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Imperial consensus: the English press and India, 1919-1935

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IMPERIAL CONSENSUS:
THE ENGLISH PRESS AND INDIA,
1919-1935

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
the Louisiana State University
and Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

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by
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Abstract

Between 1919 and 1935, the lion's share of the interwar era, the British government's most important overriding task was constitutional reform of India. The subcontinent's importance to Britain was undoubted: economically as an important trading partner and militarily a source of fighting men and material, as demonstrated in the Great War. However, scholars have relegated India to a relatively minor topic and instead have portrayed Britain's interwar period as the era of appeasement. Appeasement only became an issue in 1935 and a *major* topic with the Munich crisis of September 1938. Voluminous press coverage of the India issue throughout the interwar period demonstrates that India was the major issue of the era, not just the final few years.

This dissertation examines the coverage of the English press and the paramount issue in interwar Britain: The press played an important role in the debate over the political future of Britain's most important possession as newspapers and periodicals still enjoyed a veritable monopoly in disseminating information; radio was still in its infancy and television only existed in research laboratories. The newspaper and periodical owners, editors, and leader writers, part of the "chattering class," held enormous sway in setting the parameters and tone of the India debate: press views of the British imperial mission, Indians, as well as the reforms process colored the discussion over political changes on the subcontinent. Press coverage of the India issue also helped mold the identity of the Conservative Party, and, ultimately, of imperial Britain between the wars.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Flip through any general history book about interwar or twentieth-century Britain and one is left with the impression that the topic of appeasement dominated political affairs and public debate for the twenty years between 1919 and 1939. Discussions of appeasement encompass scores of pages, if not entire chapters, in many British history surveys while the subject of India receives scant, if any, coverage.¹ The comparison is even starker in terms of books specific to the subject. Well over one hundred books on appeasement have been published in the United States and Britain in the past twenty years while I have only been able to find two books on British policy towards India in the interwar era.² Other works on the National Government and the Labour Party have given India adequate coverage but amount to a mere puddle compared to the ocean of appeasement.³

Yet a survey of the contemporary media of the 1920s and 30s reveals a very different picture: India is the dominant topic throughout the interwar era while appeasement only becomes an issue in 1935 and a *major* topic with the Munich crisis of September 1938. The subject of constitutional reform in India, as well as pivotal events on the subcontinent, absorbed news

¹ William Rubinstein, *Twentieth Century Britain: A Political History* (London, 2003). Appeasement: 18 ½ pages, India 2 ½ pages. John W. Young, *Britain and the World in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1997). Appeasement: 13 ½ pages, India: 1 ¼ pages. Charles More, *Britain in the Twentieth Century* (London, 2007). Appeasement: 6 ½ pages, India: ½ page. Thomas Heyck, *The Peoples of the British Isles, Volume III: From 1870-Present* (Chicago, 2002). Appeasement: 3 ½ pages, India ½ page. Peter Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-2000* (New York, 2004). Appeasement: 6 ½ pages, India: 1 ½ pages. Walter Arnstein, *Britain Yesterday and Today: 1830-Present* (Lexington, 1992). Appeasement: 6+ pages, India: 1 ½ pages. Noreen Branson and Margot Heinemann, *Britain in the 1930's* (New York, 1971). Appeasement: 15 pages, India: 1 page. Martin Pugh, *We Danced All Night: A Social History of Britain Between the Wars* (London, 2009). Appeasement: 6+ pages, India: 2 pages. Malcolm Smith, *Democracy in a Depression: Britain in the 1920's and 1930's* (Cardiff, 1998). Appeasement: 8 pages, India: 1 sentence. Also see Kevin Williams, *Read All About It!: A History of the British Newspaper* (London, 2010). Focused on appeasement and the abdication crisis as the major stories of the 1930's; India is not mentioned.

² Carl Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire: The British Conservative Party and the 1935 Constitution* (New York, 1986). Andrew Muldoon, *Empire, Politics and the Creation of the 1935 India Act* (Burlington, 2009).

³ Nick Smart, *The National Government, 1931-1940* (New York, 1999). Nicholas Owen, *The British Left and India: Metropolitan Anti-Imperialism, 1885-1947* (Oxford, 2007). Also see Chandrika Kaul, *Reporting the Raj: The British Press and India, c. 1880-1922* (Manchester, 2003) and Chandrika Kaul ed., *Media and the British Empire* (New York, 2006).

stories and leaders in the daily and periodical press, as well as radio talks on the BBC, cinema newsreels and hundreds of books. India was the major *political*, not just imperial, issue throughout the interwar period. The British press recognized it as such at the time. Why, then, have historians relegated India to a minor nuisance in British domestic politics and foreign affairs? The reason is simple: World War II. With the greatest conflagration the world has ever known, the question of the war's origins, and the role that appeasement played in those origins, achieved new paramountcy. But only a prescient few could see world war on the horizon up to 1 March 1939; the process of granting greater self-government to Britain's largest dependency seemed far more real and far more pressing.⁴ Conveniently, India receded in importance in the British press with the achievement of a new Indian constitution in August 1935. Two months later, with the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, the attention of Britain's political elites began to shift toward the prospect of war and, therefore, toward the ongoing policy of appeasement.⁵

Until 1935, however, India dominated the political agenda—just as it played a dominant role in Britain's economic and military security. India served as an important British trading partner and recipient of capital. British trade in the interwar period was shifting away from foreign markets to the Dominion and colonies and India was the largest purchaser of British goods until the late 1930's. India also contributed to balancing Britain's balance of trade by exporting gold to Britain. The Great War demonstrated India's military importance to Britain. India supplied 1.4 million soldiers, tons of materials, and £100 million at the outset of the war and £20-30 million annually during the war. The Indian Army was self-supporting, meaning that it was paid for by

⁴ The British press covered events like the Anglo-German Naval Accords (June 1935) and the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, but the press debate about appeasement did not truly begin until the Munich crisis.

⁵ See David Gillard, *Appeasement in Crisis: From Munich to Prague, October 1938-March 1939* (New York, 2007). R.A.C. Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement: British Policy and the Coming of the Second World War* (London, 1993). The topic of appeasement did not gain the interest of the press until the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in October 1935 and did not become a major issue until Munich in the autumn of 1938; I can find no contemporary books on the subject until after the start of the war.

Indian, not British, taxpayers, and served as the “imperial fire brigade,” putting out “fires” in the newly acquired British mandates in the Middle East. More generally, the subcontinent served as a vast British military base in South Asia and the foundation of British global power and prestige.⁶ The growing demand for Indian political independence threatened to deprive Britain of this base.

The Government of India was in the hands of a Viceroy appointed to five year term, who, in turn, was responsible to a cabinet level official, the Secretary of State for India who was responsible to Parliament. The Imperial Legislative Council, an all-British body, assisted the Viceroy while British Governors oversaw the eight provinces of the Raj. Provincial councils made up of Indians appointed by the Government of India advised these governors. The only major change to the structure of the Raj since 1858 was the Government of India Act of 1909. Also known as the Morley-Minto Reforms, this act, which allowed Indians to be elected to legislative councils, sought to co-opt educated politically minded Indians into cooperating with the regime. At this point, few British politicians or policy-makers viewed Indian self-government as anything more than a distant goal. In India, however, nationalism was already a powerful force. A.O. Hume established the Indian National Congress in 1885 to obtain for educated Indians increased opportunities for self-government. Initially a loose confederation of Western educated professionals, not a political party, Congress petitioned for increased opportunities in the civil service and the legislatures for Indians.

The experience of World War I radicalized Congress. Great Britain’s declaration of war on Germany and Austria-Hungary automatically brought India into the war without consulting

⁶ See Judith Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy* (Oxford, 1994); B.R. Tomlinson, *The Political Economy of the Raj, 1914-1947* (London, 1979); Burton Stein, *A History of India* (Oxford, 1998); Percival Spear, *The Oxford History of Modern India, 1740-1975* (Oxford, 1997); Sugata Bose & Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (New York, 1999).

Indian leaders. The Defense of India Act, passed in March 1915, allowed special trials without juries and the imprisonment of suspects without trial. Approximately 1.4 million Indian and British soldiers of the British Indian Army took part in the war in numerous theaters: the Western Front, Mesopotamia, East Africa, Palestine, and Gallipoli. India also contributed large amounts of money and supplies to the Allied cause. Increased defense spending by the Government of India led to increased taxes on the Indian people. The war, which cost India 74,000 men dead and 70,000 wounded, left India in flux. Food shortages, inflation, and the influenza pandemic fed the growing political discontent. During the Great War, Congress, led by Balawantrao Tilak and Englishwoman Annie Besant, set up Home Rule Leagues throughout the subcontinent.⁷

The emergence of Mohandas Gandhi as a nationalist leader furthered the radicalization of Congress and transformed the Indian nationalist campaign from a minority concern into a mass movement. Gandhi, who had immigrated to South Africa in 1893, returned to India in 1915 and embarked on a one year trip across the subcontinent to reacquaint himself with his homeland. During 1917-8 he started three local non-violent non-cooperation campaigns which established his reputation as an effective leader of mass agitations. In 1919 Gandhi made his move into politics at the all-India level for the first time. He united politically minded Hindus protesting the Rowlatt Acts (these extended the Defense of India Act into peacetime) with Muslims discontented with British and Allied treatment of Turkey, home of the Islamic Khalifat. Although Gandhi called for peaceful civil disobedience, outbreaks of violence did occur in Delhi, Bombay, and the Punjab and culminated in the horrific Amritsar massacre. On 13 April

⁷ Sugata Bose & Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (New York, 1999).

1919 at Amritsar in the Punjab, Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer fired without warning upon a prohibited meeting in Jallianwalla Bagh killing 379 and wounding over 1,200.⁸

In the midst of this turbulence, the British Government pushed through important reform measures. Lloyd George's Cabinet, to counteract growing Indian nationalism and war weariness as well as reward Indian loyalty in the war, agreed to accelerate India's political progress. Edwin Montagu, the Liberal Secretary of State for India, made the announcement, known as the Montagu Declaration, on 20 August 1917. The declaration stated that the British Government's goal was the gradual development of self-governing institutions to achieve responsible government for India within the framework of the British Empire. Out of the Montagu Declaration came the Government of India Act of 1919, with its controversial provision for dyarchy, the division of the portfolios of provincial governments into reserved and transferred subjects. The Governor's Council retained control over the former, such as security and taxation, and elected Indian ministers assumed responsibility for the latter, which included education, health, and agriculture. The reforms passed Parliament and attained royal assent in December as the Government of India Act of 1919.

In October 1919, the Government of India, under public pressure from Indians, appointed a committee under Lord Hunter to investigate the disturbances in Delhi, Bombay, and the Punjab the previous April. Other than Hunter, the commission consisted of four British members and three Indian. It was through the commission and its hearings that the British press and public heard the truth of what happened at Amritsar.⁹ General Dyer was ordered to resign by the

⁸ The press reported the disturbances but the incident at Amritsar was not revealed to the British press until eight months later; the India Office claimed that the delay stemmed from a broken telegraph cable in the Mediterranean Sea.

⁹ The committee published its reports in May 1920; commission members divided on racial lines with the British members submitting the Majority Report and the Indians the Minority Report. Both reports severely censured Dyer; the majority only reprimanded Punjab Lieutenant-Governor Michael O'Dwyer while the minority condemned him as well.

Commander-in-Chief of India, Major-General Sir Charles Munro. Winston Churchill, the Secretary of State for War, echoed this decision by stating that Dyer would be forced to resign from the army altogether.

In spite of Dyer's condemnation, Gandhi's civil disobedience campaign and the Muslim Khalifat movement continued to cause trouble on the subcontinent during 1920 and 1921. When the Prince of Wales, the future Edward VIII, disembarked in Bombay in November 1921, the local Congress committee organized a *hartal* and a demonstration. Gandhi demanded non-violence, but riots broke out. Lasting four days, the riots left many Europeans dead or injured. The police opened fire on the protesters: fifty-three demonstrators lay dead and hundreds wounded. Gandhi toured the city and was sickened by the devastation; he fasted for three days to make amends for the victims of the riots. Protests reached a violent crescendo only a few months later after the Prince's departure. In February 1922 at Chauri Chaura in the United Provinces, police fired on a procession and were attacked by an angry mob. The twenty-two policemen took shelter in their station but were forced out when the mob set fire to the premises. The mob hacked the officers to death and threw their bodies into the flames.¹⁰

The events at Chauri Chaura led to a temporary lull in mass nationalist campaigns. As a result of the massacre, Gandhi called off the civil disobedience campaign and went on a five-day fast in repentance. Nevertheless the Government of India arrested Gandhi and sentenced him to six years in prison. He served only two, but then relinquished his leadership role in Congress and instead devoted the next five years to his homespun and Hindu education campaigns. At the same time, Muslims lost their major grievance against the British when Turkish president Kemal Ataturk abolished the Khalifat in 1924.

¹⁰ Judith Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (New Haven, 1989). B.R. Nanda, *Gandhi and His Critics* (New Delhi, 1985).

In 1927, however, nationalist protests resumed, in response to what became known as the Simon Commission. A provision in the 1919 Government of India Act specified that a commission be formed after ten years to investigate the workings of the Act. With elections due in 1929, the Conservative Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead, feared that if the Labour Party won office and determined the make-up of the commission, it might grant India dominion status. In 1927, then, Birkenhead announced the naming of the body of inquiry two years ahead of schedule (thus ensuring that its members were chosen by a Conservative Government). These members were announced in November 1927: Sir John Simon of the Liberal Party as chairman, two Conservative members and two Labour members (including the future PM Clement Attlee) from the House of Commons, and two Conservative Lords. Furious that no Indian members were appointed, the nationalist movement in India protested the commission. A countrywide *hartal* and demonstrations greeted the Simon Commission when it disembarked at Bombay for its first tour of India in February 1928; protests also arose in other cities that the commission visited during its journey.

