Anyone who visits India today will be aware of the administrative decline that has taken place. As the Indian leaders know themselves, there is bound to be a transition from western standards to, at least, western and eastern standards. We have always planned that we shall hand over completely to India. Their standards are not always the same as ours; I am not saying whether they are better or worse, but they are not the same, and an alteration of standard is taking place. I submit that the administrative efficiency of India is not the really governing factor in the plan that we in this country should have for the future of India. In His Majesty's Government's arguments for the defence of the present scheme they have fallen back on the administrative decline in India today. When one considers making a plan [734](#)as, I think, somebody wrote the other day in "The Times," one has to work out among all the factors that affect that plan, what will be the limiting and governing factor. My hon. Friends and I consider that the real governing factor that must affect the plans we make today for the future of India are the pledges we have given, and the obligations we have undertaken. I was glad to hear my right hon. Friend the Member for the Scottish Universities (Sir J. Anderson) point out to the Government—and I ask the House to believe him—that they could have improved the administrative services, even in the last two years, on a temporary basis.

[§Mr. A. V. Alexander](#)

I beg the hon. and gallant Member to remember what I said earlier today. I am not quite sure of the words I used, but I will say this now: Early in 1945 the whole question was considered, not by us especially, but by the Coalition Government which reported to the Cabinet in April, 1945, and it was decided, after conferring between four separate Departments, that it was not practicable to do so. The Cabinet approved that decision, and the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the Scottish Universities (Sir J. Anderson) was a Member of the Cabinet at that time.

[§Mr. Godfrey Nicholson \(Farnham\)](#)

I must press the right hon. Gentleman on this point. It is remarkable that at the end of this Debate he should produce an amazing statement like this. I am not saying that it is inadequate but it is staggering that he should attempt to put

responsibility for this crisis on to the decision of another Government. The statement he made is of the greatest importance and—

§Mr. Deputy-Speaker (Major Milner)

The hon. Gentleman cannot make a speech.

§Mr. Nicholson

I want to ask a question, Sir.

§Mr. Deputy-Speaker

I understood that that was the reason why the hon. Gentleman rose.

§Mr. Nicholson

I am going to ask the right hon. Gentleman whether he will repeat that statement tonight when the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. R. A. Butler) and the right hon. Member for the Scottish [735](#)Universities (Sir J. Anderson) are in the House.

§Mr. Alexander

Certainly. I have a record of it here.

§Mr. Cove (Aberavon)

On a point of Order. May I put questions to the right hon. Gentleman, and will he be allowed to reply to hon. Members all round the House?

§Mr. Deputy-Speaker

The hon. and gallant Gentleman who was in possession of the Floor gave way.

§Mr. Cove

It is most unusual, if I may say so, to give way to another Member like that.

§Mr. Alexander

As a matter of courtesy and explanation, I would only say to the hon. Gentleman opposite that I did not deliver my speech as I had intended to deliver it, replying to the whole of the Debate yesterday; I only replied to the right hon. Gentleman who opened the Debate today. What I have just said I

said deliberately, and I am quite prepared to repeat it at any time and in any place.

§ Brigadier Low

I understand that the effect of all that is that the right hon. Gentleman is putting the blame for the decision on the previous Government, but is not telling us whether it was right or wrong. In my view, and I was glad to hear from my right hon. Friend in front that it is also his opinion, something could have been done. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman has forgotten that when Mr. Casey went as Governor of Bengal he took with him well over 100 Army officers who had never been to India before. Some were from the Dominions and some from this country, and they did magnificent service there. I am quite aware that it is no good sending an untrained officer into an Indian district, that is another matter altogether, but there are plenty of other jobs for them to do; my right hon. Friend made that absolutely clear.

There is one other way in which I submit the Government ought to have helped the administration of India. This may strike the House and the Government as a little paradoxical in view of what I have said before, but it is my opinion that the dual allegiance which a member of the Secretary of State Services owes at the present time is detrimental to his efficiency [736](#) and to his happiness. That dual allegiance is detrimental, and it has never been my view that we need wait to wind up the Secretary of State's Services until the date of the actual transfer of power. I would like the Government to let us know what plans they have about the future of the Secretary of State's Services, those magnificent men who have given all their lives, many of whom have now to turn round and embark upon some quite new job. We hope that many of them will stay and serve the Indian Government as loyally as they have served the Crown in the past, but great changes are taking place and there will be greater changes in the future, and they are entitled to their choice and to know what their position is to be.

In putting forward their argument about the state of the administration in India, the Government and their supporters have, from time to time, stressed the gap that has to be bridged between power on the one hand and responsibility on the other. I think the right hon. Gentleman would agree that power has now passed in great measure to the Indians in the Indian Government. That had happened, in fact, last autumn. When I was in India last December, it seemed peculiar to read in the report of the Debate that the right hon. Gentleman had said: There had been in fact no actual constitutional change, and certainly there could not be any constitutional change without the Government coming to Parliament for authority."—[\[OFFICIAL REPORT, 13th December, 1946; Vol. 431, c. 1549.\]](#) There has in fact been constitutional change, though in law there may

have been no change. If the Government had kept the House and the country more informed of what the position was, many of the doubts and difficulties that have arisen in the past few months would not have arisen.

Let me turn to the future. It is clear that the intention expressed is almost a pledge given by His Majesty's Government to the people of India, and they will obviously not wish to depart from that pledge in any way. I can add my hopes to the hopes already expressed in all parts of the House that this scheme will succeed. I find it difficult to see how it will succeed, but I hope it will, I hope most sincerely that it will.

737

§Mr. A. V. Alexander

You are not helping it tonight.

§Brigadier Low

The right hon. Gentleman says I am not helping it—

§Mr. Alexander

Not the hon. and gallant Gentleman, but the party opposite and this Division.

§Mr. Nicholson

Who is interrupting now?

§Brigadier Low

It is surely right, when we differ on big issues like this, that we should say what exactly lies in our minds, and I do encourage the Government to make the people of India understand that we have as much right to say what we believe as they have to say what they believe. The right hon. Gentleman is not treating the people of India on a footing of equality if he believes that they will be offended by anything that is said here. When the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition made his speech in December, I discussed it with a leading Congress politician in Calcutta, and he had taken no offence at all. Indeed, he said that the one British politician he really liked was Mr. Churchill, if I may use his words, because he always spoke his mind. So do not let us be mealy-mouthed.

Now I must come to an end. I number myself among the many hon. Members of this House who have a great love for India. We want to help India, but we are given very little chance owing to the tact that the Government do not keep

us sufficiently informed. I do hope that, whatever differences there may be between us on the rightness or wrongness of this statement, and I do differ from the right hon. Gentleman on that, he will, during the coming months, keep us informed of what is going on. I hope he will take the House and the people of the country into his confidence, and I hope that as he works out his plan, which obviously he has not worked out yet in detail, he will let the House know the details. One of the later speakers has said that India will in future play a great part in the peace of the Far East. I believe that, too. I believe that it is vital, not only for the peace of the Far East but also in the end for the peace of the world, that the various parts and Provinces of India should either be united or be able to live together in a truly co-operative spirit.

[738](#)

§8.9 p.m.

[§Mr. Piratin](#) (Mile End)

I find it rather difficult to follow in the strain of the last speaker because I do not think I can achieve the emotion that he managed to instil into his statement. I think it is becoming apparent at this stage of the Debate that even those Members of the Conservative Party who are opposing the Government's proposals with such fury are beginning to lose some of the support from their own benches. Some of the later speakers—I am not referring now to the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Sir S. Reed)—seem to have been pulling their punches a little, and even the last speaker opposite did that here and there.

[§Brigadier Low](#) rose—

[§Mr. Piratin](#)

I am prepared to give way on some other occasion, but I want now to speak quickly, as other hon. Members want to get in. I will try to set an example to my predecessor. I hope that this House will firmly reject the Conservative Amendment. I had hoped that far more hon. Members on the other side would have heard the speech of the hon. Member for Aylesbury. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Leek (Mr. Harold Davies) that it was one of the wisest speeches we have heard from the Benches opposite. I do not agree with much of what the hon. Member for Aylesbury said, but nevertheless, it was one of the wisest and most cogent speeches I have ever heard from the other side of the House. One might have hoped that the hon. and gallant Member for North Blackpool (Brigadier Low) would have taken a lesson from his older colleague who spoke before him. There was a vivid contrast between the speech of the hon. Member for Aylesbury and the speech of his Leader, the right hon.

Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill). We listened this afternoon to what was nothing more than a tub-thumping speech by the right hon. Member for Woodford.

§Brigadier Low

It has been described as brilliantly phrased.

§Mr. Piratin

It may have been brilliantly phrased, but I submit that there was not one iota of constructiveness in the whole speech. Although the right hon. Gentleman claimed to have a close acquaintance with the problem of India for as long as some of us have been alive, he did not make one constructive point, [739](#)and everything he said was deliberately mischievous. It was, therefore, a relief to listen to the speech of the hon. Member for Aylesbury, and, yesterday evening, the speech of the hon. and gallant Member for Down (Sir W. Smiles). The Tory Amendment is only a manoeuvre to delay a settlement of the Indian problem. Their politics are apparent. The right hon. Member for Woodford made it quite clear when, after the Atlantic Charter was signed, he was asked whether it would apply to India, and he then said that it would not apply to India. I am speaking from memory and, of course, I am paraphrasing what he said. What the right hon. Member for Woodford said this afternoon was merely an elaboration of what he said a few years ago.

I would like to give my full support to the Government's policy, but I am sorry I cannot do so until I hear some further statement from the Government on the points I am about to make. I hope the Prime Minister may be acquainted of these points and that he will reply to them when he speaks. First, when we speak of the transfer of power in June, 1948, what do we mean? To whom is power to be transferred? The White Paper says that it is hoped that there will be a fully responsible Constituent Assembly, but, on the other hand, if there is not such a fully responsible Constituent Assembly, the British Government will then consider to whom power should be handed over firstly, whether as a whole to some form of Central Government; or to some existing Provincial Governments, or in some other way still undecided.

I submit that this surely places a premium on obstruction, because it stands to reason that such elements in India as do not want to see a united India—and hon. Members on all sides of the House say they are for a united India—will do their utmost to embarrass the Constituent Assembly so that at some stage before June, 1948, the Government will be able to say that there appears to be no unity, and hence they cannot recognise the Constituent Assembly and can therefore choose either A, B or C, whichever alternative they decide upon.

Consequently, I believe this was an unwise declaration on the part of the Government, for it is an open invitation to reactionary, sectional interests notably [740](#)the Princes' States, to withhold their co-operation and encourage the maximum of internal friction. Further, I ask whether the Government have decided what they mean by the expression in the White Paper: Or in such other way as may seem most reasonable and in the best interests of the Indian people. If the Government have such an alternative in mind, I believe that the House and the Indian people are entitled to know about it, because if the Indian people knew what the Government's alternative was, it might help them to get together and co-operate, and thus obviate the alternative. But the Government do not state the alternative. It may be that the Government do not know it, in which case they should indicate that to us. I submit that paragraph 10, to which I am referring, is an invitation to non-co-operation. The consequence of it could be a British inspired plan of Partition, the provision of an opportunity for the Princes' States to continue their undemocratic governments. I hope the Prime Minister will state that this is not the intention of the Government and will give encouragement to all elements who are fighting for close co-operation in India.

My second question is: What is meant by the transfer of power? Are our troops to withdraw in June, 1948, some time before, or some specific time later? If so, could we be informed of that? When this matter was debated in another place, the answers to that question were rather ambiguous. Earlier today there was an intervention about this matter by the hon. and gallant Member for South Paddington (Vice-Admiral Taylor) and the Minister of Defence likewise passed it over, and left it to be answered subsequently. I would like to have the answer, and I feel that Indians would like to have it.

[§Mr. A. V. Alexander](#)

I think the answer was made clearly by the Lord Chancellor in another place, when he said that the troops would be withdrawn at the time of handing over power.

[§Mr. Piratin](#)

I am glad to receive that statement. If our troops are to be withdrawn at the time of handing over power, what is the meaning of paragraph 11, in which it is stated: It is important... that the defence of India should be fully provided for. [741](#)I believe that is meant to refer to the period subsequent to the transfer of power. I gather that it means that subsequent to the transfer of power, it is important to us to ensure that the defence of India shall be fully provided for.

[§Mr. Alexander](#)

I have already answered that in the sense that I referred the House to the answer given by the Prime Minister in his statement of 25th February, in which he gave the position exactly. I referred to that statement.

§Mr. Piratin

I accept the statement made by the right hon. Gentleman and I recall the statement made by the Prime Minister, but what I have in mind is that, not so long ago, we entered into a treaty of recognition with the new State of Transjordan, and likewise there is the example of Iraq; and in those countries in the Middle East there is so-called independence, an independence, however, by which in each country we have several scores of thousands of troops stationed. That is part of the agreement for independence which has been granted to those countries. It is possible that the Minister conceives of the possibility that an independent Government in India may ask for British troops to be stationed there in order to guarantee its defence. It would be possible for a stooge independent Government to ask for British troops to be stationed there. I would like to have an unequivocal statement from the Government that there will be no troops stationed in India, whether invited or uninvited, and I think that if such a statement can be made, it will help a lot towards resolving this question and clearing up doubts in the House and in India.

§Mr. Alexander

It is a most extraordinary proposition—I know the hon. Member is keenly interested in the Russian ideology and so on—if it is to be suggested that the British authority is never to respond in any circumstances sympathetically to the request of another Power, while Russia may be quite free to respond to any other countries that desire Russian troops to be there. It is quite an impossible proposition.

§Mr. Piratin

The Minister is developing an argument which takes the matter much beyond the point which I was making. That point was in regard to other countries. I am not referring to the Soviet [742](#)Union. I am referring to Transjordan. It is well known that we have troops stationed in independent countries at the direct request of what I will call puppet Governments. [Interruption.] The Minister asks me "Why not?" My concern is whether it is proposed that we should establish in India the kind of Government which I would call a puppet Government and which would automatically invite British troops to be stationed there. The Minister suggests that the Soviet Union might be able to send their troops there. I do not want any foreign troops, to be there. I want the matter to be one for the United Nations. We should not expect unilateral action whether

from one side or from the other. I think that is a policy to which the Minister would subscribe and a policy that we should be able to guarantee.

§Mr. Alexander

I must make it clear that we stand exactly on the statement that was made by the Lord Chancellor in the House of Lords, namely, that we propose to withdraw British troops at the time of the transference of power. It is not the custom of this country to allow British troops overseas at any time at the direction of some foreign Power or some other authority. Those two things must be kept quite clearly in mind.

§Mr. Piratin

We have gone into that subject quite enough and I think hon. Members will have been able to satisfy themselves on the matter. The test is whether British troops will be withdrawn. If that is so, I am very glad to hear it. I hope that there are no qualifying aspects of the matter. In addition to the withdrawal of the troops and the civil authority, would the Minister of Defence give us an assurance that there will be recognised in addition the right of the Constituent Assembly to settle Indian problems? The Constituent Assembly as now established ought to be the body in which responsibility should be vested. The three alternatives are: Separate Provincial Governments; a different type of Central Government; or some other organisation, as seems fit. As the Government's suggestion leaves the matter in abeyance it will give an opportunity for further friction to be developed in India. A lot of effort has been expended by the Government and by organisations in India to get the Constituent Assembly established.

743We need to settle the differences between Hindus and Muslims. We have good will towards the Indians, but we deplore in a number of cases the fact that the differences are deliberately fostered between those two sections. In both cases there are certain so-called leaders who are prepared to welcome those exacerbations.

§Mr. A. V. Alexander

To what leaders does the hon. Member refer? Is he making a charge against the British Government?

§Mr. Piratin

Hindu and Muslim leaders.

§Mr. Alexander

He is not bringing a charge against the British Government?

§Mr. Piratin

I would make it clear that representatives of the British Government have helped in the past to exacerbate the differences between Hindus and Muslims. Today, when the Indians are reaching the stage of transference of power, certain India leaders still wish to maintain the differences that exist. We should bear that in mind when we ask the Indians to forget the past and to begin to co-operate. The Constituent Assembly that has been set up to deal with the establishment of a new Government is the most reasonable organisation in which authority could be vested in order to get co-operation between Muslim and Hindu. If a categorical statement on those lines could be made by the Government that that was the body in which responsibility would be vested, we could be sure that there would be co-operation by individuals and organisations in India who are desirous of seeing a settlement of India's problems and who would take their full part in that settlement.

Those are the tests of sincerity of the Government's policy. I shall be glad of the implementation of what the Minister of Defence said with regard to the evacuation of our troops. I hope that the Government will take notice of the observations I have made with regard to the vesting of authority in the Constituent Assembly. There should be no ambiguity on the part of the Government. Their action should not be in any way impeded by any section of the Opposition. The action of withdrawing troops and vesting responsibility in the Constituent Assembly so as to let the Indians deal with their own matters, would be a true reflection of Socialist policy. It is equally the best way of winning the co-[744](#)operation of all Indians who are sincerely interested in India's future.

[§8.28](#) p.m.

§Sir Arthur Salter (Oxford University)

The greater part of what has just been said by the hon. Member for Mile End (Mr. Piratin) was addressed to, and has largely been already answered by, the Government. As to his opening remarks, they are perhaps best ignored and forgotten.

My contact with Indian affairs has been less intimate and responsible than that of a good many who have spoken both here and in another place. But some years before the war I was invited by the Government of India to advise them upon certain economic questions. My task there brought me into close personal contact with the leading personalities in Indian life, as well as the British

authorities, in most of the Provinces of India. My imagination and interest could not fail to be awakened by such mission. I would therefore like to offer a few reflections on the question now before us. I hope that in their brevity and in their restraint they will be appropriate to the limited character of my experience.

At this fateful moment, when our departure from India has been not only decided but dated, it is fitting that we in this country, the people of India, and the world should try to assess the achievement over nearly two centuries of this small island in the great and populous sub-continent of the East. By attempting such an estimate we shall get a measure and mirror of the problems which will now confront political leaders during the next 14 or 15 months. The political association of Great Britain with India has given a shield to India against the four principal scourges of humanity; with rare and limited exceptions, such as result from a great external war, against famine and pestilence; against civil war and hostile invasion, four scourges which were chronic or frequently recurrent in India before we came, which are now chronic or frequently recurrent in the country most comparable with India, China. We have during this period established conditions which made possible both a great increase in India's population—at the rate in recent years of five millions a year—and at the same time a steady increase in the standard of living. Our association has enabled both economic unity and a central and efficient authority [745](#) to be established, equipped with sufficient power to discharge the essential functions of government. We have brought a common language and a system of education without which any ambitions for self-government of a united India could have been nothing but a dream.

I would like to contrast for a moment the lot of the country that is most similar to India—China—which in fact it was my duty to visit, to study economic conditions there, immediately after I left India. China is a country of comparable size and population. Her natural resources are not inferior, her people are capable of a high civilisation; they are skilled, industrious, virile and vital. And yet for many years the average standard of living in China has been little more than half that of India. Her population, decimated by civil war and external invasion, has remained static instead of doubling. What the explanation and the difference? It is one thing and one thing only. It is the presence in India, and the absence in China, of a stable, efficient Government equipped with power to carry out the essential functions of Government and extending over the whole of the area of a country united economically and for the most essential purposes, united also politically. India desires that India shall be self-governing. So does Great Britain. We not only desire it in this country but we have under successive Governments of every complexion for many years patiently and persistently attempted to assist India to establish conditions under which a transition to self-government could come without disaster. I do

not think that any unprejudiced or dispassionate observer could possibly look closely at the course of our policy at the time of Asquith and Morley, of MacDonald and the Round Table, of Baldwin and Lord Irwin, now Lord Halifax, of the Coalition Government and the Cripps Mission, and of the Cabinet Mission, and entertain honestly the illusion that our purpose has been to divide and rule; can entertain the absurd belief that all these statesmen during all these years in all these long efforts have been attempting to foment dissension between the Indian communities. It is obvious to anyone who has studied the course of our history during this century that one Government after another, with the whole people behind them, have been [746](#) attempting to bridge the gap and to allay the dissensions. But it is true that our critics have not always been unprejudiced and dispassionate.