After two tours of India and numerous consultations over two years, the Simon Commission presented its report to Parliament in two volumes on 10 and 24 June 1930. The commission's main recommendation was to scrap dyarchy in the provinces and introduce full ministerial responsibility at the provincial level; the central government would continue to remain fully in British hands. The Simon Report, however, mattered little; it was essentially out of date on arrival because of the independent actions of the Viceroy, Lord Irwin. With little confidence in the success of the Simon Commission, Irwin came up with his own plan supported by the Labour Government, one that he hoped would attach liberal Indian opinion to the Raj and split the Indian National Congress. The Viceroy wanted to avoid a clash with Congress, with its demands

backed by the threat of civil disobedience. The Irwin Declaration, issued on 31 October 1929 (while the Simon Commission was still touring India and nine months before it issued its report), reaffirmed that dominion status was the ultimate goal of British rule in India; it also included a proposal for a series of talks between representatives of the British Government, British India, and the Indian Princes.¹¹ Congress responded to the Viceroy's offer with a declaration of independence at its annual conference on 31 December 1929.

Nevertheless, the first set of talks, the first Round Table Conference, took place in London between 12 November 1930 and 19 January 1931.¹² Representatives of all major Indian parties and the princes attended, with one glaring exception: the Indian National Congress declined Irwin's offer. Unwilling to conform to a British agenda or to accept the princes as equal representatives of the Indian people, Congress instead prepared for a new round of civil disobedience to commence early in 1930. This campaign included *hartals*, boycotts of British goods, picketing, a no-tax campaign and a no-rent campaign.

On 2 March 1930, Gandhi, set out on his own *satyagraha* campaign from his home in Ahmadabad for a 240 mile walk to the sea in protest of the government monopoly on salt. Thousands joined him on his trek, including journalists from around the globe. The "Salt March" became a true media event. Gandhi reached the shore at Dandi on 5 April and ceremonially made salt on the beach in defiance of the law.¹³

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact, essentially an armistice between the Government of India and Congress, was agreed to by the Viceroy and Gandhi after weeks of negotiations in early March

¹¹ Andrew Roberts, *The Holy Fox: A Life of Lord Halifax* (London, 1991). Earl of Halifax, *Fulness of Days* (London, 1957). Earl of Birkenhead, *Halifax* (London, 1965). S. Gopal, *The Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin 1926-31* (Oxford, 1957).

¹² The main accomplishment of the meeting was the agreement that India should achieve dominion status as a federation of British India and the Princely States.

¹³ The Government of India largely ignored the proceedings.

1931. Gandhi and the Viceroy came to the negotiating table as both feared that Congress would resort to violence to break the stalemate. By the agreement Congress suspended its campaign of civil disobedience. Gandhi agreed to attend the second Round Table Conference in exchange for the release of political prisoners, the return of confiscated property, and a relaxation of some emergency coercive powers. By the terms of his pact with the Viceroy, Gandhi attended the second Round Table Conference (15 September to 1 December 1931) as the sole representative of Congress. The meeting accomplished little; discussions quickly devolved into bickering over reserved seats for religious minorities. The same was true of the Third Round Table Conference which took place between November and December 1932.

Because of the failure of the second round table conference to decide the distribution of seats in the provincial and federal legislatures in the future federated India, the British Government made the Communal Award. Announced by Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald in August 1932, the award granted separate electorates to minorities including Muslims, Sikhs, and untouchables. Congress opposed the award because it removed untouchables from the Hindu electorate; Gandhi fasted in protest against it. The award was superseded by the Poona Pact, concluded in September 1932 between Dr. Ambedkar, leader of the untouchables, and the leaders of the caste Hindus. Untouchables kept their separate electorates but took their place under the umbrella of caste Hindus.

The India White Paper of March 1933 encapsulated the agreements reached at the three round table talks and the Communal Award: it called for British India and the Princely States to combine into a single federation, with a Central Legislative Assembly elected by separate electorates. The bill abolished dyarchy in the provinces, all government departments were to be controlled by elected Indian ministers. However, thanks to the powerful safeguards, Governors

could dismiss ministries whenever they deemed it necessary. The India White Paper became the basis of the Government of India Act, which received its official assent in August, 1935. Between the assent of the India Act and the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, the only major event in India was the provincial elections of 1937. In spite of the franchise being limited to property owners, Congress won control of seven of the eight British Indian provinces; in the following year it controlled all eight. The Viceroy, however, still held supreme executive power, as evidenced by his entering India into the World War II alongside Britain without consulting Indian leaders.

The ongoing crisis in India helped transform the Conservative Party. In the wake of the Great War, British party politics changed dramatically as the result of two interlocking developments. First, by the Representation of the People Act of 1918, which enfranchised virtually all men over 21 and women over 30, Britain finally became a democracy.¹⁴ The upper and middle classes of Britain had to confront the fact that they were no longer in control of the political game; the masses had the vote. Second, the Labour Party replaced the Liberal Party as the party of the Opposition. The prospect of an avowedly socialist party coming to power in Britain, especially after the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, made the upper and middle classes practically swoon in terror. Added to these major changes in politics was the continuing introduction of mass media. Industrial printing techniques made the mass production of cheap newspapers possible and the railroad allowed for quick and easy national distribution. And the advent of radio and cinema provided new avenues for politicians to reach the newly enfranchised electorate.

¹⁴ The electorate increased from 8 to 21 million voters; approximately 13 million men versus 8 million women. Women received the vote at 21 by the Representation of the People Act of 1928 which increased the electorate to 29 million. Before the war only 10% of males 21 and over had the vote because of property restrictions.

In response, the Conservative Party had to change or confine itself to political irrelevance. The war undermined or erased the old causes of the Tory party: preservation of the union with Ireland, preservation of the Church, and tariff reform. And change it did: the party confirmed its transformation from the party of the landed elites to the party of the commercial and business classes. It did this by reorganization: developing mass organizations for women, young people, and wage earners.¹⁵ The Conservatives portrayed themselves as the party of free trade, Empire, and anti-socialism. The reorganized Conservative Party became the dominant political party of the interwar era, controlling the Government, alone or in coalition, for all but three years between 1919 and 1939. Conservatism remained strongly imperialist, nationalist, and anti-socialist. In spite of the official line of free trade, however, the party was deeply divided over the issue with some notable Conservatives favoring protective tariffs or an imperial customs union.

Imperial issues also divided the Conservative Party. Three groups emerged: reformers, led by party leader Stanley Baldwin; the constructive imperialists, best exemplified by Leo Amery; and the romantic imperialists, also known as the diehards, unofficially led by Winston Churchill.¹⁶ Baldwin was the dominant character of British politics from 1924 to 1937 as leader of the Conservative Party, Prime Minister (1924-9 and 1935-7), prominent member of the National Government (1931-1935), and leader of the Conservative opposition (1924 and 1929-31). In 1929 Baldwin became an avid supporter of Indian constitutional reform; he, and other reformers such as Samuel Hoare, saw it as the surest way to cement peaceably India's place within the empire. Baldwin also worked to ensure that Indian reform was a bipartisan effort

¹⁵ See Neal R. McCrillis, *The British Conservative Party in the Age of Universal Suffrage: Popular Conservatism, 1918-29* (Columbus, 1998).

¹⁶ But not all diehards were Conservative. A prominent diehard and frequent contributor to the *Sunday Times*, *British Weekly*, and *Saturday Review* was the Liberal Lord Meston. Meston served in the Indian Civil Service at the turn of the century and served as Lt. Governor of the United Provinces from 1912 to 1918.

along with the Labour Party. Amery and the constructive imperialists were more concerned with the economic development of British possessions in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia than they were with India. In contrast, the diehards viewed events in India as pivotal – and feared a disastrous repeat of the Irish experience. Churchill was willing to risk his political future on the issue: he resigned from the shadow cabinet in January 1931 in order to be free to speak out against the Indian reforms.¹⁷

The split between Baldwin and Churchill was based on personality as well as opposing views of empire. Churchill's and Baldwin's temperaments and personas were on opposite ends of the spectrum: Churchill was passionate and romantic, embracing causes, such as India or rearmament, deeply and zealously, while Baldwin was more pragmatic and even-tempered, doing what was practical and possible. On the issue of empire, the divide was stark: Churchill was an imperialist while Baldwin was not; also, when thinking of the empire Churchill thought of India's importance first while Baldwin viewed the White Dominions as most vital. On the issue of India, Churchill's vision of the subcontinent dated from his time there in the 1890's as a subaltern in the British army; he wanted to identify the Tory Party with the 19th century empire. Baldwin wanted to adjust the Conservative Party's conception of empire to post-war realities, namely the necessity of dealing with the Indian nationalist movement.

Baldwin, and other Tory pro-reformers, looked to the precedent of Ireland: they believed that the British Government withheld reform from Ireland far too long resulting in a bloody civil war and the loss of southern Ireland. They viewed reform as the means to secure peacefully India in the empire; no one contemplated a self-governing India any time in the near future, let alone an

¹⁷ K. Veerathappa, *The British Conservative Party and Indian Independence, 1930-1947* (New Delhi, 1976). Mesbahuddin Ahmed, *The British Labour Party and the Indian Independence Movement, 1917-1939* (London, 1987). Ross McKibbin, *Parties and People: England 1914-1951* (Oxford, 2010). Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People* (London, 1985). Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge, 1999).

independent India. Baldwin wanted to maintain the empire in the background of his vision of the Conservative Party and to keep Indian reform out of the domestic political arena.

In contrast, Churchill and the diehards saw reform, not the lack thereof, as the root cause of Ireland's troubles. The diehards, however, were not reactionaries. They recognized the need for constitutional reform in India but their vision meant a *much* slower pace and less far-reaching measures. A self-governing India, if the diehards had their way, would be centuries away. Convinced that the party, if not the entire country, sympathized with their views, the diehards wanted their image of India and empire forefront in the Conservative Party; they therefore sought to make Indian reform a domestic political issue.¹⁸

In the interconnected struggles to shape the futures of both the Conservative Party and India, the press played a crucial role. The interwar years were the golden age of British newspapers. In the twenties, radio was in its infancy; the BBC did not become a major news source until the thirties. Television was still in the developmental stages confined to research laboratories; hence, virtually everyone still got their news from the daily and periodical press.¹⁹ Although the London press dominated England, provincial papers such as the *Manchester Guardian* and *Yorkshire Post* also achieved national circulation. The *Daily Mail* was the first true national daily, established by Alfred Harmsworth (made Lord Northcliffe in 1905) in 1896. Changes

¹⁸ See Kenneth Young, *Baldwin* (London, 1976), Paul Johnson, *Churchill* (New York, 2009), G.M. Young, *Stanley Baldwin* (London, 1952), Stuart Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party: The Crisis of 1929-1931* (New Haven, 1988), Roy Jenkins, *Churchill: A Biography* (New York, 2001), John Charmley, *Churchill: The End of Glory* (London, 1993). The Labour Party, although not an unswerving anti-imperialist party, kept its official rhetoric anti-imperial enough to keep it at the forefront of British radicalism. As we shall see, however, Labour was the product of an imperial society and held the same orientalist assumptions as its Conservative and Liberal counterparts. Moreover, like the Tories, Labour was rent with factions concerning imperialism. Classical Marxists, liberal socialists, and Fabians all had their own views of empire. For example, the Fabian wing of the party, dominated by intellectuals such as Sidney Webb, favored progressive imperialism, meaning that the British state must develop the Indian economy before transferring political power to the Indians themselves. See Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party* (New York, 1997). Nicholas Owen, *The British Left and India: Metropolitan Anti-Imperialism, 1885-1947* (Oxford, 2007).

¹⁹ See Richard Cockett, *Twilight of Truth: Chamberlain, Appeasement and the Manipulation of the Press* (London, 1989). Benny Morris, *The Roots of Appeasement: The British Weekly Press and Nazi Germany in the 1930's* (London, 1991). Franklin Reid Gannon, *The British Press and Germany, 1936-9* (Oxford, 1971).

introduced by Northcliffe included a cheaper cover price, women's and sports pages, and higher quality photographs. The *Mail's* rival, the *Daily Express*, established in 1900, innovated news on the front page, banner headlines, and full-page advertisements. The war taught even quality papers, such as the *Times*, that urgent and important news deserved headlines and front page coverage.

The interwar years were also the golden age of the British press lords. Membership in this select group included Lord Burnham, who sold the *Daily Telegraph* to Lord Camrose in 1928, and Viscount Astor, who acquired the *Times* from Lord Northcliffe in 1922. The most notorious press lords, however, were Lord Beaverbrook of the *Daily Express* and Lord Rothermere, who acquired the *Daily Mail* from his brother Northcliffe upon his death in 1922.²⁰ The press lords, Beaverbrook and Rothermere especially, attempted to use their newspapers to influence party politics and government policies. Beaverbrook and Rothermere blamed Baldwin for the Tory electoral defeat in 1929 and worked in tandem to unseat him from the leadership of the Conservative party. The two press lords, however, differed on their views of India. Beaverbrook favored "Empire Free Trade," effectively an imperial customs union of the White Dominions and Britain; India did not figure into his calculations. Rothermere, in contrast, considered the continued control of India as paramount to British prosperity and world power status. Strongly opposed to Baldwin's plans for increasing Indian self-government, Rothermere advocated a crackdown on the Indian nationalist movement. His United Empire Party combined his desire to oust Baldwin from his leadership perch with his interest in India.

The power of the press is undisputed but immeasurable. It is taken as a given, but difficult to explain. Scholars disagree over the degree to which the press mirrored and molded

²⁰ A.J.P. Taylor, *Beaverbrook* (New York, 1972). S.J. Taylor, *The Great Outsiders: Northcliffe, Rothermere and the Daily Mail* (London, 1996). Alan Wood, *The True History of Lord Beaverbrook* (Portsmouth, 1965). Anne Chisholm, *Beaverbrook: A Life* (New York, 1993).

public opinion. However, there is a consensus that the press both mirrored and molded public opinion and politicians ignored the press at their peril. Stephen Koss described press power as a “great force” and concluded that both newspapers writers and readers believed that papers were influential, that this influence was pervasive, and “mistaken or not, this conviction created its own reality.”²¹ Andrew Sharf contended that the press was considered to be a powerful and potentially dangerous political instrument “and this in itself gave it power.”²² Newspaper editors had the power to pick and choose, amongst the wide variety of topics of the day, which ones to concentrate upon and emphasize as important to their readers. And in this case, from 1919 to 1935 editors consistently selected India as an important issue. India merited not only articles explaining current events in or about the subcontinent, but also leaders to explain the paper’s opinions on India. Kevin Williams stated that newspapers played an important role in the lives of the British people as more newspapers per capita were bought in Britain than in most other countries; newspaper reading was, and remains, a major leisure activity in Britain. Williams also contended that there is a strong correlation between social class and newspaper reading in Britain: “newspapers have been...strongly divided along class lines.”²³ Martin Conboy described journalism as a complex intersection of conflicting relationships involving political and economic power and thus referred to it as an example of discourse.²⁴ Julie Codell asserted that newspaper helped create and shape Britain’s imperial identity: readers “derived their sense

²¹ Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain* (Chapel Hill, 1984), p. 7.