It is true that many both in India and the world outside have managed to delude themselves that this has not been our purpose. It is true doubtless that some of them will now have a belief in our sincerity which they did not previously entertain. But the value of a greater belief in our sincerity is the extra influence it may give to us in the negotiations of the vital months immediately ahead of us. Against any such increase we must, of course, offset the reduction in our influence described by my right hon. Friend the Member for the Scottish Universities (Sir J. Anderson) which will result from the known fact that at a definite date, we shall be leaving. I do not propose to argue how the balance will now turn, but I do not think that any of us can be confident about the answer.

It is, of course, what happens in India that matters most. So far as our own British prestige and influence in the world are concerned, they will turn largely on what, in fact, happens there. Apart from that, which we cannot at present certainly foresee, it is, of course, true that we shall have at least the momentary applause of some of our less responsible and more vocal critics. It is no less true, however, that many people of experience, authority, and responsibility, some friendly and some less friendly, are now coolly assessing—re-assessing—the prestige, the influence and the future place of Great Britain in the world. As they survey this latest chapter in the British Imperial record, they will find in it, I fear, one thing that no one has hitherto seen in the earlier chapters of that record. There have been chapters of great and beneficent achievement too little regarded by envious eyes; there have been other pages, too eagerly scanned, that have shown errors and lapses from our highest standards. But, in this last chapter, for the first time, we see a decision to leave a responsibility, before it is discharged, at a fixed future date without conditions, without knowledge of the circumstances of that time, and however certain it conceivably may be at that time that the greatest possible disasters will result from an immediate departure. That is I say for good or ill a new

chapter. It is unlike [747](#)any that appears in all the earlier pages of the British Imperial record.

[§Mr. Zilliacus](#)

Surely there is the episode of the American Colonies.

[§Sir A. Salter](#)

I do not quite follow the hon. Gentleman. I was not aware that George III and his Government had said at some time before the American Revolution, "We will withdraw on such and such a date." Perhaps the hon. Gentle man means that we should have done so. But what I have said is that, for good or ill, this is a new chapter. I think all of us are to some extent embarrassed by debating this great issue at this moment after the decision has been made and announced. If this question had been discussed while policy was still being considered by the Government I certainly would have pursued some of the arguments made by other hon. Members. I share some of their anxieties. But at this moment when the decision has been announced, all of us in this House and in this country consider that it is above all important that the chances, be they good or ill, of a satisfactory government in India being established to which we can transfer power should not be impaired by any word or action. I do not therefore propose to pursue this argument any further but to say a few words on the problems which will confront the Government and the political leaders of India in the months immediately ahead.

In the first place I should like to express my very deep and firm conviction that the population of India cannot possibly be supported by India at anything like its present size and standard of living if India is Balkanised if it is fragmented into a number of separate economic units with the destruction or dislocation of the present unified system of transport, or currency and customs systems which would be involved, or if the great irrigation and other works upon which the fertility of a great part of India depends are not maintained. This population cannot maintain its present size, still less increase, if there should be, either through civil war or civil strife, a sagging in the standard of administrative efficiency. India is always in the position, at the best, of having her head only just above the engulfing waters of famine and disaster. [748](#)May I give one example of what the maintenance of a high standard of administrative efficiency means to a large part of India? The House will remember the great irrigation works in the Punjab. Within 20 years the population of the Punjab increased by something like to million, or about 40 per cent. The very life of that increased population has depended, and must depend, upon the vigilant and efficient maintenance of that irrigation system. Think of what it may mean to have the Indian people reduced to such conditions as exist in China, and if

civil war should come, which God for bid, I see no reason why we should expect it to be less enduring or less serious than that which China has experienced between the Kuomintang and the Communists. If civil war should come or if, even without it, there should be such a loss of administrative efficiency as to impair that framework of the economic life of the country upon which the existence of India depends, what would be the result? In how many tens of millions of lives will the consequences have later to be measured? I am not saying this now in criticism of this decision. I say it in the earnest hope that there will be a realisation on the part of all those on whom the future of India depends, in particular Indian political leaders, of what a breaking up of the economic unity of India would mean. I hope that a realisation of this will help in the difficult negotiations in the next 15 months, which aim at establishing conditions which will enable the British Government to hand over power with reasonable confidence for the future.

The other question to which I should like to refer is that of defence. I have failed to find as full indications as I should desire—either in the White Paper, in Government statements, or in the Prime Minister's statement the other day—that this problem of the defence of India, and of that part of the world of which India is the strategic centre, has engaged or is engaging sufficiently the attention either of British statesmen or Indian political leaders. I trust I am wrong. I hope that the Minister of Defence will convince me that I am wrong, but it seems to me that the sure shield afforded by the British association over all these years has had the same lulling effect on the public mind of India and perhaps of Englishmen engaged in Indian affairs as the effect on the public mind [749](#)in this country, in the 19th century, of our unchallengable Navy.

The problem of India's defence when we depart is for India herself one of tremendous importance and of tremendous difficulty, but it is not only India which is at stake. As I said just now, India is obviously the strategic centre of the whole of that part of the world. If it should be the case that India is "Balkanised and Ceylon and Burma—and other small units in that part of the world are separate and independent—with no link to a more general system that is found in the United Nations, I greatly fear what may be the effect on the peace of the world, what may be the temptations to aggressors, what hurricane may develop in that vacuum.

Perhaps I might suggest that there is a task—possibly a very fruitful task—in which British statesmen may be associated with Indian statesmen, in the construction and development of an Indian Ocean regional defence system of the kind which is contemplated for different regions in the United Nations Charter. I hope that even in the anxious months immediately ahead, that will be in the minds of statesmen in both this country and India and that they will work intently and constantly upon this problem—

§Mr. A. V. Alexander

Certainly.

§Sir A. Salter

I have expressed some of the anxieties which are in all our minds. I hope that these dangers will be present in the minds not only of our Government but of the Indian political leaders, and that a realisation of them may increase and improve the chances of settlement and agreement in the months ahead.

When the obituary of our association with India is written, as one day it must be, it will record one of the greatest and most beneficial political achievements in human history. May its final sentences record, at the close, an honourable and peaceful passing. May the epitaph not be of one who in the end failed in the discharge of as grave a responsibility as has ever rested upon men in this, or any other, country, in this or any other age.

§8.49 p.m.

§Mr. R. A. Butler (Saffron Walden)

It is far from surprising that the fixing of an arbitrary date for the relinquishment by the British of all power in India should come as a real shock. I think it would [750](#) have come as a shock to any of us on either side of the House whatever our views, because we all realise, I think fully, the immense range and almost aeons of history which are behind us, the achievements of many of our ancestors and the fair name of Britain which has never been fairer than in her conduct of Indian affairs, in her development of Indian unity and in her granting of the Pax Britannica to that sub-continent. It would have been a shock in any case, but I think the shock is particularly severe because we have no knowledge today of the hands to which this power is to be transferred, and that is the first point at which I join issue with His Majesty's Government.

I am sure we were impressed by the language of the senior Burgess for Oxford University (Sir A. Salter) in his comparison of this great issue with others in history, and I think none of us would differ with him when he said that we are facing something this evening which is quite out of the ordinary in our national history over the centuries, and which is certainly quite outside the ordinary range of experience of the Imperial Parliament. I cannot help thinking that our little island tonight does not fully realise what we are discussing, and I cannot but hope that our Debates will be attended with the same publicity and the same notice, so that our fellow citizens in this island may understand what is happening, as attended those noble Debates in another place which we have all tried to follow.

I may be excused perhaps if I make one or two very short personal remarks, and I can assure you, Mr. Deputy-Speaker, that I shall not enter into an account of those of my forbears who for generations past have served India in a variety of capacities. If I were to do that, I should become Kiplingesque and very boring, but I think it is legitimate to remind the House that, for the first eight years of my service in this House, I devoted myself to the affairs of India and found it the most important single issue, as, indeed, I do today. go further than that—and I want to brush aside all petty considerations from my speech and I hope, from the atmosphere—I go further than that and say that India to me is far more important than Party politics. The line I am taking tonight is not dictated by any other consideration whatever than because I [751](#) sincerely believe, as I shall try to show the House, that the Government plan is not in my view on absolutely the right lines.

When I was thinking of these services which I had tried to render to India, I could not help reflecting on the words of Burke, and perhaps the House will remember them: The services...in which I showed the most industry and had the least success. I mean the affairs of India. They are those on which I value myself the most for the importance: most for the labour: most for the judgment: most for constancy and perseverance in the pursuit. That applies not only perhaps to any modest person like myself, but I feel it applies to many others who have taken part in this Debate tonight, and who have given of their best not only to this Debate but also to India.

In our case, on this side of the House, our constancy has been addressed towards certain definite objectives which I would like to rehearse for the benefit of the House in order to show where we stand. First, we have always believed in working for the transfer of power to a government or governments capable of exercising that power under a constitution or constitutions to which the minorities and main sections of opinion, to whom our pledges have been given, are consenting parties. That has been our first main objective and, as the House will see, a very broad one, because it does not confine itself to the success of a unitary system of government; it embraces the possibility of a divided system of government, as I hope, eventually returning to some central nexus without which I think India cannot be prosperous or successful. Our second main objective has been a refusal to hand India over to anarchy or to civil war. Those have been the two main objectives of the party for which I am speaking tonight, and for which I have worked, and which in answer to the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Defence, is as united as it has been in the past in the main objectives of its policy.

We have also had another main objective, and that has been that India should find her place among the nations. I have never been able to understand how an Indian statesman can enter one of our [752](#) discussions, our debating halls, or

any conclave we have held over these years, and feel himself that he is not the equivalent of one of those statesman who comes from neighbouring countries because he is not independent. I have always felt it intolerable, knowing as I do the quality of Indian statesmen, that we have not yet been able to devise some system of nationhood, either of a unitary or divided system, which would satisfy the Indian in that respect, because, having worked with Indian statesmen, I am convinced of their quality. Having served at the Foreign Office and at Geneva, and met representatives of 52 nations on several occasions, I can honestly say I have never met any who have been the equivalent of the Indian statesman for sheer ability in any sphere whatever. There can be no doubt about our main objectives.

There can be no doubt that we are all wishing to go ahead towards certain fixed goals and targets. I want to add to what I have said in answer to the sincere although, I believe, misguided, speech of the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Sir S. Reed), in which he said that one of the chief objections of the Indians was that we used the excuse that there was no agreement in order to hold up progress.

§Mr. James Hudson (Ealing, West)

He is right.

§Mr. Butler

The hon. Member is too simple. Perhaps he thinks it is right, but I want to give my own opinion in the same spirit of sincerity, which I hold very strongly. It has never been our intention to hold up progress by playing variations on the harp of discord. If there were any doubt about this, I think it has been answered by what I have said, namely, that our point about awaiting the agreement of Indians themselves is not confined to Indians finding agreement about a unified constitution, but if Indians disagree—and this is what agreement usually means in our Debates—about entering a unitary Government, we would still be right to go ahead and have a divided form of government, in which the Indians themselves would be able to find some sort of nation hood. That, I think, disposes once and for all of the idea that we are raising this pretext of agreement as a method of stopping progress. That is not true, as I hope to show by what I have to say.

After the last conversations in London and the statement of 6th December by [753](#)His Majesty's Government, it became, at any rate to me, more and more apparent that to start with in India a unitary system of government would be very difficult indeed to achieve. That is my own opinion, for what it is worth, and I believe it to be true, and I believe it will be proved to be the truth by history. I believe the conception of a unitary system was made less likely by the

last words of the statement of 6th December published by His Majesty's Government, in which, in my view, they very rightly state—and I have no quarrel with that statement at all: His Majesty's Government could not, of course, contemplate, as Congress have stated they would not contemplate, forcing such a constitution upon any unwilling parts of the country. In my view that statement of 6th December, with those concluding words, made it less likely that we would start, at any rate, by achieving a unitary system of government, because I think it puts a premium upon the possibility of division. I am quite convinced that the most important single minority community would take advantage of that statement to pursue its own aims which have been known to many of us for a very long time. In pursuance of that statement of their policy, I made an intervention in the last Debate on India, when I preceded the Minister of Defence. I now wish to refer to what I said, because one of the taunts that has come from the Government side of the House, both in another place and here, is that we have no alternative. The alternative which I had in mind I took the trouble to put forward before the House as long ago as 13th December. For the sake of convenience I will repeat and rehearse some of my remarks on that occasion. I said: If the machinery is not properly functioning, if the Constituent Assembly is not constituted with the aid of the Muslims as envisaged in the White Paper, if the spirit is absent—the spirit had been referred to throughout the Debate—the spirit of co-operation in a unitary government—the government will be faced with a very serious situation. I went on to say that I hoped there would be agreement. At the outset let me repeat that it is our desire that there should be agreement on a unitary system of government at the centre, if it can be achieved. [754](#)I said that if there was not that agreement the Government would have to have in mind a clearer acknowledgment of our responsibilities in the period prior to a successful issue out of all the negotiations. I said: There is still a chance of an orderly solution, but it depends how determined the Government is, and how determined they will be, and how clearly the Government see the dangers in the path of their own plan. I went on to make this proposal, before I concluded that it would be natural if, in any new initiative, attention were focused first on achieving these aims"— that is, the aims of self-government— within certain areas or, to use the Government's own expression...within 'certain parts of the country,' but, if there is to be a new initiative"— it must be the case that once the Government has been started in the various parts of the country these parts must be closely interdependent and that our true aim must be 'the fusion of divergent claims into mutual obligations' at the centre.

That is the patient, long-teem hard alternative that I want to put to the Government tonight. It is one which I put two mouths ago, and in my view it is the only possibility of an orderly solution of the Indian problem at the present time. The words with which I concluded those remarks were: Our toils must and will remain, and our purpose must remain constant."—[[OFFICIAL REPORT, 13th](#)

[December, 1946; Vol. 431, c. 1536–37.](#)] I consider that these words represent a genuine endeavour to put before the House, on that occasion, as I do again on this occasion, what I consider would be the only orderly solution to the Indian problem.

I combine with that alternative to what the Government have put forward the proposals made by the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the Scottish Universities (Sir J. Anderson) about the buttressing of the Administration. This is the weakest point in any dialectical case from this side of the House, because right hon. and hon. Gentlemen on that side can say, "The Administration has run down; therefore, there is nothing for us to do but to get out," and it is very difficult for us to answer. Why is it difficult for us to answer? Because we have been [755](#) taken completely by surprise by the astonishing Government neglect of the Administration in India. The Minister of Defence made a statement when I happened to be out of the Chamber just now, but it was reported to me that he said that these decisions were taken before the Labour Government came into power. I have no knowledge of any such suggestion, if he ever made it.

These decisions, according to my information, were taken in the course of last year. There is no doubt that the Government have assumed a very serious responsibility in letting the Indian Administration run down. They have not only assumed a very serious responsibility but they have also, in my view—and this is a new point which has not been put hitherto—they have also hypothecated the position to the detriment of the new Indian Government which is taking over. If the Administration is important now, it is even more important in the future. In my opinion it is impossible to say that an Indian Government of the future can administer its work properly if the Administration is breaking down. Therefore, the Government deserve censure for not having foreseen this matter and looked properly ahead.

[**§Mr. A. V. Alexander**](#)

The right hon. Gentleman was not here when I made the statement in reply to an interjection from the opposite side of the House. I repeat it now from the factual position within my knowledge. What I said was that the possibility of forming an Imperial service on the line suggested by the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Scottish Universities (Sir J. Anderson), was discussed early in 1945, between the India Office, the Colonial Office, the Treasury and the Civil Service Commission, and the conclusion reached was that it was not a practicable proposition. This view was reported to, and accepted by, the War Cabinet of the Coalition Government in April, 1945.

[**§Mr. Butler**](#)

My information is that after that date a Mission actually was sent to India, and that certain decisions have been taken since, in the course of 1946, which entitle me to the remarks that I have made.

§Mr. Alexander

I also put that position to the House in December last. It is [756](#) perfectly true that on top of the decision which was taken by the Coalition Government, this Government were so concerned about the situation, to try and deal with it that they actually raised again the question of reinforcing on the lines of an Imperial service, but all our advice from India was against it.

§Mr. Butler

My own opinion, as I have said, is that by failing to take the right decision, and by not facing the situation, the Government have done harm not only to the possible carrying out of British policy and of the orderly conclusion of British rule, but they have also made it much more difficult for a future Indian Government to transact their business in a proper atmosphere with a proper Administration.

I have attempted to indicate the sort of line—that is to say, the developing and working towards a unitary system of government by developing power among the units, as being the patient and orderly way of bringing British rule to an end in India in the best manner. This is the path towards which I consider that the efforts of the Government should have been inexorably leading them. When I come to examine the Government's own record, I find something infinitely less attractive. I find that while some of us have remained constant on this course—and nobody can accuse us, or accuse me what I have said, of not being constant—it is the Government now who are not constant. It is the Government who are inconstant and are not fulfilling their pledges or enabling us to follow them in the next step. In order to make this clear, I want to refer at once to two matters—the minorities and the treaties. I want to refer to paragraph 4 of the statement of the Cabinet Mission of 25th May, 1946. The Cabinet Mission then said that there were: Two matters which are mentioned in the statement and which, we believe, are not controversial, namely: adequate provision for the protection of minorities (paragraph 20 of the statement) and willingness to conclude a treaty with His Majesty's Government to cover matters arising out of the transfer of power (paragraph 22 of the statement). It will be remembered that paragraph 20 of the original Cabinet Mission statement said that the rights of citizens, minorities and tribal areas would be protected by an advisory committee, on which the minorities would be represented, and [757](#) it went on to state that no final transference would take place until we have an opportunity of seeing the scheme for the administration of tribal and excluded areas, as well

as the scheme for minorities, and advising whether these rights should be incorporated in the Provincial, the Group or the Union Constitutions. That was a definite opportunity for us to see that there was provision in the Provincial, Group or Union Constitutions for the minorities in a proper legislative manner, and I maintain, and I think with justice, that, in this new statement of policy, the Government have said good-bye to all that. Even the Secretary of State for India, in another place, said that the letter of the Government's attitude to minorities had been altered, and that, in regard to the minorities, the Government had gone back on their pledges. Why? Because, in the likely event of power having to be transferred to units, no provision is made for even so slender a device as an advisory committee. Moreover, the fixing of the date is crucial, because there is every likelihood that the advisory committee will not have reported by the fixed date which the Government have insisted on introducing.

Therefore, there is a radical change in this condition precedent for the transfer of power, and I cannot myself cross my heart and say that it is possible for me or my hon. Friends to be satisfied that there is any clause in the Provincial, Group or Union Constitution to deal with minorities under the new scheme. When we come to the question of how the minorities can be helped, I gain singularly little satisfaction from the remarks of the Minister of Defence, who said that there was simply a resolution passed by the Constituent Assembly which talked about equality, rights of faith and association for the minorities. As the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the Scottish Universities said, we want something much more remarkable than that. We want something that will remind us of the language which I heard at the opening of the first Round Table Conference, the gracious language which was introduced at that stage when we, started our labours: I have also in mind the just claims of majorities and minorities, of men and women, of town dwellers and tillers of the soil, of landlords and tenants of the strong and the weak, of the, rich and the poor, of the races, [758](#)castes and creeds of which the body politic is composed. For these things I care deeply."

For these things we care deeply, and we do not believe that the minorities, especially the Scheduled Castes, are adequately protected in the new Government plan. When we come to consider another matter, the Treaty, I think we find exactly the same thing. In the matter of the Treaty, the Government have again departed from the common ground on which we had been standing. Under the new statement, agreements are to be negotiated with representatives of those to whom power is to be transferred, but, again, the fixing of a date removes all reality from the satisfaction we might have felt, because we find that no longer is the making of a satisfactory treaty a condition precedent to our departure. Therefore, not only on the question of the minorities, but also on the question of the making of a treaty, we can have no

satisfaction that we shall know what is what before we depart. It is surely relevant to remember that there are some singularly important matters in this treaty which ought to be remembered but which have had very little mention in this House. There is the question of treaty relations with Nepal and Afghanistan, because India is not only defended by a chain of mountains but also by treaties made throughout many years with the British Raj.