²² Andrew Sharf, *British Press and Jews Under Nazi Rule* (Oxford, 1964), p. 3. Also see, Armin Rappaport, *The British Press and Wilsonian Neutrality* (Stanford, 1951) and Franklin Reid Gannon, *The British Press and Germany, 1936-9* (Oxford, 1971)

²³ Williams, p. 9.

²⁴ Martin Conboy, *Journalism: A Critical History* (London, 2004), p. 3.

of their own and others' places and spaces from the press, which offered a major site for the production and re-production of national identities."²⁵

Circulation of these papers and periodicals varied greatly. These estimates are from 1938.²⁶

Table 1: English Press Circulation

<i>Daily Express</i>	2,329,000
<i>Daily Mail</i>	1,580,000
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	637,000
<i>Daily Herald</i>	2,000,000+
<i>Observer</i>	214,000
<i>Times</i>	192,000
<i>Yorkshire Post</i>	29,000
<i>Manchester Guardian</i>	56,000
<i>Sunday Times</i>	270,000

Most British editors were the product of the middle class. Only George Lansbury, founder, editor, and proprietor of the *Daily Herald* and James Garvin of the *Observer*, came from working-class families. (Lansbury's father was a railway timekeeper and Garvin's was a poor Irish Catholic laborer).²⁷ Geoffrey Dawson of the *Times*, Walter Layton of the *Economist*,

²⁵ Julie Codell, ed., *Imperial Co-Histories: National Identities and the British and Colonial Press* (London, 2003), p. 16.

²⁶ *Report on The British Press* (London, 1938).

²⁷ David Ayerst, *The Guardian: A Biography of a Newspaper* (London, 1971). Frank Beckwith, *The Yorkshire Post* (, 1954). David Ayerst, *Garvin of the Observer* (London, 1985). John Evelyn Wrench, *Geoffrey Dawson and Our Times* (London, 1955). Keith M. Wilson, *A Study in the History and Politics of the Morning Post, 1905-26* (Lewiston, 1990). Wilfrid Hindle, *The Morning Post 1772-1937: Portrait of a Newspaper* (London, 1937).

Charles Prestwich Scott of the *Manchester Guardian*, Arthur Mann of the *Yorkshire Post*, Kingsley Martin of the *New Statesman*, Evelyn Wrench of the *Spectator*, and H.A. Gwynne of the *Morning Post* all emerged from the British bourgeoisie. Dawson's father was a banker, Mann's father was a merchant who also served as mayor of Warwick while Scott's father was a partner in a coal company. Other diverse occupations such as Congregationalist minister (Martin), professional singer (Layton), Irish land commissioner (Wrench), and schoolmaster (Gwynne) all fit under the middle class umbrella in Britain.

Their educations also reveal their middle-class status. Scott attended Clapham Grammar School, Dawson was educated at Eton, Layton attended King's College School (London), Martin went to Mill Hill School (London), Wrench attended Summer Fields Prep (Oxford), and Eton, Gwynne went to Swansea Grammar School and Mann attended the Warwick School. Four of these editors not only went to university but to Oxford or Cambridge: Martin studied history at Magdalene College, Cambridge, Layton took degrees in history and economics from Trinity College, Cambridge; Dawson studied classics at Magdalen College, Oxford; Scott studied classics at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Again, Garvin and Lansbury are the exceptions: Garvin left school at 13 but continued his education on his own; he entered journalism as a proofreader for the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* in his early 20's. Lansbury's education was intermittent up to the age of 14; he left school to do a variety of manual jobs.

Two future editors remained in academia early in their careers. Layton went on to post-graduate studies in economics at Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge, and eventually became a lecturer in economics there. Martin was a visiting scholar at Princeton and became an assistant lecturer in politics at the London School of Economics. Of the three who did not go to university, two were apprenticed to journalists after they completed their secondary education.

Gwynne, for example, began at the *Times* and moved to Reuters serving as a foreign correspondent for many years. Wrench became a briefly successful entrepreneur out of Eton; he was introduced to the newspaper game as Lord Northcliffe's private secretary, a job he held for eight years. Two of the future editors served in the civil service. Layton joined at the outbreak of the Great War and served in a variety of ministries including the Local Government Board under Seebohm Rowntree, the Board of Trade, and the Ministry of Munitions. Layton also stood for Parliament as a Liberal unsuccessfully three times (1922, 1923, and 1929). Dawson served in the Colonial Office under Joseph Chamberlain and in South Africa for the High Commissioner, Milner. Garvin took, and failed, the civil service exam.

Many of the editors' biographies also highlight the connection between British journalism and parliamentary politics. Lansbury ran unsuccessfully for Parliament in 1895 and 1900 as a Social Democratic Federation candidate, and in 1904 and 1906 as an Independent Labour Party candidate. He served as Labour MP from 1910-12 and 1922 to his death 1940. Many editors had prominent politicians amongst their regular correspondents. Regarding India, Dawson frequently corresponded with Viceroy Lord Irwin, India Secretary Wedgwood Benn, and Tory leader and oft Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin. Dawson essentially served as a sounding board and unofficial advisor for Irwin during his Viceroyalty. Scott and Garvin frequently corresponded with Statutory Commission chairman Sir John Simon. Gwynne exchanged numerous letters with MP's associated with the India Defense League, an organization devoted to the diehard cause.

As the above biographies make clear, many editors and contributors floated in and out of three arenas throughout their careers: teaching at university, serving in the civil service, and serving stints at major newspapers or periodicals. Hence, these editors not only often had

contacts with the politicians and corresponded on a regular basis they also formed part of Britain's political elite. They used their papers to publicize and popularize the upper and middle classes views of India and its place in the British Empire.

To discover what the press thought about India and the reforms processes between 1919 and 1935 I examined eighteen English newspapers and periodicals. The papers under investigation were overwhelmingly Conservative in their political affiliation or leaning: the *Times*, *Sunday Times*, *Morning Post*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Observer*, *Yorkshire Post*, *Truth*, *Spectator*, *Saturday Review*, *Daily Mail*, and *Daily Express*. Only two papers were affiliated with Labour – the *Daily Herald* and *New Statesman* -- while the *Manchester Guardian* and *Economist* remained loyal to the Liberal Party. Three papers remained somewhat anomalous: the *Nation & Athenaeum* (merged with the *New Statesman* in January 1931 to form the *New Statesman & Nation*) can be best be described as Liberal/Labour, *Time & Tide* described itself as above party but tended to side with the Conservatives, and the *British Weekly* identified itself as a Christian paper with no overt political party affiliation. For simplicity (and sanity's sake), I concentrated my research on twenty-four "hot points," key events in India or in the making of British policy toward India between 1919 and 1935. These were events where the majority of papers commented upon, as opposed to incidents that only a few papers remarked on, while most did not, such as when Baldwin named Irwin Viceroy and the publication of the Nehru Report.

Table 2: "Hot Point" Events In or Concerning India, 1919-1935

Disturbances in the Punjab	April 1919
Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms	May, June, November, December 1919
Dyer Controversy	December 1919; May & July 1920

Prince of Wales Visit	November 1921
Chauri Chaura	February 1922
Simon Commission Named	November 1927
Simon Commission Arrives in India	February 1928
Irwin Declaration and Aftermath	November 1929
Congress Declaration of Independence	January 1930
Gandhi's Salt March	March & April 1930
Simon Report	June 1930
First Round Table Conference	November 1930 & January 1931
Gandhi-Irwin Pact	March 1931
Second Round Table Conference	September & December 1931
Communal Award	August 1932
Poona Pact	September & October 1932
Third Round Table Conference	November & December 1932
Indian White Paper	March 1933
India White Paper Report	November 1934
Queen's Hall Debate	December 1934
White Paper Debate	December 1934
India Bill Introduced	February 1935
India Bill Passed	August 1935
India Bill Enacted	December 1935

Writing about Britain in the 1930's, A.J.P. Taylor quipped that "if the importance of a subject were to be measured by the columns which it took up in Hansard, the entire nation would seem to have been obsessed with the intricacies of India's constitutional future." Taylor went on to insist, "This was not so. India was a specialist affair," although he admitted, "an important one all the same."²⁸ While the entire nation was not obsessed with India, Britain's politicians and policy makers – as well as the press, saw India as a central concern. The press debate over the future of India was a closed debate between and among the upper and middle classes of Britain broadcast via newspapers across the country.

This dissertation addresses five major points. First, it shows the essential lack of debate in the press concerning the future of India. There was no divergence of opinion across the political spectrum or across the seventeen years under investigation over the British imperial mission or perceptions of India and, ultimately, only minimal differences over the pace and scope of reform. Second, it highlights the differences between assumptions explained and those left unspoken. Many assumptions, such as the eternal animosity between Hindus and Muslims, are explained at great length while others, such as that of race and the benefits that control over India brought to Britain are left tacit. This is likely a result of a combination of assuming the reader already knows these facts as well as editors avoiding sullyng the British imperial mission. Third, the dissertation shows the paradoxical relationship between the diehards and democracy both in Britain and India. The diehards, adjusting to the new reality of universal manhood suffrage in Britain inaugurated in 1918, attempted to use the issue of India as a means of co-opting new voters and retaining existing ones as well. Churchill and the other India diehards believed that the new voters shared the same traditional views of India and empire and were only ignorant of what the Conservative leadership's and Labour's reform plans meant to the Raj. Once the

²⁸ A.J.P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945* (Oxford, 1965). p. 355.

general public found out the truth, the diehards believed, the voters would demand a change in Tory leadership and an imperially centered Conservative Party most likely led by a diehard. Fourth, this study wades into the debate between John MacKenzie and the “Manchester school” and Bernard Porter and the imperial skeptics by examining the limits of Britain’s imperial culture. MacKenzie sees empire as prevalent in British society and argues that a pervasive imperial culture included the working class while Porter disputes the existence of an imperial culture and claims that empire was only of interest to Britain’s upper and upper middle classes. This work shows that an imperial culture did exist, but even so empire was only of interest to the chattering classes. Fifth, this study demonstrates that India was the major issue of concern to those chattering classes in interwar Britain. The press recognized its importance through its voluminous coverage of events on the subcontinent and reforms processes. As will be seen, the press discussed India *a lot*, and this dialogue helped determine the identity of the Conservative Party – and of imperial Britain between the wars.

Chapter 2 The Raj at Bay, 1919-1922

Under the protection of the existing system the Indian must learn the art of self-government in the only way possible – by practice. This is the beginning, as we are proud to think, of the great and difficult period of ‘handing over’ in India.

■ “The Blessed Word ‘Dyarchy.’” Editorial. *Observer*. 8 June 1919: 10a.

What an irony that this should be the moment when in a fit of indecision and at the bidding of a capricious, wilful, undecided, and over cultivated politician, we should take the first step in withdrawing the benefits which Western methods of rule have brought to India – the land which till British rule was established therein never knew any period of peace and prosperity longer than one generation.

■ “National Mismanagement: The New Indian Constitution,” *Spectator*, 6 Dec. 1919, 758.

In 1919 the British Empire was under siege. In January Sinn Fein MPs refused to take their seats at Westminster, set up their own parallel government in Dublin, and proclaimed Ireland a republic. The “Troubles” began in early summer with the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the paramilitary wing of the Sinn Fein government, instituting a violent campaign against the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC). The IRA murdered policemen, attacked police stations, and burned RIC barracks. In Egypt, a mass movement for the full independence of Egypt and Sudan organized by the Wafd Party at a grassroots level, using the tactics of civil disobedience. In March the British authorities arrested the Wafd leadership and exiled them to Malta. Demonstrations, strikes, and a violent uprising in the countryside spread like wildfire across Egypt bringing normal life to a halt. By July, 800 Egyptians were dead and 1,600 wounded.

Against the backdrop of this imperial turbulence, Gandhi made his move into politics at the all-India level for the first time. In 1919 he united politically minded Hindus protesting the Rowlatt Acts with Muslims discontented with British and Allied treatment of Turkey, the Islamic political power. The Rowlatt Acts extended the Defense of India Act into peacetime. Although Gandhi called for peaceful civil disobedience, outbreaks of violence did occur in Delhi, Bombay, and the Punjab and culminated in the horrific Amritsar massacre. On 13 April 1919 at Amritsar

in the Punjab, Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer fired without warning upon a prohibited meeting in Jallianwalla Bagh killing 379 and wounding over 1,200. In the midst of this turbulence, the British Government pushed through important reform measures. Edwin Montagu, the Liberal Secretary of State for India, pushed his reforms through Parliament culminating in the Government of India Act of 1919, with its controversial provision for dyarchy, the division of the portfolios of provincial governments into reserved and transferred subjects. The empire survived 1919 intact (though both Southern Ireland and Egypt were lost by 1922) and imperial resolve in India, as will be seen, remained undiminished. The English press consensus across the political spectrum was already in place by 1919 as Liberal, Conservative, and Labour papers express like views of the imperial mission, Indian society and nationalists; themes that will continue to 1935. This period also witnesses the creation of the India diehards who resisted the 1919 India Act as a betrayal of Britain's imperial mission. The debate over Conservative and British imperial identity came under fierce debate during the 1919-1922 period especially over the Amritsar massacre and Dyer trial. Also in this turbulent atmosphere the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms navigated its way through Parliament to become the Government of India Act of 1919, the Prince of Wales visited the subcontinent on an imperial tour, and the unrest climaxed with the gruesome murder of twenty-three policemen by an angry mob in the town of Chauri Chaura.