If there is to be a divided India, are we satisfied that there will be time for proper treaties to take their place? Are we satisfied about the future of the Services? Are we satisfied about the future of pensions? Are we satisfied about certain commercial considerations? In fact, are we satisfied about the provision for Empire defence, which must be included in a treaty? The right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Defence seems to think that is very amusing, but I should have thought that the question of Empire defence being included in a treaty was one of the first importance at the present time.

§Mr. A. V. Alexander

I strongly resent the right hon. Gentleman's imputation. I am not a bit amused; I was speaking privately to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

§Mr. Butler

I should have preferred that the right hon. Gentleman had been listening to this very important [759](#)Debate, because, if right hon. Gentlemen opposite remember certain language used by Lord Linlithgow—and he has been mentioned in this Debate—they will realise his anxiety expressed in another place. He used words, which I cannot quote to the House tonight, in which he described the vacuum which would be created by the British departure from India. There is an absolutely vital need for some treaty to be negotiated which would see that the needs of Empire defence, the future needs of Ceylon and Malaya, and the Imperial chain are properly considered. We have no guarantee in this paper that such a treaty will be a condition precedent of our departure.

I now come to the really great reason why I find it impossible to follow the Government in their policy at the present time. It is in respect of the complexity and difficulty of transferring power in the manner described in paragraph 10 of the recent statement. I consider that, in view of that complexity, it is quite impossible to fix a date, as suggested by the Government. Let us examine what is likely to happen. The noble Lord who is to go to India as Viceroy is to arrive in India, I understand, about the end of March. That is just about the beginning of the hot weather. Presumably, he will have to look round first, and, being a human person, do what is known as "settle down." He will have to make contacts, and get to understand the situation as he finds it. Also, presumably,

he will have to acquaint himself with some of the grave Constitutional difficulties with which he is faced.

It is true that Blake became an admiral after the age of 40, and it is said that one of his first commands to his ships was "Right wheel." It is also said that this command, nevertheless, won a battle, and, so, it may well be that the distinguished admiral, who has been chosen by the Prime Minister and the Government, may, although his methods may be as unorthodox as Blake's, yet be as successful in meeting the unsatisfactory complicated constitutional problems with which he will have to deal. It is certainly our desire that he should be successful, and that he should get through the formulæ of the constitutional world in which I, unfortunately, have been brought up, with the bluff heartiness of [760](#)the sailor, and the commonsense with which he is endowed. Let us hope that that will be the case. But, even if he is a superman, I hope he is going to take constitutional experts with him, besides the other distinguished persons who will accompany him. Even if he is able to unravel these problems, there must be, at one stage, a decision. When is he going to decide that the unitary system of Government is unattainable, and begin deciding, under this Paper, to transfer power to the units?

This brings me to the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for the Scottish Universities, that the one sensible amendment which could be made to the Government scheme is that some date should be given at which it would be made-clear that it is no longer possible to pursue a unitary system of government, and that we shall have to transfer a multiple system to a variety of units. Is that to be within three months or six months? I maintain that it cannot possibly be left later, because by next autumn or by next spring at the latest it will be necessary to come to this House with legislation, and with legislation it is necessary to give the House a little time—perhaps even a little more time than has been given to us for some of the recent odious Bills which have been introduced.

When we come to this question of the decision, I am convinced that after three or four months the new Viceroy will find that a unitary system of government is impossible at the present time. He will, therefore, have to turn to a task of constitution making which, I believe, is with out precedent in the history of the world, and that is the transference of power to a variety of units—to a Province here, to an area of British India there, to a group of Indian States here, or perhaps to a large individual State there. In each case the nature of the transfer will have to be different, the nature of the problem will be different, and we are facing something which I think the Government have not yet worked out.

I want to put quite frankly this question to the Government: is there in the India Office a series of plans for the transfer of power to a variety of units? Is there a plan, for example, for the repartition of the sterling debt as between a variety of units? Is there a plan for the repartition of the pensions burden between a variety [761](#)of units—the pensions burden as it falls not only on widows but also on civil servants, on Indians and on British alike? Is there a plan for dividing up and repartitioning the subsidising of activities hitherto central? For example, let us take the problem of food. That problem has already brought India to the brink of starvation. The Senior Burgess for Oxford University has already told us that India is always on the balance between starvation and just being alive, and those of us who have lived in the Ganges Valley, with every inch of the ground scratched, know how close they are to the line.

Is this to be a Provincial or a Central Government responsibility? If there is no Central Government, how is there to be an all-over India control of the food situation in time of difficulty? Has that been thought out, and have the Government the plan? What is to be the subsidising of education and development? What is to be the position of individual States? I honestly do not believe that the Government or the new Viceroy have a plan to meet these very complicated conditions. They come to this House and tell us that they must have a fixed date 14 months hence to settle this matter, and the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Defence says, "You have all the material; if they wish to come to a settlement we can settle it all at once. Beyond that I am not prepared to speak." The reason the right hon. Gentleman is not prepared to speak is that he does not know what to say. Therefore, I am convinced that the Government are gambling on agreement. If they get agreement on unitary government, then they have a tolerably easy task to transfer power in time, but even so, on the matter of minorities in the treaty, we shall still be disappointed and we cannot support them, short of anything fresh which we may hear from the Prime Minister this evening. But, as I am convinced from their own statement of 6th December and paragraph 10 of the statement of 20th February, they will be obliged to transfer power to units. Their two statements together, in my view—and time will 'show whether I am right or not—make it certain that we shall not approach the unity of India in the first place through a unitary government.

We are thus up against the problem which we have posed, namely, that a constitutional task of immense complexity has got to be undertaken in a period when [762](#)it is quite impossible to carry it out, because it will not be 14 months but much more like five or six months into which all these matters have got to be crammed. Therefore, the Government—and this bears out some hint in the speech of the right hon. and learned Gentleman the President of the Board of Trade—have used the threat to break up India into smaller units. If agreement

be not reached they will be "hoist with their own petard" without time to do the job properly. It is because they have not time to do the job properly that we are driven, inevitably, to oppose this plan and to dissociate ourselves from this policy.

I have been looking back—I know the Prime Minister wants to speak, so I will not continue long—on some of the historic statements on British policy. I want to make quite clear that although, in my view, we shall approach the Indian solution through self-government for the units, in much the same way as the Prime Minister found it inevitable when he visited India with the Statutory Commission, we must bring the matter back to the central nexus, for many of the reasons I have given in the course of my speech today—and this for reasons of foreign policy, food control, communication and many others. Therefore, we have a very patient task before us. I do not say we ought to stay in India for an indefinite number of years. But I do say we ought to stay and finish the job, as the proper culmination of these centuries of devotion and service.

I am looking back on the occasion when Lord Curzon received the Freedom of the City of London. At that date, he said: I believe we have it in our power to weld the people of India to a unity greater than they have ever dreamed of, and to give them blessings beyond any they now enjoy. He said he did not believe we had simply built a fragile plank between the East and the West which the roaring tides of Asia would presently sweep away. But he did admit this fear—and this fear is now creeping on us on this side of the House— ...that we have only made India to our own or to its own unmaking. We feel here that there is a grave danger that the Government policy is leading to the unmaking of India and the unmaking of the work of the British in India. We feel it is the policy of His Majesty's Government that must be unmade, and [763](#)we are hopeful that if we take our stand some honourable way out of our difficulties may be found.

The right hon. Gentleman challenged me to make a speech tonight which would be consistent with my previous speeches. I have shown him that I have gone straight ahead from my last speech on the way I am going, and on the way I would like to have gone in developing India towards self-government. But he also twitted my party, which is far more important; and he said we were playing politics; he also twitted us by saying that those who had disagreed with us on this side of the House would evidently submit to some form of screw or torture. I can tell the right hon. Gentleman that he may understand one or two things, but he certainly does not understand the party for which I speak. We are united, and we are purposely taking our stand, because we know for certain that the Government policy has to be unmade, and there yet lies before the British a glorious hour, in making India's destiny great. I, therefore, have the

greatest pleasure in supporting this Amendment, and in telling hon. and right hon. Gentlemen opposite that we are determined upon this matter, and that history will prove us right.

§9.30 p.m.

§The Prime Minister (Mr. Attlee)

The right hon. Gentleman the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. R. A. Butler) has spoken with his usual care, courtesy, lucidity and knowledge on this subject. I think he started with one point on which I entirely agree with him, because, having sat through all the Debates prior to the 1935 Act, I am quite prepared to admit that the Conservative Party is as united on Indian questions as it was then. I have no doubt that this has been fully borne out in this Debate. We have had a very interesting Debate, illuminated, as Debates are in this House, by hon. Members who have great practical experience of this problem. I was very much impressed by the speeches by the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Sir S. Reed), the hon. and gallant Member for Sudbury (Lieut.-Colonel Hamilton), and the hon. and gallant Member for Down (Sir W. Smiles), whom I remember so well when I was in India and he was in Assam on the Legislative Council of the Assam Government. I noticed one thing—that the more recent [764](#) and the more complete the experience of hon. Members, the less were their speeches ready to condemn outright the decision of the Government. Indeed, as I pointed out, there were speeches in support of it that were not confined to this side of the House.

In approaching this subject we all have to realise how little we know about India, and how soon what knowledge we have gets out of date. I quite recognise that I am out of date myself. I ended my time in India on the Simon Committee nearly 18 years ago. I, therefore, hesitate to be dogmatic or prophetic about what may happen in India. In this, I admit, I differ from the Leader of the Opposition. I think his practical acquaintance with India ended some 50 years ago. He formed very strong opinions—I might almost say prejudices—then. They have remained with him ever since. I think I agree with the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Saffron Walden that this is a remarkable example of constancy, because I have heard him reiterate those views over a period of years with a constancy that completely ignores the march of events. I have always felt, in listening to him—I know he feels very deeply on these matters—that he does not really believe in Indian self-government. I think he has forced himself to recognise that steps over many years cannot be entirely retraced, but I think he still feels that those steps were mistaken, and that he will not face the logic of the situation. Yet even he did not suggest that we should seek to restore the British Raj as it was in the days when he was in India. We have to make up our minds that those days are past.

Indeed, at the opening of his speech today he took great pains to bring himself abreast of the movement of opinion in the Conservative Party.

Let me say that I am the first to recognise that we have had some admirable speeches. I know of the good work that was done by Members of all parties who went out on that goodwill mission. In deed, I remember quite well—the right hon. Gentleman, unfortunately, was not able to be present—that when I made a statement on India, which was to the effect of the free right of the Indians to choose their future—which, I quite admit, departed from the views of the right hon. Gentleman, that they must necessarily go through a stage of Dominion status—as a [765](#) matter of fact there was no objection in this House at all on any side. That shows that there is that movement of opinion. But although the right hon. Gentleman sought to bring himself abreast, I noticed a certain amount of recidivism all the time. He accused the Government of dealing with Indian politicians who were not elected by an adult franchise. In 1942, there were the same Indian politicians, and the franchise was no different. He never said anything about the franchise then; it was just the usual stick with which to beat the Government on the ground that they were not fully representative. When the right hon. Gentleman came into this House, the franchise was not nearly as extensive as it is today, and it never sapped his self-confidence. Yet the right hon. Gentleman will recall how well he did when he was attacked by the Conservatives of that day, when he was accused of throwing away South Africa—the only difference is that Mr. Balfour said nothing about the franchise. I must say that in his speech there were a great many irrelevancies, delightfully expressed, of course, which were reminiscent of the days when, in a seat below the Gangway, he and a small band fought such a long and distinguished rear-guard action against the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Saffron Walden, Lord Templewood and the Leader of the Conservative Party, and, in fact, the bulk of the Conservative Party at that time. I do not intend to deal with many of these irrelevancies. I would rather propose to devote as much time as I have to the serious arguments put forward by the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the Scottish Universities (Sir J. Anderson), who has had actual experience of government in India, and the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Saffron Walden, who, by heredity and environment, has made himself a mater of the subject.

The right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition asked me to say something about the change in Viceroyalty, and I will say a word or two about that. He suggested that whenever there was a change made of a Minister or high functionary, there was need of some explanation. I do not accept that doctrine. There have been occasions in this House when Ministers, quite properly, have made statements on leaving office, but I can recall a great many Ministers leaving office with nothing said, and no reason [766](#) why there should have been anything said. I used to keep a list in the 1935 Parliament, trying to

keep up to date with the various changes in the Government of the day. Some of them were up, and some were down, and I was never quite sure which was which, until it looked like the charts of the Eights Week at Oxford. There were very few explanations, and I have known changes in the Civil Service, and of ambassadors and governors, made without question. If changed circumstances seem to the Prime Minister of the day—let me say that it may apply in peacetime as well as in wartime—to make changes desirable—to put it colloquially, if a change of bowling is desired—it is not always necessary that there should be an elaborate explanation. I do not think it is reasonable that that should be done. If on every occasion there is to be an explanation, it would be hampering to the officials and hampering to the Government.

I should like to turn to the principal issues which have been raised. The first thing I wish to deal with is the point raised by the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the Scottish Universities, the subject of the run-down of the administration. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Defence pointed out that the advice suggested by the right hon. Gentleman was, as a matter of fact, turned down by the war-time Coalition Government, in 1945.

[§Sir J. Anderson](#)

In war conditions.

[§The Prime Minister](#)

We were near the end of the war, and were planning for the future, and I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman was as confident as I was of how well we were getting on at that time. [An HON. MEMBER: "What was the date?"] It was April, 1945, near the end of the war. We took this matter up with my right hon. Friends who went to India and, there, again, it was said that it would not be useful. I rather pressed it myself, because I thought some strengthening would be useful, but we were told that it would not be useful. But even if it were desired to strengthen slightly the British cadre, it really would not do what the right hon. Gentleman wanted. It is very strange for him, but I think he must have missed something here.

[767](#)We all know that India is governed, in the main, by Indians, and only a few British. The great masses of the services there are under the Provincial Governments. They have, for some time, been under the Provincial Governments, and they look to, them. Inevitably, before we ever became a Government, the Indian civil servants were, naturally, looking to the future. I thought they stood up wonderfully to the strain of events in the war, because they knew, inevitably, by the declaration of the Government, that the British Raj was coming to an end. Therefore, however much you strengthen it, you

have to govern India through the Indians. Conditions are not such that you can suddenly throw over what has been done, and go back to Section 93 Government in every Province. I think the right hon. Gentleman rather missed the point that a mere strengthening of the Government at the top, by a few people with a certain acquaintance with India, would not carry you through if you were going to take a line in opposition to the political forces in India. Remember, if you are dealing with political things you must deal with political forces. The right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill) sometimes suggests that, after all, political people do not count very much, that the great masses are not much interested—

§Mr. Churchill

In India.

§The Prime Minister

In India. I agree that they are not much interested. You have to govern India through educated Indians. You cannot suddenly take in members of the Depressed Classes, and put them in to govern a Province, or anything of that kind. You have to govern with Indian people, and they are the politically educated classes. As long as 18 years ago, when I was in India, I realised that the wave of nationalist feeling had extended beyond politicians. Nationalist feeling runs right through all the Indian classes. That is the reason why you cannot carry on against the will of the Indian people. All our advice has been to the effect that to strengthen the administration would not get over the difficulties.

I agree that the time is short. The hon. Member for Aylesbury wisely said, "Would you gain anything by giving a much longer time than the time we have given?" We were given very strong [768](#) advice from India that it was desirable to fix a date. The right hon. Gentleman the Member (for the Scottish Universities made a suggestion—one of the few suggestions we have had today—that we should try and take this in two stages—first of all, to decide whether we want one India, or several, and thereafter a Constitution. Let us look at what the effect of that would be. It would be to deflect the minds of Indian politicians to that one specific issue, and you would in fact get a delay, because you would tend to get disagreement there and people would not be forced to consider what are the actual things that have to be done in this interim period.

Then I disagree so much with the right hon. Member for the Scottish Universities when he said that it was a great mistake to bring the Indian politicians into the Government. I gather that he rather wanted us to continue

with a "caretaker Government" while the politicians went on with the Constituent Assembly, but the essence of the Indian problem is to get Indian statesmen to understand what are the real problems they have to face. The right hon. Gentleman must remember that although we have had considerable experience in the Provinces it has been one of the faults—I think, a very grave fault—of the reforms we have carried out over these years that we have taught irresponsibility instead of responsibility. All Indian politicians were permanently in opposition, and speaking with long experience, it is not good to be always in opposition. [Laughter.] You see, it makes for irresponsibility. Therefore it is essential to try to get politicians of all communities into the Government, to understand these problems.

The right hon. Gentleman rightly stressed how complex were the problems of a divided India. Would it not be useful if people could understand from practical working how complex they are? Would it not give a much better chance if they were able to see how the actual machinery would work for an all-India Government, instead of cheerfully saying "Pakistan," or one of those things, without looking at what it really meant? We believe profoundly that it would be far better to have an all-India Government if we could possibly get it, and our object has been to get Indian politicians to look at this thing and see what it means for India. Therefore I entirely disagree with [769](#)the right hon. Gentleman when he says it was wrong to put the responsibility as soon as possible on Indian politicians. I repeat again, and I was impressed by the Simon reports, that one of the faults of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms was that they taught irresponsibility and not responsibility, because we gave all the pleasantest jobs in government, where there were favours to be given out, to the Indians, and retained all the difficult ones of taxation and police for ourselves. I thought that was a great mistake. I still think it is a mistake, and therefore I say we must try to get the politicians to realise their responsibility. I know the difficulties will be enormous, but nobody supposes in these matters that you can get everything fixed, to the last gaiter-button so to speak, unless there is some interim arrangement. The more people begin to look at that, the more likely they are to come to some wise conclusion in regard to India, instead of thinking that it is quite easy to carve up India into a number of separate compartments.

I turn to another point, that is, our responsibilities to minorities. The right hon. Member for the Scottish Universities said, roughly speaking, that he thought that most of the minorities could look after themselves. I do not entirely agree; although I do not think we can do much about it, but one which is in a difficult position is the Anglo-Indians. I quite agree that the strong minorities, the Sikhs and the Muslims and so on, will be able to look after themselves. He did come down on the point of the Scheduled Castes, or the Depressed Classes as we used to call them. That has been mentioned over and over again. I have very great sympathy with the people of the Scheduled Castes. I remember very well

going into a village in Madras of the Scheduled Castes. There was not even a road that was allowed to be laid to the village. I talked to those people, and found out the conditions they were in. Has it occurred to hon. Members opposite that that is after 100 years of British rule? Did we lack the will to raise these people? I do not think we lacked the will, but we lacked the power. That point was extremely well brought out by the right hon. Member for the Scottish Universities. The fact is that the existence of the Scheduled Castes and their position is part of the whole Hindu social system. They are at the bottom of the [770](#)social pyramid. Although at one time we did interfere with Indian customs before the Indian Mutiny—we interfered with thuggee and suttee—we have never tackled the others.

§Mr. Churchill

The moneylenders.

§The Prime Minister

I will come to them later. The right hon. Gentleman is anticipating me. The fact is, as everybody knows, that one cannot change the Hindu social system from outside by alien rule. These things have to be done by Indians, and whatever is put into treaties, as has been said, ultimately it rests upon the Indians themselves. I come to the point that was mentioned by the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition—the moneylenders There is gross inequality of wealth in India, but unfortunately, that social and economic system was continued during all the time of our rule. We did not go in for the revolutionary business of turning out the land lords who do nothing whatever. We did something to repress the moneylenders, but not much. We accepted that social and economic system. Why are we told now, at the very end of our rule, that we must clear up all these things before we go, otherwise we shall betray our trust? If that trust is there, it ought to have been fulfilled long ago.