The English press did not feel overly compelled to justify British rule in India; the justice of that rule is largely assumed. Primarily the papers had to explain the occurrence of disorder in India. Press leaders explained the tumult as the result of variables beyond Britain's control, rather than either specific British policies, such as the Rowlatt Acts, or British rule over India in general. Both pro-reform and anti-reform papers portrayed India as a divided land and Indian

nationalists as irresponsible agitators. The Raj was necessary, according to the press, as it established and preserved peace and order on the subcontinent; pro-reform papers highlighted the benefit of tutoring Indians on the skills of self-government. On the subject of Indian nationalism, the press placed nearly all of its focus on one man: Gandhi. Focusing on one man seemingly made it easy for the press to marginalize and discount the Indian nationalist movement as a temporary phenomenon that was incapable of peacefully taking charge of the Indian government. The press also sought to use the Prince of Wales, who visited India in November 1921, as a contrast with Gandhi or to demonstrate the loyalty of the Indian masses to the Raj. No paper attempted to make domestic political hay with the issue of India. Perhaps there was just a common assumed agreement in the press to keep India out of the domestic political arena.

The most popular scapegoats for the turmoil in India were the Bolsheviks. The belief in communist complicity was so strong that many papers continued to support it even after the Hunter Commission found that there was no organized conspiracy behind the disorders, let alone involvement by the Bolsheviks.¹ Bolsheviks were behind the war with Afghanistan with the aim of weakening the British Empire and “Bolshevist propaganda” helped to cause the troubles in India; papers charged that either the Government of India or the India Office blocked this information from reaching Britain.² Because of the Bolsheviks’ skill at propaganda it was not

¹ In October 1919, the Government of India, under public pressure from Indians, appointed a committee under Lord Hunter to investigate the disturbances in Delhi, Bombay, and the Punjab the previous April. Other than Hunter, the commission consisted of four British members and three Indian. The committee published its reports in May 1920; commission members divided on racial lines with the British members submitting the Majority Report and the Indians the Minority Report. Both reports severely censured Dyer; the majority only reprimanded Punjab Lieutenant-Governor Michael O’Dwyer while the minority condemned him as well.

² “India and Afghanistan.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 23 May 1919: 6c. The paper refers to the Afghan War of 1919-21. The Afghan offensive was easily pushed back within three weeks; the remainder of the war consisted of RAF attacks against Afghan villages.

“extravagant to suppose they have got into touch with seditious elements in India”³ and that Bolshevik misinformation took root in the soil of ignorance in India.⁴ Even the normally staid *Times* had its conspiracy theory about the disorders in India: “The tentacles of the conspiracy extend far beyond India, and the secret leaders are now unquestionably in touch with the Russian Bolshevik movement.”⁵ This theory was repeated verbatim in the *Times* eight months later in December 1919.⁶ The *British Weekly* and *New Statesman* also stuck with their Bolshevik conspiracy theories in spite of the findings of Lord Hunter.⁷

Two papers saw the external causes not in Bolshevism but in one of Britain’s enemies during the war, the Ottoman Empire. These papers contended that Britain’s troubles with the peace treaty with the Turks, the Islamic power, led to Indian Muslims joining forces with Hindus in demonstrations against the Raj. Blaming the Turks also helped to explain similar disturbances occurring simultaneously in Egypt, and why Muslims were joining Hindus in the disorder. The *Yorkshire Post* cited the difficulties surrounding the Treaty of Sèvres led to troubles with Muslims not only in India but also in Egypt.⁸ Inflammatory language by Gandhi about Egypt was evidence that the disturbances arose from religious causes. The *New Statesman* also claimed the work of Turkish agents during the war to induce a rising of Muslims against the British was bearing fruit.⁹ The *Statesman* saw the defeat of the Turkish Empire as a reason Indian Muslims

³ “Untitled.” Editorial. *Truth*. 23 Apr. 1919: 632.

⁴ “Order and Progress in India.” Editorial. *Observer*. 20 Apr. 1919: 8b.

⁵ “‘Open Rebellion’ in India.” Editorial. *Times*. 19 April 1919: 11a.

⁶ “The Amritsar Disclosures.” Editorial. *Times*. 16 December 1919: 15b.

⁷ See “The Trouble in India.” Editorial. *British Weekly*. 18 Dec. 1919: 271d. Print, and “The Common Sense of Coercion,” *New Statesman*. 20 Dec. 1919, 340.

⁸ “Untitled.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 23 May 1919: 6a.

⁹ “India, Egypt and the Jihad,” *New Statesman*. 26 April 1919, 87.

were up in arms against the British,¹⁰ though the paper would also contend that all of the troubles of India would disappear once the reforms materialized.¹¹

Other papers did not point to a single conspicuous cause of the unrest but to a litany of sources. The *Observer*, *Daily Mail*, and *Manchester Guardian* described the world war as triggering a world revolution which affected India as it did elsewhere. The *Guardian* portrayed the Indian tumult as “symptoms of a political and spiritual unrest which we cannot in the full sense hope to estimate” unleashed by the “prodigious forces of upheaval which have been working through the world during the past five years,” forces that included the influenza outbreak, food scarcity, and high prices.¹² The entire world was remaking itself after the Great War according to the *Observer*:

It is not the West only which is painfully recasting itself under the break-up of forms and theories which have done duty for a century. The East is stirring in the same process of dissolution and renaissance.¹³

The *Daily Mail* blamed the riots in India on the “wave of unrest that has spread over the whole world since the close of the war” which was also the cause of troubles in Egypt, Ireland, and the Continent.¹⁴

While British papers had differing explanations of the source of post-war India’s unrest, they agreed that the Rowlatt Acts were not to blame, with one exception: the *New Statesman*. The *Times*, *Daily Mail*, and *Morning Post* each stressed that the Rowlatt Acts were the pretext for and not the cause of the unrest. The *Times* described the opposition to the acts as “never very

¹⁰ “The Indian Discontents,” *New Statesman*, 19 April 1919, 62.

¹¹ “India, Egypt and the Jihad,” *New Statesman*, 26 April 1919, 87.

¹² “The Disturbances in India.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 16 Apr. 1919:6a. “India.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 23 May 1919: 6a. The *British Weekly* also blamed the influenza epidemic, scarcity of food, and “failure of rains” for the disturbances. “Unrest in India.” Editorial. *British Weekly*. 29 May 1919: 123.

¹³ “Order and Progress in India.” Editorial. *Observer*. 20 Apr. 1919: 8b.

¹⁴ “German Trouble in India.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 16 Apr. 1919: 6a.

sincere” and attributed the disturbances to “inflammatory agitators.”¹⁵ The acts, the *Daily Mail* asserted, were “measures which any right-thinking or loyal Indian might have been expected to support.”¹⁶ Looking back from December 1919, the *Morning Post* claimed that the Rowlatt Act was “made necessary by the attempts to overthrow British rule during the war” and that “agitators seized upon this measure to organize an agitation which threatened the very existence of British rule in India.”¹⁷

The press could not conceive of Indians themselves wanting to overthrow the Raj because of all the benefits that British rule conferred to the people of the subcontinent. Unsurprisingly, or perhaps ironically, considering the strife afflicting India, the press highlighted maintenance of peace and order as first and foremost amongst British achievements. The *Yorkshire Post* summed up Raj’s role of providing stability and protection to India in describing why Indians in the army and police stayed loyal during the disorders:

It may be that they know the advantages, internal and external, which India derives from her connections with the British Empire, and that they recognize the inability of the people of India, as a whole, to themselves resist invasion by some other Power, if the safeguarding hand of the British Empire were removed.¹⁸

This sentiment was effectively echoed in the *Spectator*:

India throughout her history has been cursed by the demon of anarchy except during the period of our rule. It is our greatest claim to the gratitude of mankind that we stopped anarchy among the vast populations of India.¹⁹

The British had made themselves responsible for the “security and happiness of a great part of the human race in India”²⁰ and if the British withdrew from India “there would be chaos,

¹⁵ “India and the Rowlatt Acts.” Editorial. *Times*. 9 Apr. 1919: 13a.

¹⁶ “German Trouble in India.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 16 Apr. 1919: 6a.

¹⁷ “What Happened at Amritsar.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 15 Dec. 1919: 6c. *Truth* described the Rowlatt Act as “one of many examples of the difficulty of running Imperialism and Democracy in double harness.” “Our Indian Liabilities.” Editorial. *Truth*. 28 May 1919: 888.

¹⁸ “Untitled.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 23 May 1919: 6a.

¹⁹ “The First Stage Towards Indian Anarchy,” *Spectator*, 20 Dec. 1919, 849. Also see “National Mismanagement: The New Indian Constitution,” *Spectator*, 6 Dec. 1919, 758.

confusion, and decimation indescribable.”²¹ Therefore, the first duty of the Government of India was the restoration of order and the prevention of further danger of disturbance.²² Sections of the press highlighted the need for peace and order to be restored first before the reforms process could be carried out. This idea was best expressed by the *Yorkshire Post*:

At a time when the Indian people are being trusted with a larger measure of self-government, and have yet to show how far they are ready for such responsibilities, it is more than ever essential that a strong hand should be taken against those who are out to wreck all possibility of peaceful, orderly, progress.²³

Domestic order, to the *Daily Telegraph*, was a *sine qua non* of “the most elementary measures of constitutional development.”²⁴

Other benefits of British rule received much less attention during the 1919-1922 period; the press only mentioned education and the instruction in self-government. The *Observer* noted that Indians were finally coming to embrace Western ideas: “Indian interest has turned eagerly in the direction in which it has been our policy to guide it.”²⁵ The instruction of Indians in the difficult art of self-rule was another important benefit of the Raj. This was best stated by *Truth* in May 1919:

There is no justification for British rule in India that will in these days stand debate before a democratic electorate, except this – that we simply remain in India for the purpose of putting the Indian people in the way of learning to govern themselves, in this performing a duty which has devolved upon us, and which we cannot repudiate without inflicting grievous misfortune upon the Indian people.²⁶

The *Observer* concurred, claiming that the Government of India was “working more and more...for its own supersession” and that it was the goal of British rule was “to devolve

²⁰ “The Indian Disorders.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 17 Apr. 1919: 8e.

²¹ “The Premier on India.” Editorial. *British Weekly*. 16 Feb. 1922: 439e. Also see “British Rule in the East.” Editorial. *Observer*. 19 Feb. 1922: 12b.

²² *Observer* 25 May 1919

²³ “The Bombay Disturbances.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 21 Nov. 1921: 6b.

²⁴ “The State of India.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 15 Feb. 1922: 10c. See also “German Trouble in India.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 16 Apr. 1919: 6a, and “.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 23 May 1919: 4b.

²⁵ “The Blessed Word ‘Dyarchy.’” Editorial. *Observer*. 8 June 1919: 10a.

²⁶ “Our Indian Liabilities.” Editorial. *Truth*. 28 May 1919: 888.

responsibility upon Indians.”²⁷ Britain was “carrying a long step farther the doctrine which is at the base of our Indian policy,” namely self-government for India, according to the *Manchester Guardian*. The paper concluded that the justification of the Raj was that “the peoples of India shall derive benefit from it.”²⁸ The most ostentatious language describing Britain’s tutelage of Indians came from the usually serious *Times*:

The task of Great Britain is still, as in the past, to guide them onward march, with unresting zeal, with prudent boldness, and in a faith indomitable that the reward of sacrifice to pure ideals is sure.²⁹

The press devoted more space highlighting dominant British perceptions of India and its peoples. In its pages India appeared as a land of divisions, divisions based on mistrust if not outright hatred, and particularly on a seemingly impassable gulf between Hindus and Muslims. The assumption of permanent sectarian divisions, however, presented leader writers with a problem: editors could not explain how Hindus and Muslims were able to work together in demonstrating against the Raj in the spring of 1919.

Most press leaders agreed that the divisions of India, especially the gulf between Hindus and Muslims, were a major stumbling block to reform. The *Yorkshire Post* wondered aloud whether it was possible to transfer power to Indians “due to the variety of language, caste, and social conditions.” To illustrate this point the *Post* pointed to the condition of Russia, going through a brutal civil war at the time, even though it was more unified with no religious differences.³⁰ The *Daily Mail* saw a subcontinent “seething with a newly born race-consciousness” growing in an atmosphere of “acute political unrest.”³¹ The *Morning Post*

²⁷ “British Rule in the East.” Editorial. *Observer*. 19 Feb. 1922: 12b.

²⁸ “A Great Experiment.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 16 Feb. 1922: 6b. Also see “The Indian Disorders.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 17 Apr. 1919: 8e.

²⁹ “India’s Charter.” Editorial. *Times*. 20 Nov. 1919: 13b.

³⁰ “Untitled.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 23 May 1919: 6a. The paper must not have known of the myriad religions of Russia.

³¹ “Troubled India.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 15 Feb. 1922: 8c.

worried most about the threatened dominance of Hindu lawyers in a self-governing India. The *Post* condemned the “politically minded class whom Mr. Montagu misrepresents as the ‘people of India.’ They are not the people, but the enemies of the people.”³² India as a whole was loyal, but Montagu’s machinations with the “educated and wealthier classes” led to unrest. The paper concluded that the Indian masses would fare worse if power were transferred from the British to Indian lawyers and landowners.³³

The English press blamed Indian nationalists for inciting the uneducated masses by spreading lies about the Raj. Those Indians who rioted were nothing but “the foolish dupes of agitators who sought ‘naked revolution,’ and nothing less.”³⁴ The riots did not reveal a people united for political freedom; instead, they resulted from the vicious efforts of a, “minute and selfish minority, chiefly composed of an arrogant priestly caste;”³⁵ merely a collection of “half-educated...native journalists and lawyers who are not more than 5 per cent of the population.”³⁶ These agitators aroused support by blaming all of India’s ills on the “wilful malevolence on the part of the British” and spreading “poisonous falsehoods” about the Rowlatt Acts, describing the acts “as giving sanction to the most atrocious and irresponsible tyranny.”³⁷ They corrupted the minds of illiterates who, “understanding little of the points at issue, interpreted their instructions in their own way,” that is to say, through violence.³⁸ In the *Sunday Times*, Lord Sydenham asserted that since Congress had been taken over by extremists, who also controlled the Indian press, “the growth of anti-British feeling among the turbulent classes of the towns and even in

³² “India and Afghanistan.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 23 May 1919: 6c. In what would become a major issue of contention in the 1927-1935, the *Sunday Times* asserted that 94 percent of India’s population was illiterate and had “no desire for political change.” Lord Sydenham, “Organised Rebellion in India,” *Sunday Times*, 27 Apr. 1919, 8g.

³³ “Untitled.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 23 May 1919: 6a.

³⁴ “Disturbances in India.” Editorial. *Times*. 26 Apr. 1919: 13b.