I want to say another word on our obligations. Of course, His Majesty's Government will carry out all their proper obligations to the members of the Services; who can be assured that they will not be let down. I come now to what is, after all, the essence of the speeches of those who support the Amendment. In essence they are a plea for delay, a plea for inaction—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]
—or for greater time. They say, "Wait until the Indian parties come together, wait until every detail of the new Constitution has been worked out and agreed." We have been warned, in impressive speeches by two hon. Members who know India very well, and who have given the same warning as we have had from India, that the dangers of delay, the dangers of hanging on, are as great as the dangers of going forward. It is not as if we had had an easy time with India. When we took over, we did not find India in a very easy

position. It was a volcano of hidden fires. I think a great deal has been done by the visit of my right hon. Friends, [771](#)and, let me say also, by visits of Members of all parties, who went across to India, to try to hold this very difficult position. But it is a very difficult position.

I was very much impressed by what the hon. Member for Aylesbury said. He reminded us that it is 30 years since Austen Chamberlain and Lord Curzon initiated the change. And 30 years ago there was a declaration. What did that declaration do? It changed the entire outlook. In those 30 years, Indians have grown up in an atmosphere of delayed hope and largely of impatience and frustration. During those 30 years, starting with the Report of the Lee Commission, the administrative machine has been changed out of all knowledge from the days when we first used to talk about the Indian Civil Service and about how India was governed. Political advance has been slow to keep pace with those administrative changes, particularly in the Central Government. I think political advance would have been easier if it had been undertaken earlier, when the administrative machine was stronger. There were too much delay, too much hesitation, too much fear to go forward. Having reached the present stage, we cannot go back. We cannot remain as we are. That is what they used to tell one when I went to India. Everybody told me, "We cannot go back, but the present position is impossible We do not know where to go to." It was not very nice for investigators who went out there.

[772](#)

§ We believe that we have done a great work in India. We believe that the time has come when Indians must shoulder their responsibility. We must help them. We cannot take this burden to ourselves. Even as we are speaking tonight, there are serious communal disturbances. We cannot wait. I would have liked a message to go from this House. I would have liked a message without a dissenting voice, saying, "It is our earnest will that the Indians should grasp now this great opportunity of showing that all of them, without distinction of creed, place the good of India's millions before the interests of any section whatever," and that today we should have said in this House, "We have placed this responsibility squarely on you and we believe you can carry it." I close by saying that whatever differences there may be between us in the House on these matters, I am sure that the whole House will wish "God speed" to the new Viceroy in his great mission. It is a mission, not as has been suggested of betrayal on our part. It is a mission of fulfilment. Anyone who has read the lives of the great men who have built up our rule in India and who did so much to make India united will know that all those great men looked to the fulfilment of our mission in India, and the placing of responsibility for their own lives in Indian hands.

§Question put, "That the words proposed be left out stand part of the Question."

§The House divided: Ayes, 337; Noes, 185.

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Division No. 106.	AYES	10.1 p.m
Adams, Richard (Balham)	Bing, G. H. C	Chetwynd, G. R.
Adams, W. T. (Hammersmith, South)	Binns, J.	Cobb, F. A.
Alexander, Rt. Hon. A. V	Blenkinsop, A	Collick, P.
Allen, A. C. (Bosworth)	Blyton, W. R.	Collindridge, F.
Allighan, Garry	Boardman, H.	Collins, V. J.
Alpass, J. H.	Bottomley, A. G.	Colman, Miss G. M.
Anderson, F. (Whitehaven)	Bowden, Flg.-Offr. H. W	Comyns, Dr. L.
Attewell, H. C.	Bowen, R.	Cook, T. F.
Attlee, Rt. Hon. C. R.	Bowles, F. G. (Nuneaton)	Cooper, Wing-Comdr. G.
Austin, H. Lewis	Braddock, Mrs. E. M. (L'pl, Exch'ge)	Corbet, Mrs. F. K. (Camb'well, N.W)
Awbery, S. S.	Braddock, T. (Mitcham)	Corlett, Dr. J.
Ayles, W. H.	Bramall, Major E. A.	Corvedale, Viscount)
Ayrton Gould, Mrs. B	Brook, D. (Halifax)	Cove, W. G.
Bacon, Miss A	Brooks, T. J. (Rothwell)	Crawley, A.
Baird, J.	Brown, George (Belper)	Cripps, Rt. Hon. Sir S
Balfour, A.	Brown, T. J. (Ince)	Grossman, R. H. S.
Barnes, Rt. Hon. A. J.	Bruce, Mai. D. W. T.	Daggar, G.
Barstow, P. G.	Burden, T. W.	Daines, P.
Barton, C.	Burke, W. A.	Dalton, Rt. Hon. H.
Battley, J. R.	Butler, H. W. (Hackney, S.)	Davies, Clement (Montgomery)
Bechervaise, A. E.	Byers, Frank	Davies, Edward (Burslem)
Belcher, J. W.	Callaghan, James	Davies, Ernest (Enfield)
Bellenger, Rt. Hon. F.J.	Carmichael, James	Davies, Harold (Leek)
Benson, G.	Chamberlain, R. A.	Davies, Hadyn (St. Pancras, S.W.)
Berry, H.	Champion, A. J.	Davies, R. J. (Westhoughton)
Beswick, F.	Chater, D.	Davies, S. O. (Merthyr)
Deer, G.	Jones, P. Asterley (Hitchin)	Roberts, Emrys (Merioneth)
Delargy, H. J	Keenan, W.	Roberts, Goronwy (Caernarvonshire)
Diamond, J	Kenyon, G.	Robertson, J J. (Berwick)
Dobbie, W.	Key, C W.	Rogers, G. H. R.
Dodds, N. N	King, E. M.	Ross, William (Kilmarnock)
Donovan, T.	Kingdom, Sqn.-Ldr. E	Royle, C.
Driberg, T. E. N.	Kinley, J.	Sargood, R
Dugdale, J. (W. Bromwich)	Kirby, B. V	Scollan, T.

Dumpleton, C. W.	Lavers, S.	Segal, Dr. S.
Dye, S.	Lee, F. (Hulme)	Shackleton, Wing-Cdr. E. A. A
Ede, Rt. Hon. J. C.	Leonard, W.	Sharp, Granville
Edelman, M.	Levy, B. W.	Shawcross, C. N (Widnes)
Edwards A (Middlesbrough, E.)	Lewis, A. W. J. (Upton)	Shawcross, Rt. Hn. Sir H. (St. Helens)
Edwards, John (Blackburn)	Lewis, J. (Bolton)	Shurmer, P.
Edwards, N. (Caerphilly)	Lewis, T. (Southampton)	Silkin, Rt. Hon. L.
Edwards, W. J. (Whitechapel)	Lindgren, G. S.	Silverman, J. (Erdington)
Evans, E. (Lowestoft)	Lipton, Lt.-Col. M.	Silverman, S S. (Nelson)
Evans, John (Ogmore)	Longden, F.	Simmons, C. J.
Evans, S. N. (Wednesbury)	Lyne, A. W.	Skeffington, A. M.
Ewart, R.	McAdam, W.	Skeffington-Lodge, T. C.
Fairhurst, F.	McAllister, G.	Skinnard, F. W.
Farthing, W. J	McEntee, V. La T.	Smith, C. (Colchester)
Field, Capt. W. J	McGovern, J.	Smith, Ellis (Stoke)
Fletcher, E. G. M. (Islington, E.)	Mack, J. D	Smith, H. N. (Nottingham, S.)
Follick, M.	McKay, J. (Wallsend)	Smith, S. H. (Hull, S.W.)
Foot, M. M	Mackay, R. W. G. (Hull, N. W.)	Snow, Capt. J. W.
Forman, J. C.	McKinlay, A. S.	Solley, L. J.
Fraser, T. (Hamilton)	McLeavy, F.	Sorensen, R. W.
Freeman, Peter (Newport)	MacMillan, M. K. (Western Isles)	Soskice, Maj. Sir F.
Gaitskell, H. T. N.	Macpherson, T. (Romford)	Sparks, J. A.
George, Lady M. Lloyd (Anglesey)	Mallalieu, J. P. W.	Stamford, W.
Gibbins, J.	Manning, C. (Camberwell, N.)	Steele, T.
Gibson, C. W.	Manning, Mrs. L. (Epping)	Stewart, Michael (Futham, E.)
Gilzean, A.	Marquand, H. A.	Stokes, R. R.
Glanville, J. E. (Consett)	Marshall, F. (Brightside)	Strauss, G. R. (Lambeth, N.)
Gooch, E. G.	Mathers, G.	Summerskill, Dr. Edith
Goodrich, H. E.	Medland, H. M.	Swingler, S
Gordon-Walker, P. C.	Messer, F.	Sylvester, G. O
Granville, E. (Eye)	Middleton, Mrs L	Symonds, A. L.
Greenwood, Rt. Hon. A. (Wakefield)	Mikardo, Ian	Taylor, H. B. (Mansfield)
Greenwood, A. W. J. (Heywood)	Mitchison, G. R.	Taylor, Dr. S. (Barnet)
Grenfell, D. R.	Monslow, W.	Thomas, D. E. (Aberdare)
Grey, C. F.	Montague, F.	Thomas, Ivor (Keighley)
Grierson, E.	Moody, A. S.	Thomas, I. O. (Wrekin)
Griffiths, D. (Rother Valley)	Morgan, Dr. H. B	Thomas, George (Cardiff)
Griffiths, Rt. Hon. J. (Llanelly)	Morley, R.	Thomson, RT. Hn. G. R. (Ed'b'gh, E.)
Griffiths, W. D. (Moss Side)	Morris, P. (Swansea, W.)	Thorneycroft, Harry (Clayton)
Guest, Dr. L. Haden	Morris, Hopkin (Carmarthen)	Thurtle, E.
Gunter, R. J.	Moyle, A.	Tiffany, S.