³⁵ “The First Stage Towards Indian Anarchy,” *Spectator*, 20 Dec. 1919, 849.

³⁶ “Notes of the Week,” *Saturday Review*, 13 Dec. 1919, 554.

³⁷ “The Indian Disorders.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 17 Apr. 1919: 8e.

³⁸ “India, Egypt and the Jihad,” *New Statesman*, 26 April 1919, 87.

the country villages was continuous.”³⁹ The *Times* discounted the possibility of passive resistance when “the passions of the credulous populace have been stirred up by the dissemination of wilful lies.” Only the *Sunday Times* put the onus of responsibility for constitutional progress in India on Indians themselves; the paper meant that Indians needed to work out all of their internal disputes before properly working towards self-government. The paper claimed that “liberty, reform, and progress” depended on “the political ability and good sense” of the Indian people.⁴⁰

Gandhi personified all that was wrong with India in the English press. So fixated was the press on the person of Gandhi that in all of the press leaders in this period, the name of the Indian National Congress appeared only once.⁴¹ Anything remotely positive about Gandhi in the press was immediately qualified. Editors saw Gandhi motivated by a “mixture of shoddy sentimentality and anti-British venom”⁴² who incited the masses to violence and fasted in contrition afterwards. This “well-known and bitter critic of the Indian Government”⁴³ was unprincipled, reckless, and unstable, “one of the deadliest and most unscrupulous enemies of our country and everything it stands for.”⁴⁴ A “crude idealist,” he has been “driven to wring his hands in despair over the blazing up of a fire to which he has put the match” and was “a grave menace to society.”⁴⁵ As the *Times* insisted, Gandhi was “a misguided and excitable person, who is used by others as a stalking horse.”⁴⁶ The *Times* depicted Gandhi as weak and without principle: “he stirs up some section of the ignorant masses to tumult, finds he cannot control

³⁹ Lord Sydenham, “Amritsar – The Commission’s Report,” *Sunday Times*, 30 May 1920, 9.

⁴⁰ “The Indian Debate.” Editorial. *Sunday Times*. 19 Feb. 1922: 10d.

⁴¹ Lord Sydenham, “Amritsar – The Commission’s Report,” *Sunday Times*, 30 May 1920, 9.

⁴² “Gandhi’s Chat.” Editorial. *Daily Express*. 21 Nov. 1921: 6b.

⁴³ “German Trouble in India.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 16 Apr. 1919: 6a. Also see “Notes of the Week,” *Saturday Review*, 18 Feb. 1922, 162.

⁴⁴ “The State of India.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 15 Feb. 1922: 10c.

⁴⁵ “The Bombay Disturbances.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 21 Nov. 1921: 6b.

⁴⁶ “The Outbreak in India.” Editorial. *Times*. 15 Apr. 1919: 13a.

them, expresses regret, and after an interval of quiescence behaves in the same way again.⁴⁷ Similarly William Joynson-Hicks, in the *Sunday Times*, condemned Gandhi as “the great Bombay agitator” who professed to be the leader of a peaceful movement, though “men who committed arson and assaulted women did so with his name upon their lips.”⁴⁸

Many papers predicted appalling consequences in India if “the hatreds and jealousies of race and creed which Mr. Gandhi affects to ignore were indeed loosed under cover of his teaching.”⁴⁹ Press portraits of Gandhi also focused on the impossibility of his political and economic programs. The *Spectator*, for example, declared that Gandhi’s goal of revolution without violence was impossible,⁵⁰ while both the *Observer* and *Time and Tide* condemned Swaraj, Gandhi’s goal of Indian economic self-sufficiency, as nostalgic and unrealistic: “The return to a golden age of handlooms and Vedic virtue is a principle which would, were it put in practice on any scale, beggar India.”⁵¹ The *Nation & Athenaeum* and the *New Statesman* dismissed Gandhi as “Tolstoyan.”⁵²

Some papers, however, expressed qualified praise, or at least sympathy, for Gandhi. Warning that passive resistance was “a very dangerous idea,” the *New Statesman* conceded that Gandhi possessed “enough practical capacity to realise that if the movement becomes violent it must fail.”⁵³ Though the *Daily Mail* regarded Gandhi as “a misguided man,” it admitted that those who knew him best were convinced of his honesty and sincerity. The *Mail* added that when Gandhi apologized for violence carried out in his name:

⁴⁷ “The Riots at Bombay.” Editorial. *Times*. 22 Nov. 1921: 11c. Also see “Mr. Montagu and India.” Editorial. *Times*. 15 Feb. 1922: 11b.

⁴⁸ William Joynson Hicks, “Amritsar,” *Sunday Times*, 23 May 1920, 8f.

⁴⁹ “A Chastened Gandhi.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 21 Nov. 1921: 6e.

⁵⁰ “Asia and Europe,” *Spectator*, 26 Nov. 1921, 696.

⁵¹ “India’s Choice.” Editorial. *Observer*. 20 Nov. 1921: 12b.

⁵² “Untitled,” *Nation & Athenaeum*, 18 Feb. 1922, 333, and “The Indian Discontents,” *New Statesman*, 19 Apr. 1919, 62.

⁵³ “Untitled,” *New Statesman*, 26 Nov. 1921, 213.

it is not because he is a coward trying to evade responsibility but because he really feels that his policy is bad, and is having disastrous consequences and wishes to express his contrition.⁵⁴

Time & Tide praised Gandhi as “a fine man” as he was able to admit his failure in creating “the sort of spiritual movement of which he dreamed.”⁵⁵ The *Manchester Guardian* declared that Gandhi tried to quell the Bombay disturbances following the arrival of the Prince of Wales and make amends through fasting. The *Guardian* also stated that Gandhi admitted civil disobedience was not possible “until all who believe in it are prepared to practise it without violence.”⁵⁶ The *Times* called Gandhi “an emotional but sincere agitator” who was “entirely well-meaning” but “becomes an unconscious foe to peace and order.”⁵⁷ The *Daily Herald* argued against the arrest of Gandhi as he was a genuine pacifist who used his great influence to prevent violence.⁵⁸

The British press used the Prince of Wales, visiting India as part of his tour of the empire, to demonstrate the continuing allegiance of the Indian masses as well as a contrast to Gandhi. The prince disembarked in Bombay in November 1921; the local Congress committee organized a *hartal* and a demonstration. Gandhi demanded non-violence, but riots broke out. The press used the Prince’s visit to demonstrate the loyalty of the masses, thus discounting the alleged popularity of Indian nationalists. Many papers stated that the Prince received a magnificent welcome “from Indians of every race, religion, caste, and colour,”⁵⁹ and claimed that “the heart of the people beats with the loyalty – the free and willing loyalty – which their fighting-men showed during the war.”⁶⁰ Others predicted that “all disorders will vanish in well-ordered

⁵⁴ “Mr. Gandhi Does Penance.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 21 Nov. 1921: 8b.

⁵⁵ “Untitled.” Editorial. *Time & Tide*. 26 Nov. 1921: 1126a.

⁵⁶ “A Chastened Gandhi.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 21 Nov. 1921: 6e.

⁵⁷ “India and the Rowlatt Acts.” Editorial. *Times*. 9 Apr. 1919: 13a.

⁵⁸ “India.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 15 Feb. 1922: 4b.

⁵⁹ “The Prince in India.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 18 Nov. 1921: 8d.

⁶⁰ “King, Prince, and People.” Editorial. *Times*. 18 Nov. 1921: 11c.

progress” thanks to the Prince’s arrival.⁶¹ The *New Statesman* claimed that the Prince overshadowed Gandhi and Gandhi’s prestige suffered a blow as “half the population of the city disobeyed him by gathering to welcome the Prince with remarkable enthusiasm.”⁶² The Prince was used as a contrast to Gandhi; progress versus backwardness. The press associated the Prince with peace and order, advancement, and growth while it connected Gandhi with mysticism, chaos, and disorder.

In sharp contrast to the unrest on the subcontinent in April 1919 in Britain the Montagu-Chelmsford Report was introduced to Parliament. The Report wound its way through Parliament and Parliamentary committees during the summer and autumn 1919 to emerge as the Government of India Act of 1919 in December of that year. The most controversial provision in the reforms and eventually the Act was dyarchy, the division of the portfolios of provincial governments into reserved and transferred subjects. The Governor’s Council retained the former, such as security and taxation, and elected Indian ministers assumed the latter, which included education, health, and agriculture. The majority of the press supported the reforms, but the measure generated little enthusiasm in even pro-reform papers.

The pro-reform press insisted that that the lack or the slow pace of reform led to the violence; hence, reforms must be enacted swiftly, though only after order had been re-established. This view was contrary to that of the diehards who contended that the unrest was a direct result of the reforms process. Reform in the face of native resistance made British authority appear weak which simply incited the agitators to commit further violence. The diehards wanted draconian means to suppress agitation not only in India, but also Egypt and

⁶¹ “At the Gateway of India.” Editorial. *Daily Express*. 18 Nov. 1921: 6b. Also see “The Prince in Bombay.” Editorial. *British Weekly*. 24 Nov. 1921: 179c, “India’s Choice.” Editorial. *Observer*. 20 Nov. 1921: 12b, “The Bombay Disturbances.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 21 Nov. 1921: 6b, and “The Prince in India.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 18 Nov. 1921: 6b.

⁶² “Untitled,” *New Statesman*, 26 Nov. 1921, 214.

Ireland. The *Manchester Guardian* and *Truth* argued that reforms must be carried forward in spite of the political disaffection on the subcontinent.⁶³ *Truth* added that using the riots as a pretext to postpone reforms would disappoint a large section of loyal Indians.⁶⁴ But the *Guardian* was prepared for extraordinary measures to quash the unrest:

if there should be any material extension of the disturbance we must be prepared to hear of drastic executive action, coupled with a demand for unqualified support from Parliament and the British public for any policy which, in the opinion of the Viceroy's Government, it may be necessary to adopt.⁶⁵

The *Observer* stated that the reestablishment of order was necessary but claimed any “negative policy of ‘firmness’” would only aggravate the turbulence. The paper concluded that there was “a far greater danger of our being scared away from than being stampeded into execution of the Montagu-Chelmsford proposals.”⁶⁶ On the other hand, the *Times* suggested that order and punishment of the guilty were necessary before reform could be enacted.⁶⁷

Even pro-reform papers viewed the proposed changes as a great experiment, a fact that tempered their own enthusiasm for the measure. While both the *Observer* and the *Times* advised moving forward with the reforms as “senile caution in India would be the real danger,”⁶⁸ the *Daily Telegraph* stressed the importance of measured progress: responsibility should be rewarded only gradually as Indians gained political experience.⁶⁹ The *British Weekly*, too, expressed optimism in the reforms but declared that much depended on “the wise extension of

⁶³ “The Disorders in India.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 19 Apr. 1919: 6c.

⁶⁴ “Untitled,” *Truth*, 23 Apr. 1919, 632.

⁶⁵ “The Disturbances in India.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 16 Apr. 1919: 6a.

⁶⁶ “Order and Progress in India.” Editorial. *Observer*. 20 Apr. 1919: 8b.

⁶⁷ “Open Rebellion in India.” Editorial. *Times*. 19 Apr. 1919: 11a.

⁶⁸ Quotation from the “The Blessed Word ‘Dyarchy.’” Editorial. *Observer*. 8 June 1919: 10a. See also “India’s Charter.” Editorial. *Times*. 20 November 1919: 13b.

⁶⁹ “The Proclamation and the Speech.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 24 Dec. 1919: 8e.

local government throughout India.”⁷⁰ The *New Statesman* argued that the disturbances resulted from, and could be resolved by, British actions:

Indians were impatiently waiting for Mr. Montagu’s schemes to materialise, we gave them the Rowlatt Bills...if the Viceroy of India and the Home Government can make up their minds to modification of the Rowlatt Bills, accompanied by a speeding up of the promised reforms, the unrest will subside in India.⁷¹

Admitting that the bill was a good start, The *Daily Herald* warned that “until it provides for responsible self-government, for which India is clamorous, it will never be enough.”⁷² The *Herald* hoped that Labour MPs would attempt to amend the Bill in order to widen its scope as the legislation did not meet what Indians asked for: the right of self-government. Nevertheless, the Bill, “a definite break with the past,” provided the assurance that “once the Labour movement comes into power, a full and complete measure will be passed.”⁷³

Pro-reform papers were not entirely happy with the provision for dyarchy, the introduction of limited self-government at the provincial level. However, with no alternative available, these papers feared having to restart the reforms process from scratch. Both the *Observer* and the *Manchester Guardian* praised the Bill as the fulfillment of Indian aspirations, with dyarchy as the first step in the “transfer of power from a despotic Executive to Ministries responsible to elected representatives.”⁷⁴ While not entirely pleased with dyarchy, the *Guardian* concluded that it was “so completely woven into [the Bill’s] texture that no amendment short of disruption would seem to be possible.”⁷⁵ The *Observer* defended dyarchy as an experimental measure that would transfer a share of power so Indians could learn the art of self-government by

⁷⁰ “Unrest in India.” Editorial. *British Weekly*. 29 May 1919: 123.

⁷¹ “India, Egypt and the Jihad,” *New Statesman*, 26 Apr. 1919, 88.

⁷² “Urgent India.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 23 May 1919: 4b.

⁷³ “Burmah.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 25 Nov. 1919: 9b. The first two Labour Governments in 1923 and 1929-31 did not fulfill the paper’s expectations.

⁷⁴ “India.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 23 May 1919: 6a. Also see “Indian Reforms and Egypt.” Editorial. *Observer*. 23 Nov. 1919: 12b.

⁷⁵ “The Indian Reform Bill.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 6 June 1919: 6c.

practice. The paper viewed this as the first part of “the great and difficult period of ‘handing over’ in India and dyarchy would last “until India can...assume full responsibility for her place in the line along with the other nations of the Commonwealth.”⁷⁶

The name of the author of the reforms, Edwin Montagu, appeared in pro-reform accounts much less frequently than in the anti-reform papers. Perhaps the pro-reform papers attempted to disassociate the man from the legislation as he proved to be such a lightning rod for criticism. Montagu, who came from a rich Jewish family, attended the Universities of London and Oxford, where he started his connection with the Liberal party. He was elected to Parliament in 1906 and held the seat until 1922. Montagu’s connection with India began in 1910 when he became undersecretary to the India Office; he visited India on a tour two years later. At the outbreak of war he moved to the Treasury and eventually to the Ministry of Munitions. Montagu joined the Cabinet in 1915, as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the inner War Committee of the Cabinet in July 1916 as Minister of Munitions. He followed Lloyd George with the fall of Asquith and the new Premier named him Secretary of State for India in July 1917. Montagu served as the head of the Indian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference but was compelled to resign his position in March 1922 for violating the principle of collective Cabinet responsibility by publishing the views of the Government of India on revising the Treaty of Sèvres. He died two years later of a combination of arteriosclerosis and septicaemia coma. John Maynard Keynes, the eminent Liberal economist, described Montagu as possessing a “remarkable personality” but suffering from “violent fluctuations of mood” ranging from reckless courage to abject panic and dejection. Montagu’s status as an outsider in English society and politics was summed up by Keynes, an admirer:

⁷⁶ “The Blessed Word ‘Dyarchy.’” Editorial. *Observer*. 8 June 1919: 10a.

he was an Oriental, equipped, nevertheless, with the intellectual technique and atmosphere of the West, drew him naturally to the political problems of India, and allowed an instinctive, mutual sympathy between him and its peoples.⁷⁷

Although he was not a practicing Jew, Montagu was seen as the “other,” an Oriental in Western dress with a Western education, but certainly not English. His supposed Eastern heritage was perhaps the reason why he was given important roles in the India Office. The existing literature on Montagu sheds little light on why he was such a lightning rod for criticism; the best explanation comes from the Dictionary of National Biography: “antisemitism was a constant undermining factor in his political life.”⁷⁸

Montagu’s greatest enemy in the press was the *Morning Post*. Much of the *Post*’s distrust and revulsion of the ethnically Jewish Montagu may have stemmed from the anti-Semitism of its editor, H.A. Gwynne.⁷⁹ The *Morning Post* chided Montagu for attempting to impose democracy on India and place power in the hands of “politically-minded lawyers and seditious Brahmans and Bengalis” who would exploit the masses. The recent disturbances, with the loss of European lives, offered a glimpse of what was going to happen when Montagu had finished with his plans.⁸⁰ Montagu committed the Government and country to a program they had never fully considered.⁸¹ Dyarchy meant disaster:

what Mr. Montagu has succeeded in doing is to introduce a vicious principle into the government of India – the principle of division. That principle, however it may be modified and whatever safeguards may be imposed upon it, must

⁷⁷ John M. Keynes, *Essays in Biography* (London, 1951). p. 50.

⁷⁸ H.C.G. Matthew & Brian Harrison, eds, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 38 (Oxford, 2004). p. 719. Also see S.D. Waley, *Edwin Montagu* (New York, 1964) and Naomi B. Levine, *Politics, Religion and Love: The Story of H.H. Asquith, Venetia Stanley and Edwin Montagu, Based on the Life and Letters of Edwin Samuel Montagu* (New York, 1991).

⁷⁹ For example, the *Post* ran a series of articles in 1920 based on the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, an anti-Semitic hoax originally published in Russia. Gwynne compiled these articles as the basis for his book, *The Cause of World Unrest*, published in 1920.

⁸⁰ “India and Afghanistan.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 23 May 1919: 6c.

⁸¹ “Looking for Trouble.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 6 June 1919: 6c.

inevitably work mischief. Sooner or later we shall either have to get rid of this principle or get rid of India.⁸²

Dyarchy could only “create confusion, discord, delay, and weakness within the Government.”⁸³

Along with the *Morning Post*, other papers attacked the reforms by targeting Montagu. The *Spectator* blamed the unrest on the Montagu-Chelmsford Report and the “impatience of the Secretary of State for India.” Trying to apply Western democratic methods to an undemocratic Eastern society was bound to promote confusion and conflict.⁸⁴ The *Sunday Times* also made a direct attack against Montagu, comparing him unfavorably with the Rudyard Kipling character Padgett, M.P.:

Mr. Montagu...differs from ‘Padgett, M.P.’ in the capacity for greater evil which goes with political power; and evidently he has handled Indian affairs with all the ingenuousness of his prototype. The result is widespread unrest punctuated by local rebellion and outrage.⁸⁵

Declaring that it was an extreme misfortune for India and the empire that Montagu should be the head of the India Office, the *Spectator* accused the secretary of pulling a confidence trick on the country as the reform measure before Parliament was Montagu’s Bill alone:

It has all of the marks of his personality and mental equipment. His busy colleagues have taken it from him on trust, and now Parliament is being guided, pressed, nay ‘herded,’ to take it also on trust and in the hope that bad as it looks, it will turn out all that Mr. Montagu says it will.⁸⁶

⁸² “A House Divided Against Itself.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 20 Nov. 1919: 6d.

⁸³ Ibid. The *Spectator* praised the *Morning Post* as “a journal which has done a very great public service in its dealings with the crisis in Indian affairs.” “National Mismanagement: The New Indian Constitution,” *Spectator*, 6 Dec. 1919, 758.

⁸⁴ *Spectator* 19 Apr. 1919

⁸⁵ Lord Sydenham, “Organised Rebellion in India,” *Sunday Times*, 27 Apr. 1919, 8g. The poem describes Padgett as a “fluent liar” who went to “study the East” and denied the heat of India as the “Asian Solar Myth.” The remainder of the poem describes Padgett’s suffering due to his ignorance and concluded:

the fools like Padgett who write of their “Eastern trips,”
And the sneers of the traveled idiots who duly misgovern the land,
And I prayed to the Lord to deliver another one into my hand.

⁸⁶ “National Mismanagement: The New Indian Constitution,” *Spectator*, 6 Dec. 1919, 758.

Similarly, *Truth* described Montagu's proposal as a "huge liability" that carried "risks which can hardly fail to bring us trouble of one kind or another." As a result, *Truth* concluded "a good many people are strongly opposed to the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms on principle."⁸⁷

Praise for Montagu in the press was rare and far outstripped by criticism. The *Daily Mail* and *Observer* praised Montagu; the *Mail* was encouraged that "Indian affairs should be in the hands of a Secretary of State so firmly imbued with a spirit of sympathy, and wielding a courage equal to the force of his conviction."⁸⁸ The *New Statesman* commended Montagu as "an able man" and urged the Cabinet to give him its backing. However, the *Statesman* admitted that "it is clearly impossible at the present stage to forecast the fortunes of a measure which must be regarded as the most significant in our imperial history."⁸⁹ While the *Herald* declared the Bill overly complicated and hoped it was bolder and clearer and based on Indian self-government, it acclaimed Montagu as a sincere man who aimed for the gradual transfer of power to Indians.⁹⁰

Only the *Yorkshire Post* and *Saturday Review* were able to oppose the reforms without mentioning the Secretary of State. The *Yorkshire Post* feared that the proposed extension of self-government to India would have similar consequences to the passing of Home Rule Act in regards to Ireland, namely civil war. The *Post* also considered the Russian Revolution as a possible example: "If the transference of power from a bureaucracy to the masses has led to disorder in Russia, and its proposal to disorder in Ireland, what may we expect in India."⁹¹ The *Saturday Review* described the proposed legislation as a "revolutionary Bill" and the entire reforms scheme as an untried experiment and a leap in the dark. The *Review* added that "every step in [the reforms] may lead us far down a slippery slope; and no step, however rash, once

⁸⁷ "Our Indian Liabilities." Editorial. *Truth*. 28 May 1919: 888. The paper also stated that there was more danger going too fast with reform than too slow, using the analogy of building a house without a solid foundation.

⁸⁸ *Daily Mail* 23 May 1919 and *Observer* 25 May 1919

⁸⁹ "The India Bill," *New Statesman*, 7 June 1919, 230.

⁹⁰ "A Crucial Bill." Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 5 June 1919: 4a.

⁹¹ "Untitled." Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 23 May 1919: 6a.

taken can be retraced.”⁹² The *Saturday Review* also disputed the contention that Indians would learn self-government through experience:

The logic of the proceeding is on par with that of a man who should place a bomb in the hands of a child or a savage in the certain expectation that the experience would teach him its explosive qualities.⁹³

The strangest paper concerning the 1919 reforms was undoubtedly the *Times*. The paper supported the reforms (but only because of the lack of any alternative) but disliked Montagu and disapproved of his methods. Montagu’s constitutional modification scheme was not the cause of the unrest but the Secretary had only himself to blame for falling

into the arms of unpractical idealists with very little knowledge either of India or of the Asiatic atmosphere. He made the error of permitting experienced administrators to be thrust aside while he kept at his elbow, in India, [and] at the India Office...men who had no sound qualifications for advising him.⁹⁴

Nevertheless, the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, containing as it did “a great deal of dreamy and even dangerous nonsense,” was fundamentally sound. The *Times* expressed disquiet over dyarchy: “we have always regarded [dualism] as a clumsy expedient, and have been inclined to doubt its practicability.” It doubted that Parliament would change the Bill as amendment “would necessitate the reconstruction of the whole measure, which in turn would mean a delay of several months.” Unconvinced of Montagu’s defense of dyarchy, the paper still approved the measure as there was no alternative to reform.⁹⁵ Referring to the continued unrest in India, the paper stated that “never...was a greater experiment about to be made in circumstances more deeply disquieting.” But in spite of the disorder, it agreed with Montagu that the reforms should proceed as “to draw back now, to be intimidated by recent disturbances, would be fatal.”⁹⁶

⁹² “India for the Agitator,” *Saturday Review*, 22 Nov. 1919, 481.

⁹³ “Untitled,” *Saturday Review*, 13 Dec. 1919, 554.

⁹⁴ “‘Open Rebellion’ in India.” Editorial. *Times*. 19 Apr. 1919: 11a.

⁹⁵ “The Indian Reforms Bill.” Editorial. *Times*. 6 June 1919: 13b.

⁹⁶ “The Government of India.” Editorial. *Times*. 23 May 1919: 13a.

In October 1919, the Government of India, under public pressure from Indians, appointed a committee under Lord Hunter to investigate the disturbances across northern India the previous April. The Hunter Commission and its hearings brought the truth of what happened at Amritsar to the British press and public. Press reaction to the Dyer controversy revealed a divided nation. All papers, with the exception of the *Daily Herald*, expressed sympathy for Dyer. The press split fairly evenly over the general's actions. The *Morning Post*, *Spectator*, *Daily Express*, *Yorkshire Post*, *Saturday Review*, *Daily Telegraph*, and *Sunday Times* viewed Dyer as the savior of India who prevented a second mutiny, and thus preserved the entire British Empire. The *Manchester Guardian*, *Times*, *Observer*, *Daily Herald*, *Daily Mail*, and *British Weekly* condemned the general's actions as unnecessarily barbaric and essentially "un-British." Both *Truth* and the *New Statesman* tried to take both sides simultaneously: they condemned Dyer and his methods but stated it was unfair that the general was "thrown overboard" by the Government of India for showing poor judgment.⁹⁷

The difference between the two opposing camps depended on their conception of empire and British rule on the subcontinent. Was a revolt fomenting in India at the time of the Dyer massacre? Some papers insisted yes; others disagreed. Another crucial question was whether the shooting at Jallianwalla Bagh was necessary, given the situation. Even some papers that conceded that armed force was needed condemned the general for continuing the fire until the ammunition was depleted. Many papers portrayed Dyer as the real victim of the incident. The general faced a situation beyond his means and his only mistake was firing too long, as the initial shooting was necessary to disperse the crowd. Press opinion of Montagu helped determine the tenor of the press coverage. Typically, editors that condemned Dyer defended Montagu, and

⁹⁷ "The Saving of India." Editorial. *Truth*. 14 July 1920: 66 and "The Common Sense of Coercion," *New Statesman*, 20 Dec. 1919, 340.

vice versa. Papers that supported the general, especially the *Morning Post*, sought to portray the controversy over the incident at Amritsar as a conflict between Dyer and Montagu.

What was the nature of British rule on the subcontinent? Papers divided into two camps: depending upon whether the paper believed the shooting at Amritsar was necessary. Papers who viewed the shooting as unnecessary claimed that government should be based on cooperation, while those who did see the shooting as necessary based British rule on force. The *Times*, *Manchester Guardian*, *Daily Mail*, *Observer*, and *Truth* all judged Dyer's actions as indefensible and renounced the "Dyer doctrine" or the "Dyer school" as the foundation of the British Raj. India would be held to Britain by understanding and respect (according to the *Guardian*) and by loyal consent (according to the *Daily Mail*).⁹⁸ The *Observer* and *Truth* contended that the India Bill, not Dyer, embodied British imperial rule.⁹⁹ The *Times* was able to condemn Dyer by finally renouncing its conspiracy theories after the Hunter Commission report found no evidence of a revolutionary plot.¹⁰⁰ These papers, however, did not renounce the use of force in India (or the empire) entirely. The *Manchester Guardian* declared the importance of maintaining order but without unnecessary severity while other papers claimed that Dyer took reasonable force too far and used it indiscriminately, if not barbarically.¹⁰¹ To these papers the confrontation at Amritsar was an isolated incident and Dyer was unrepresentative of British rule in India, or elsewhere in the empire. The *Daily Herald* also condemned Dyer but found it atrocious that the general's punishment only consisted of retirement at half pay.

⁹⁸ "The Reproof Courteous." Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 27 May 1920: 6b and "Mr. Montagu and General Dyer." Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 9 July 1920: 6b.

⁹⁹ "The Dyer Case and the Soul of Empire." Editorial. *Observer*. 11 July 1920: 12b and "Untitled." Editorial. *Truth*. 17 Dec. 1919: 1084.

¹⁰⁰ "Amritsar." Editorial. *Times*. 27 May 1920: 13b.

¹⁰¹ "The Reproof Courteous." Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 27 May 1920: 6b. Also see "Untitled." Editorial. *Truth*. 17 Dec. 1919: 1084., "Amritsar." Editorial. *Times*. 27 May 1920: 13b, "A Moral of the Future." Editorial. *Observer*. 30 May 1920: 12b, "Amritsar." Editorial. *Daily Express*. 27 May 1920: 4b, and "General Dyer." Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 27 May 1920: 4b.