Guy, W. H.
Haire, John E. (Wycombe)
Hale, Leslie
Hall, W. G.
Hamilton, Lieut.-Col. R.
Hannan, W. (Maryhill)
Hardman, D. R.
Hardy, E. A
Harrison, J.
Hastings, Dr. Somerville
Haworth, J.
Henderson, A. (Kingswinford)
Hewitson, Capt. M
Hicks, G.
Hobson, C. R.
Holman, P
Holmes, H. E. (Hemsworth)
House, G
Hoy, J.
Hudson, J. H. (Ealing, W.)
Hughes, Hector (Aberdeen, N.)
Hughes, H. D. (W'ilverh'pton, W)
Hutchinson, H. L. (Rusholme)
Hynd, H. (Hackney, C.)
Hynd, J. B. (Attercliffe)
Irving, W. J.
Isaacs, Rt. Hon. G. A
Janner, B.
Jay, D. P. T.
Jeger, G. (Winchester)
Jeger, Dr. S. W. (St. Pancras, S.E.)
John, W.
Jones, Rt. Hon. A. C. (Shipley)
Jones, D. T (Hartlepoons)
Jones, J. H.(Bolton)

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Wise, Major F. J.
Woodburn, A.
Wyatt, W.
Yates, V. F
NOES.

Mulvey, A
Murray, J. D.
Naylor, T. E.
Neal, H. (Claycross)
Nichol, Mrs. M. E. (Bradford, N.)
Nicholls, H. R. (Stratford)
Noel-Baker, Capt. F. E. (Brentford)
Noel-Baker, Rt. Hon. P J. (Derby)
Noel-Buxton, Lady
O'Brien, T.
Oliver, G. H.
Orbach, M.
Paget, R. T
Palmer, A. M F
Parker, J.
Parkin, B. T
Pearson, A.
Pearl, Capt. T. F.
Piratin, P.
Poole, Major Cecil (Lichfield)
Poppewell, E.
Porter, G. (Leeds)
Price, M. Philips
Pritt, D. N.
Proctor, W. T.
Pursey, Cmdr. H
Randall, H. E
Ranger, J.
Rankin, J.
Reeves, J.
Reid, T. (Swindon)
Rhodes, H
Richards R.
Ridealgh, Mrs. M.
Robens, A

Young, Sir R. (Newton)
Younger, Hon. Kenneth
Zilliacus, K.

Timmons, J.
Titterington, M. F.
Tolley, L.
Turner-Samuels, M.
Ungoed-Thomas, L.
Usborne, Henry
Vernon, Maj. W. F.
Viant, S. P.
Wadsworth, G.
Walkden, E.
Wallace, G. D. (Chislehurst)
Wallace, H. W. (Walthamstow, E.)
Warbey, W. N.
Watkins, T. E.
Webb, M. (Bradford, C.)
Weitzman, D.
Wells, P. L. (Faversham)
Wells, W. T. (Walsall)
West, D. G.
White, H. (Derbyshire, N.E.)
Whiteley, Rt. Hon. W.
Wigg, Col. G. E.
Wilcock, Group-Capt C. A. B
Wilkes, L.
Wilkins, W. A.
Willey, F. T. (Sunderland)
Willey, O. G. (Cleveland)
Williams, D. J. (Neath)
Williams, J. L. (Kelvingrove)
Williams, Rt. Hon. T. (Don Valley)
Williams, W. R. (Heston)
Williamson, T.
Willis, E.
Wilmot, Rt. Hon J
Wilson. J H

TELLERS FOR THE AYES:
Mr. Joseph Henderson and
Mr. R. J. Taylor.

Agnew, Cmdr. P. G.	Gomme-Duncan, Col. A. G.	Neven-Spence, Sir B.
Aitken, Hon. Max	Grant, Lady	Nicholson, G.
Amory, D. Heathcoat	Gridley, Sir A.	Noble, Comdr. A. H. P.
Anderson, Rt. Hn. Sir J. (Scot. Univ.)	Grimston, R. V.	Nutting, Anthony
Assheton, Rt. Hon. R.	Hannon, Sir P. (Moseley)	O'Neill, Rt. Hon. Sir H.
Astor, Hon. M.	Hare, Hon. J. H. (Woodbridge)	Orr-Ewing, I. L.
Baldwin, A. E.	Harris, H. Wilson	Osborne, C.
Barlow, Sir J.	Harvey, Air-Comdre. A. V.	Peake, Rt. Hon. O.
Baxter, A. B.	Headlam, Lieut.-Col. Rt. Hon. Sir C	Peto, Brig. C. H. M.
Beechman, N. A	Henderson, John (Cathcart)	Pickthorn, K.
Bennett, Sir P.	Hinchingbrooke, Viscount	Pitman, I. J.
Birch, Nigel	Hogg, Hou. Q.	Poole, O. B. S. (Oswestry)
Boles, Lt.-Col. D. C. (Wells)	Hollis, M. C.	Price-White, Lt.-Col. D.
Boothby, R.	Howard, Hon. A.	Prior-Palmer, Brig. O.
Bossom, A. C.	Hudson, Rt. Hon. R. S. (Southport)	Raikes, H. V.
Bower, N.	Hulbert, Wing-Cdr. N. J.	Ramsay, Maj. S.
Boyd-Carpenter, J, A.	Hurd, A.	Rayner, Brig. R.
Bracken, Rt. Hon. Brendan	Hutchison, Col. J. R. (Glasgow C.)	Reid, Rt. Hon. J. S. C. (Hillhead)
Braithwaite, Lt.-Comdr. J. G.	Jarvis, Sir J.	Robertson, Sir D. (Streatham)
Bromley-Davenport, Lt.-Col. W	Jeffreys, General Sir G.	Robinson Wing-Comdr. Roland
Bullock, Capt. M.	Jennings, R.	Ropner, Col. L.
Butcher, H. W.	Joynton-Hicks, Hon. L. W.	Ross, Sir R. D. (Londonderry)
Butler, Rt. Hon. R. A. (S'ffr'n W'ld'n)	Keeling, E. H.	Salter, Rt. Hon. Sir J. A.
Carson, E.	Kendall, W. D.	Sanderson, Sir F.
Challen, C.	Kerr, Sir J. Graham	Savory, Prof. D. L.
Channon, H.	Lambert, Hon. G.	Scott, Lord W.
Churchill, Rt. Hon. W. S.	Lancaster, Col. C. G.	Shephard, S. (Newark)
Clarke, Col. R. S.	Langford-Holt, J.	Shepherd, W. S. (Bucklow)
Clifton-Brown, Lt.-Col. G.	Legge-Bourke, Maj. E. A. H.	Smith, E. P. (Ashford)
Cole, T. L.	Lennox-Boyd, A. T.	Smithers, Sir W.
Conant, Maj. R. J. E.	Linstead, H. N.	Snadden, W. M.
Cooper-Key, E. M.	Lipson, D. L.	Spence, H. R.
Corbett, Lieut.-Col. U. (Ludlow)	Lloyd, Maj. Guy (Renfrew, E.)	Stanley, Rt. Hon. O.
Crookshank, Capt. Rt. Hon. H. F. C.	Lloyd, Selwyn (Wirral)	Stoddart-Scott, Col. M.
Crosthwaite-Eyre, Col. O. E	Low, Brig. A. R. W.	Strauss, H. G. (English Universities)
Crowder, Capt. John E.	Lucas, Major Sir J.	Studholme, H. G.
Cuthbert, W. N.	Lucas-Tooth, Sir H.	Sutcliffe, H.
Darling, Sir W. Y.	Lyttelton, Rt. Hon. O.	Taylor, C. S. (Eastbourne)
De la Bère, R.	MacAndrew, Col. Sir C.	Taylor, Vice-Adm. E. A. (P'dd't'n, S)
Digby, S. W.	McCallum, Maj. D.	Teeling, William

Dodds-Parker, A. D.
Donner, Sqn.-Ldr. P. W.
Dower, E. L. G. (Caithness)
Drayson, G. B.
Duncan, Rt. Hn. Sir A. (City of Lond.)

Duthie, W. S.

Eden, Rt. Hon. A.
Elliot, Rt. Hon. Walter
Erroll, F. J.
Fleming, Sqn.-Ldr. E. L.
Fletcher, W. (Bury)
Foster, J. G. (Northwich)
Fox, Sir G.
Fraser, Maj. H. C. P. (Stone)
Fraser, Sir I. (Lonsdale)
Fyfe, Rt. Hon. Sir D. P. M
Gage, C.
Galbraith, Cmdr. T. D.
Gammans, L. D.

Gates, Maj. E. E.

George, Maj. Rt. Hn. G. Lloyd (P'ke)
Glossop, C. W. H.
Glyn, Sir R.

MacDonald, Sir M. (Inverness)
Macdonald, Sir P. (I. of Wight)
Mackeson, Brig. H. R.
McKie, J. H. (Galloway)

Maclay, Hon. J. S.

Macmillan, Rt. Hon. Harold (Bromley)
Macpherson, Maj. N. (Dumfries)
Maitland, Comdr, J. W.
Manningham-Buller, R. E.
Marlowe, A. A. H.
Marples, A. E.
Marsden, Capt. A.
Marshall, D. (Bodmin)
Marshall, S. H. (Sutton)
Maude, J. C.
Mellor, Sir J.
Molson, A. H. E.
Moore, Lt.-Col. Sir T.
Morrison, Maj. J. G. (Salisbury)
Morrison, Rt. Hon. W. S. (Cirencester)
Mott-Radclyffe, Maj. C. E.
Mullan, Lt. C. H.
Neill, W. F. (Belfast, N.)

Thomas, J. P. L. (Hereford)
Thorneycroft, G E. P. (Monmouth)
Thornton-Kemsley, C. N.
Thorp, Lt.-Col. R. A. F.

Touche, G. C.

Vane, W. M. F.

Walker-Smith, D.
Ward, Hon. G. R.
Watt, Sir G. S. Harvie
Webbe, Sir H. (Abbey)
Wheatley, Colonel M. J.
White, Sir D. (Fareham)
While, J. B. (Canterbury)
Williams, C. (Torquay)
Williams, Gerald (Tonbridge)
Willink, Rt. Hon. H. U.
Willoughby de Eresby, Lord
Winterton, Rt. Hon. Earl
Young, Sir A. S. L. (Partick)

TELLERS FOR THE NOES
Mr. James Stuart and
Mr. Buchan-Hepburn.

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§ Main Question put, and agreed to. Resolved: That this House takes note of the State ment on India made on loth February by the Prime Minister and approves the policy set out therein."