The papers that defended Dyer -- the *Yorkshire Post*, *Sunday Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Morning Post*, *Saturday Review*, and *Daily Express* -- believed that British authority ultimately rested on force; the shooting at Jallianwalla Bagh in the end was necessary. Most of these papers regretted that the general allowed his troops to fire too long, but argued that Dyer's error in judgment did not warrant the end of his military career. The exception here was the *Daily Express*, which agreed that the shooting was necessary but conceded that Dyer should be punished, as he "allowed just punishment to become cruel slaughter."¹⁰² The pro-Dyer papers all argued that, contrary to the findings of the Hunter Report, the Punjab was in open rebellion in the spring of 1919. The *Morning Post*, in fact, attempted to discredit the commission itself by describing it as an unqualified body that ignored the causes of the outbreak of violence. The paper considered the presence of three "natives" on the Hunter Commission to be a great outrage since the committee essentially put the general on trial.¹⁰³ Lord Sydenham in the *Sunday Times* disputed the Hunter Report: "there is no other reasonable explanation of the facts which the Committee records than that there was a far-reaching, though not completely organised, conspiracy."¹⁰⁴

In the picture painted by the anti-reforms press, the Punjab in 1919 resembled northern India in 1857. General Dyer "saved Northern India from a danger comparable only to the Indian Mutiny," the *Post* asserted.¹⁰⁵ The entire Punjab was in open rebellion incited by Gandhi, according to the *Daily Telegraph*. Inaction on the part of the general would have led to a full-scale revolt; the *Telegraph* added that "there would have been no Indian Mutiny in 1857 if there

¹⁰² "Finis." Editorial. *Daily Express*. 8 July 1920: 6b.

¹⁰³ "An Unhappy Report." Editorial. *Morning Post*. 27 May 1920: 6a.

¹⁰⁴ Lord Sydenham, "Amritsar – The Commission's Report," *Sunday Times*, 30 May 1920, 9d.

¹⁰⁵ "What Happened at Amritsar." Editorial. *Morning Post*. 15 Dec. 1919: 6c.

had been a General Dyer at Meerut.”¹⁰⁶ Joynson-Hicks in the *Sunday Times* declared that without Dyer’s actions the mob would have taken over the entire Punjab and possibly other parts of India; a peril only comparable to the Mutiny.¹⁰⁷

The danger had not passed, according to the *Yorkshire Post*, *Saturday Review*, and *Daily Telegraph*; the condemnation of Dyer would have dire consequences for not only India but also the empire as a whole. The *Yorkshire Post* feared that anti-British revolution could flare up again at any time on the subcontinent. The *Post*, like the *Daily Herald*, described the general as a scapegoat blamed for everything that happened when “British rule was in serious danger, and the safety of large numbers of our own race was threatened by the growing frenzy of the native population.”¹⁰⁸ British soldiers, seeing the fate of General Dyer, “may be tempted to hesitate in action at the crucial moment” with consequences the editor did not want to even contemplate.¹⁰⁹ The *Saturday Review* stated that for his “courage, promptitude, and knowledge of the native character, General Dyer has been censured by the Commission, and retired by the Government.” The fate of the general caused the *Review* to question “What British officer in the future will dare to defend the British Raj in India?”¹¹⁰ Prestige was crucial to British authority in India, according to the *Yorkshire Post*: “it would be a fatal mistake...to give that vast population any ground for the assumption that our authority is weakening and our administration discredited.”¹¹¹ The fate of the general, according to the *Daily Telegraph*, would have far reaching consequences not only in Britain and the subcontinent, but also the empire:

this decision...will excite loud approbation on the one hand and deep resentment on the other, and a heated controversy which will do little service to the

¹⁰⁶ “The Punjab Outbreak.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 27 May 1920: 10d.

¹⁰⁷ William Joynson Hicks, “Amritsar,” *Sunday Times*, 23 May 1920, 8f. Also see “Notes of the Week,” *Saturday Review*, 10 July 1920, 25.

¹⁰⁸ “The Hunter Committee’s Report.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 27 May 1920: 6b.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

maintenance of British authority in India or in any other part of the Empire where British rule rests ultimately on British force and resolution to govern.¹¹²

Opinions of Montagu also played a role in the press debate over General Dyer. Debate focused on the Secretary of State for India's culpability, or lack thereof, in the news blockage on the Amritsar massacre for eight months. The *Times* and *Manchester Guardian* both expressed their support for Montagu and his contention that he was ignorant of the atrocity until it was revealed in the press that December. The *Guardian* questioned why the man responsible for India to Parliament would have been kept in the dark on the matter. But the paper did not speculate who was responsible or why it was done.¹¹³ Since Montagu was uninformed of Dyer's actions, the *Times* reasoned, the Viceroy must have been responsible for the news blackout; the paper did not comment on the matter again.¹¹⁴ The *Daily Mail* blamed the Government of India for keeping the incident a secret and claimed that a full disclosure should have been made as soon as martial law in the Punjab was removed. In the *Daily Mail's* coverage, Montagu emerged as the hero and a counter to the villainous General Dyer, and the personification of British rule in India. The Secretary of State symbolized the British ideal of ruling the subcontinent by loyal consent while Dyer represented rule by terror. In addition, the *Mail* claimed that the British public supported Montagu: "British opinion will not support or countenance fretful attacks on Mr. Montagu for his firmness in upholding the ideals of our Empire."¹¹⁵ *Truth* best summed up the Dyer debate:

What engendered so much heat in this debate was the conviction that the General 'saved India,' and resentment of Mr. Montagu's audacious doctrine that in these days India can only be lost, not saved, by the Dyer method. That Mr. Montagu

¹¹² "The Punjab Outbreak." Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 27 May 1920: 10d.

¹¹³ "The Amritsar Shooting." Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 17 Dec. 1919: 8d.

¹¹⁴ "Mr. Montagu and Amritsar." Editorial. *Times*. 17 Dec. 1919: 15d.

¹¹⁵ "Mr. Montagu and General Dyer." Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 9 July 1920: 6b.

and his colleagues are right about this no one who understands the spirit of the times can doubt.¹¹⁶

On the other side of the debate, the *Morning Post* rejected Montagu's claim of ignorance; the paper asserted that the Secretary of State knew what happened in April, and that he manipulated the Army Council in order to force Dyer to resign from the armed services. The *Post* declared that Montagu should have defended Dyer instead of condemning him. Montagu's promise of reform encouraged the seditionists, the paper asserted, and the insurrection Dyer crushed would have discredited the Secretary of State for India and his reform agenda.¹¹⁷ The *Daily Telegraph* did not directly accuse Montagu of withholding information about the massacre but claimed that the delay in disclosure loaded the dice against Dyer. As a result of the postponement, the public "got a very ill-balanced account of what had taken place, and many people were led to suppose that the bloodshed at Amritsar was due simply to the inexcusable ferocity of the British general in command."¹¹⁸ The *Saturday Review* described Montagu as "that radical Secretary of State for India" and could not comprehend why he would want to "break an officer for the prompt use of military force in suppressing a rebellion."¹¹⁹ The *Spectator* demanded Montagu's resignation or removal for his "incurable timidity" in giving in to conspirators and agitators.¹²⁰ Montagu's Jewish ethnicity added to the distrust and aversion that certain sections of the press felt for the Secretary of State, as private letters by Gwynne of the *Morning Post* reveal. In a letter to Lt. General Sir Bryan T. Mahon, Gwynne defended the Dyer fund as the "only way left to show that England does not agree with the misadministration

¹¹⁶ "The Saving of India." Editorial. *Truth*. 14 July 1920: 66.

¹¹⁷ "Montagu Versus Dyer." Editorial. *Morning Post*. 8 July 1920: 6a.

¹¹⁸ "The Punjab Outbreak." Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 27 May 1920: 10d.

¹¹⁹ "Notes of the Week," *Saturday Review*, 10 July 1920, 25.

¹²⁰ "Why the House of Commons Should Demand Mr. Montagu's Resignation," *Spectator*, 17 July 1920, 68.

of India by the Jew – Montagu.”¹²¹ The *Saturday Review* was considerably more blatant in its description of Montagu’s anti-Dyer speech in Parliament:

There was a tinge of vindictiveness about the speech, a subconscious echo of the passion of the emancipated Ghetto, which might have come very well from a Russian or even a Prussian Jew, but came with a bad grace from an English one. In short, Mr. Montagu seemed to be taking sides with the races of the East against the white man of the West, and the performance jarred the nerves of the House of Commons.¹²²

The Chauri Chaura incident in February 1922 brought together opinions of the reforms process, Montagu, and Gandhi in one episode. In the United Provinces, police fired on a procession and were attacked by an angry mob. The twenty-two policemen took shelter in their station but were forced out when the mob set fire to the premises. The mob hacked the officers to death and threw their bodies into the flames.¹²³ As a result of the massacre, Gandhi called off the civil disobedience campaign and went on a five-day fast in repentance. Much controversy was aroused by Montagu’s decision to suspend the arrest order of Gandhi before the incident.

The *Manchester Guardian* and *Daily Express* criticized attacks on Montagu in the House of Commons. The *Guardian* labeled the assailants as “a reactionary section in Parliament” while the *Express* depicted them as “those who have learned nothing and forgotten everything about India.”¹²⁴ The *Daily Express* added its support for Montagu’s policy to keep India loyal via peaceful evolution. The *Nation & Athenaeum* also defended Montagu’s policies, blaming the causes of India’s unrest as beyond the Secretary’s control and arguing that the policies that the

¹²¹ Gwynne to Mahon, Undated, MSS.Gwynne 8.

¹²² “Notes of the Week,” *Saturday Review*, 17 July 1920, 47. Both *Truth* and *British Weekly* blamed Montagu for an overly emotional and passionate Parliamentary debate over General Dyer. See “The Saving of India.” Editorial. *Truth*. 14 July 1920: 66 and “The Amritsar Debate.” Editorial. *British Weekly*. 15 June 1920: 307e and “The Amritsar Report.” Editorial. *British Weekly*. 3 June 1920: 187d.

¹²³ Judith Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (New Haven, 1989). B.R. Nanda, *Gandhi and His Critics* (New Delhi, 1985).

¹²⁴ “A Great Experiment.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 16 Feb. 1922: 6b and “India and Sanity.” Editorial. *Daily Express*. 15 Feb. 1922: 6b.

diehards advocated would produce “still more dangerous ferment and even wider discontent.”¹²⁵ The *Observer* agreed: “The Die-Hard thesis that ‘trouble’ in India is the consequence of unnecessary meddling with Indian opinion by humanitarians in Whitehall in the last few years is too easy to be true.”¹²⁶

The *Manchester Guardian*, *Daily Herald*, and *Sunday Times* supported Montagu’s decision to suspend the arrest order for Gandhi. The *Guardian* claimed that the Secretary postponed the arrest order because Gandhi called off his civil disobedience campaign; “to punish such a man is to increase his power.”¹²⁷ Arresting Gandhi could do nothing but provoke disaster since he was a “genuine pacifist and uses his great, his comparable influence to prevent violence,” the *Daily Herald* contended.¹²⁸ The *Sunday Times* declared that Britain was “strong enough to be tolerant [of Mr. Gandhi]” and to allow the reforms to continue unabated.¹²⁹

On the anti-Montagu side of the debate, the *Daily Telegraph* criticized the reforms and Montagu, though not by name:

a change in the spirit of administration is required; and it is the voice of national opinion which insists to-day upon the taking of measures which are necessary for reinstating the authority of the British Government and upon ending a course of tolerance and indecision which has done nothing but strengthen the elements of mischief and anarchy.¹³⁰

The *Morning Post* also advocated a change in personnel at the India Office in order to end the unrest on the subcontinent. The paper stated that “justice, truth, strength, and honour are required for the government of India, and in the present administration these qualities are not to

¹²⁵ “The Problem of Mr. Gandhi,” *Nation & Athenaeum*, 18 Feb. 1922, 746.

¹²⁶ “British Rule in the East.” Editorial. *Observer*. 19 Feb. 1922: 12b. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the first known use of the term “die-hard” occurred in 1922.

¹²⁷ “A Great Experiment.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 16 Feb. 1922: 6b.

¹²⁸ “India.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 15 Feb. 1922: 4b.

¹²⁹ “The Indian Debate.” Editorial. *Sunday Times*. 19 Feb. 1922: 10d.

¹³⁰ “The State of India.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 15 Feb. 1922: 10c.

be found. Hence the trouble.”¹³¹ The *Daily Mail* hoped that Parliament would force Montagu to resign and “put a full stop to the policy of drift and ensure the maintenance of British interests with a firm hand. There has been weakness. A stronger man than Mr. Montagu is needed at the India Office in these times.”¹³²

The *Times* blamed the Viceroy, not Montagu, for not arresting Gandhi. But the *Times* argued that peace in India was impossible as long as Gandhi was “free to range through the country at will” and claimed the Chari Chaura incident was “solely due to Mr. Gandhi’s incitements.”¹³³ The *Times* added that “neither Mr. Montagu’s evasions nor Mr. Gandhi’s sham retraction will satisfy the British public, who are becoming gravely alarmed about the condition of India.”¹³⁴ The *Saturday Review* described Montagu’s action of withdrawing Gandhi’s arrest order as unpardonable. The *Review* contended that revoking the order

implied...that Gandhi’s action in bringing British India to the verge of revolution was to be overlooked and condoned. It is difficult to imagine a weaker or more humiliating policy.¹³⁵

The *Morning Post* expressed disappointment that the House of Commons did not force Montagu to resign, but predicted Parliament’s confidence in the minister would only last until the next outrage. The *Post* was also disheartened that Gandhi had not been arrested as this led the man to believe he was immune from arrest and encouraged him to grow bolder in his antics.¹³⁶ The *Daily Mail* wanted Montagu out but continued to support the reform process. Parliament needed to “put a full stop to the policy of drift” by firing the Secretary of State for India. The paper also

¹³¹ “Mr. Montagu on his Defence.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 15 Feb. 1922: 6b.

¹³² “Troubled India.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 15 Feb. 1922: 8c.

¹³³ “Mr. Montagu and India.” Editorial. *Times*. 15 Feb. 1922: 11b.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ “Notes of the Week,” *Saturday Review*, 18 Feb. 1922, 162.

¹³⁶ “Mr. Montagu on his Defence.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 15 Feb. 1922: 6b.

believed that Gandhi should have been arrested as the reforms were unable to work in an atmosphere of chaos.¹³⁷

After the Chauri Chaura incident the unrest in India quieted down: the time of troubles in the Raj was over for the moment. The Government of India arrested Gandhi, put him on trial, and sentenced him to six years in prison, though he only served two. He thereafter relinquished his Congress leadership role and devoted the next five years to his homespun and Hindu education campaign. Indian Muslims lost their major grievance against the British when the Turkish president Kemal Ataturk abolished the caliphate in 1924. In 1927, however, a new period of disturbances began. As will be seen in the following chapters, the basic themes of the 1919-22 period are echoed in the 1927-35 one across party lines: the unflinching faith in Britain's imperial mission, a negative view of Indian society and Indian nationalists, and opposite conceptions of reform: the fulfillment or betrayal of Britain's imperial mission in India. The debate over post-war Conservative and British imperial identity came under fierce debate during this period, most notably with the Amritsar and Dyer controversy.

¹³⁷ "Troubled India." Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 15 Feb. 1922: 8c.

Chapter 3

“Our presence in India is essential to the Indians”: The British Imperial Mission, 1927-35

[It is] the sincere and honest wish of all parties in Great Britain to develop Indian self-government as rapidly as may be compatible with the welfare of India itself and with the time needed to devise and create stable and workable democratic institutions in a country which has never known democracy.

■ “The Simon Commission,” *New Statesman*, 12 Nov. 1927, 133.

Nobody has ever dreamt of a Constitution that would be used to take India out of the Empire. The contest is one as regards words and sentiments rather than present realities, for the conditions in which India could attain the full status of a Dominion cannot be reached in any period measured in less than decades.

■ “India Within the Empire.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 12 Feb. 1935: 12b.

The same basic conceptions of Britain’s imperial mission in India structured British editorial comments regardless of support for or rejection of the reforms process. Labour, Liberal, Conservative, independent, London-based and provincial papers alike all toed the imperial line: Britain ruled the subcontinent for the benefit of Indians. It did not matter if readers received their information about India or governmental policies dealing with the subcontinent from the popular *Daily Mail*, the left of center *Daily Herald* or the fervently Tory *Times*, the basic conceptions of the imperial mission remained constant throughout. Politically diverse papers appear virtually indistinguishable when describing the various virtues of the imperial mission. Words associated with the British themselves, the rule of the Raj, and the imperial mission in general include: “progress,” “rational/reasonable,” “improvement,” “prosperity,” “practical,” “realistic,” “facts/truth,” “impartial,” “opportunity,” and “justice.” In this standard view, British rule provided not only Western education and material gains, but also peace, order, and justice. Essentially, India *needed* Britain. So much in the imperial project in India had been accomplished, but so much more needed to be done. This was best summed up by the *Morning Post* in 1931:

If India were a nation, or could govern itself by any form of democracy...there would be no need for any conference on the subject; the Government would have shaped itself long ago in the only place where it could shape itself, that is to say, in India, and England would have retired gracefully from the scene in which she had become superfluous.¹

These sentiments were echoed more generally by Lionel Haworth in the *Saturday Review* in 1933:

It has been the Conservative boast that the Empire was the greatest agent for good that the world possesses, or has possessed. Apart from the material benefits which we have conferred upon the countries under our sovereignty we have given them the inestimable benefit of British justice.²

Three common themes shaped the discussion of the imperial mission in the English press: the British government's responsibility for India, the benefits of the Raj, especially Britain as an impartial referee, and generosity in offering Indians opportunities for demonstrating their ability for increasing self-government.

Implicit British responsibility, explicitly appearing as Parliament's final accountability for India sounds like a clarion across the English Press. Disagreements flared over the pace of the reforms (see chapters five and six) but no paper or periodical disputed the final authority of Parliament or the Viceroy. This sentiment was best summed up by the *Yorkshire Post*: "Parliament is responsible not merely for the satisfaction of genuine political aspirations...but also for the precautionary safeguarding...of the happiness and welfare of the politically voiceless millions of Indians."³

The most explicit references to Parliament's final responsibility for India occurred with the naming, in November 1927, of the Statutory Commission to judge the workings of

¹ "India and England." Editorial. *Morning Post*. 15 Sept. 1931: 10b.

² Sir Lionel Haworth, "India and Ideals of Empire," *Saturday Review*, 18 Mar. 1933, 258.

³ "The More Excellent Way." Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 4 Feb. 1928: 12b.

the 1919 Government of India Act. The Government appointed the commission's members: Sir John Simon of the Liberal Party as chairman, two Conservative members and two Labour members (including the future PM Clement Attlee) from the House of Commons, and two Conservative Lords. In reaction against the decision to exclude any and all native representation, Indian political parties announced that they would boycott the Commission. The English Press repeatedly reaffirmed the Conservative Government's decision to appoint a purely Parliamentary body as the correct choice.

The *Times*, *Sunday Times*, *New Statesman*, *Economist*, *Spectator*, and *Saturday Review* contended that since Parliament was the final arbiter for India, then a Commission made up of M.P.s from all parties could best translate its findings into legislation acceptable to the Commons and Lords.⁴ The *Times*, *Economist*, and *Saturday Review* dismissed the criticism of Indian political leaders that none of the Commissioners had any prior experience in Indian affairs by arguing that the Commissioners' very lack of experience would allow them to be impartial and detached, able to look at the situation in India with fresh eyes unencumbered by long-held preconceptions or biases.⁵ No paper or periodical addressed Indian complaints about lack of representation on the investigative body other than to stress that there would be provision for Indian legislators, both central and provincial, to have their say to the Commission during its travels. Press frustration with Indian protests is almost palpable.

Press unanimity, however, quickly broke down with the Irwin Declaration in October 1929. To avoid a clash with Congress and, with the threat of civil disobedience

⁴ "The Simon Commission." Editorial. *Times*. 9 Nov. 1927: 10c, Lord Meston, "India's Constitution," *Sunday Times*, 13 Nov. 1927, 16, "The Simon Commission," *New Statesman*, 12 Nov 1927, 133; "A Statutory Commission for India," *Economist*, 12 Nov. 1927, 825; "The Threatened Boycott in India," *Spectator*, 11 Feb. 1928, 182, and "The Comedy of Westminster," *Saturday Review*, 12 Nov. 1927, 654.

⁵"The Simon Commission." Editorial. *Times*. 9 Nov. 1927: 10c, and "The Comedy of Westminster," *Saturday Review*, 12 Nov. 1927, 654.

looming, the Viceroy issued a statement reaffirming that dominion status was the ultimate goal of British rule in India; this “Irwin Declaration” also included a proposal for a series of talks between representatives of the British Government, British India, and the Indian Princes. Instead of debating the pros and cons of the declaration and its effects on the subcontinent, the press debated who had the power to govern India: Parliament (through the Commission) or the Viceroy? The *Daily Telegraph*, *Sunday Times*, and *Manchester Guardian* criticized the Viceroy for flouting the authority of the Commission and therefore essentially attempting to overrule Parliament. The *Sunday Times* labeled Irwin’s actions as a serious breach of the committee’s authority as the Simon Commission’s mandate was both established by law, as stipulated in the Government of India Act of 1919, and had the support of all political parties. The *Daily Telegraph*, however, argued that the Labour Government, not the Viceroy, violated the understanding that the Commission was appointed. It added that no decisions over India should be made until after the Commission reported.⁶

On the other side of the debate, the *Daily Herald*, *Observer*, *Economist*, *Times*, *Yorkshire Post*, and *Nation and Athenaeum* argued that the declaration in no way interfered with the Commission’s authority or anticipated its report. They reasoned that the Viceroy did not intend to flout the commission (*Yorkshire Post*), that nothing in the statement interfered with the investigative body (*Economist* and *Nation and Athenaeum*), anticipated the report, or “question[ed] the undivided responsibility of the Imperial Government in framing proposals for the consideration of Parliament” (*Times*).⁷ The *Daily Herald* took a

⁶ “The Indian Blunder.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 5 Nov. 1929: 12c.

⁷ “India’s Future.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 2 Nov. 1929: 10b, “The Indian Problem in Parliament,” *Economist*, 9 Nov. 1929, 856; G.T. Garrat, “A New Phase in India,” *Nation and Athenaeum*, 9 Nov. 1929, 195, and “The Ulitimate Goal.” Editorial. *Times*. 1 Nov. 1929: 9b.

tougher line in defense of the Viceroy and Labour Government: “The suggestion that the opinion of Sir John Simon should have been allowed to overrule that of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State is a grotesque one.”⁸ The *Observer* tried to put a positive spin on the whole affair by declaring that the Commission emerged from the controversy “with its paramount moral authority not only restored but enhanced,” and added, with typical overstatement, that the Commission was “one of the most important bodies that ever sat in all political history.”⁹

During the period of the Indian Round Table Conferences, from 1930 to 1932, press unanimity on the issue of Parliamentary authority over India was restored. The first Round Table Conference, 12 November 1930 and 19 January 1931, without Congress, agreed that India should achieve dominion status as a federation of British India and the Princely States. The second and third rounds of the talks, in 1931 and 1932 respectively, accomplished little. Papers such as the *Times*, *Sunday Times*, *Yorkshire Post*, *Daily Telegraph*, and *Manchester Guardian* all declared that although the conferences were important means of consultation, the agreements made at the meetings were ultimately subject to the approval of Parliament. The *Morning Post* viewed Parliament as the only means of preventing the round table conferences from committing Britain to “crazy schemes” for India.¹⁰ The *Morning Post* believed that most M.P.s, along with the majority of the nation, objected to the Conservative Cabinet’s schemes for Indian government reform and would apply the brakes once they realized what was really going on at the conferences.

The second theme of British press opinion in discussions of imperial rule was that

⁸ “India.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 5 Nov. 1929: 6a.

⁹ J.L. Garvin, “India and the Crisis,” *Observer*, 3 Nov. 1929, 16c.

¹⁰ “An Indian Incarnation.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 12 Nov. 1930: 10b.

of the benefits of the Raj for Indians. The press stressed Britain's role in providing unity to the subcontinent, introducing Western education and ideas, such as democracy, and, most importantly -- judging from the amount of lines written on the topic -- maintaining peace and enforcing order. These discussions emphasized that the Raj was educating Indians in the intricacies of self-government.

Without the British presence, the press contended, India would lapse back into the civil war and disorder that had supposedly dominated Indian affairs before the onset of British rule. Britain provided the only source of unity for India with its numerous divisions in geography, religions, and languages, according to the press. The *Observer* contended that the Raj created the "illusory phantasm of accomplished nationhood." Without the unifying force of the British, there were "real possibilities of conflict, terror, and disruption in India were it torn by a hundred discordant voices, each trying to carve out a sphere of its own." This sentiment was echoed by the *Sunday Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*; the *Sunday Times* added that the English language was the only one that could be understood by educated persons across the entire country. The *Sunday Times* was particularly vehement in denying that India was a single nation; only the Raj held the disparate nation together. The *Saturday Review* compared India to a feudal state in medieval Europe with Britain acting as the necessary overlord to hold the disparate elements together in peace. The *Review* added: "those divisions which first invited the British to intervene in Indian affairs and in the end have made the British Crown their supreme regulator, are still persistent and deep."¹¹ And the *Daily Mail* stated that if the British had not arrived in India, it "would still be in a state of semi-barbaric anarchy."¹²

¹¹ "The Real Indian Problem," *Saturday Review*, 12 Apr. 1930, 445.

¹² "India," Editorial. *Daily Mail* 4 Mar. 1930: 10b.

Another key benefit of British rule according to the English press was that the Raj acted as an impartial referee between all of the contentious peoples of the subcontinent. Impartiality and justice went hand-in-hand, in the eyes of English editorialists. This was best expressed by the *Daily Mail*: “Our mission in India is to assure even-handed justice for all her varied peoples.”¹³ Britain, equipped with “British fair play,” alone was able to establish a *modus vivendi* between “warring interests and religions” of the subcontinent.¹⁴ The *Sunday Times* thought it ironic that while Indians were demanding self-government, “they have been forced to come to Britain and ask her to settle their own differences. We cannot agree, they have had to admit; will you arbitrate between us?”¹⁵ This sentiment was echoed in the pages of *Truth* in its discussion of the Irwin-Gandhi pact: “our position now is that of a benevolent umpire keeping the peace while the other parties try to set their house in order.”¹⁶ *Truth* also contended that Indians would continue to depend on the British after the new Act came into force as the British were “most capable of impartiality in any conflicts that may arise. Otherwise anarchy might well succeed the firm and orderly government that has directed the life of India for the last 150 years.”¹⁷ The *Spectator* contended that Indians would be unable to advance towards democracy without “the strong assistance of experienced and impartial Great Britain.”¹⁸

The press portrayed the Simon Report as the embodiment of British impartiality. After two tours of India and numerous consultations over two years, the Simon Commission presented its report to Parliament in two volumes on 10 and 24 June 1930.

¹³ “The Bill is a Swindle.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 11 Feb. 1935: 10b.

¹⁴ H.K. Trevaskis, “India – Government or Anarchy?,” *Saturday Review*, 24 Sept. 1932, 314. Trevaskis was a retired member of the Indian Civil Service.

¹⁵ “The Conference Ends,” *Sunday Times*, 18 Jan 1931, 12b.

¹⁶ “Peace in India?,” *Truth*, 11 Mar. 1931, 379.

¹⁷ “The Indian Proposals,” *Truth*, 22 Mar. 1933, 444.

¹⁸ “The Simon Report,” *Spectator*, 14 June 1930, 964.

The commission's main recommendation was to scrap dyarchy in the provinces and introduce full ministerial responsibility at the provincial level; the central government would continue to remain fully in British hands. Lord Meston, writing in the *British Weekly*, stated that the dominant theme of the report was its lack of favoritism to any race, interest, class, or section of India; instead, the document focused on the Indian masses, "those hundreds of millions of mankind whose well being is now in the balance."¹⁹ The *Spectator* described the approach of the report as "characteristically English" which it claimed to mean that the Commission was determined to "ascertain the facts before proceeding to judgment." "There is nowhere any trace of preconception or prejudice" in the report, the *Spectator* continued, and "no doctrine is assumed into which the facts have to be fitted."²⁰ The *Daily Telegraph* claimed that despite the boycott of the Commission by "organised Nationalist opinion," the extremists "could not have any effect in the withholding of truth."²¹ The *Economist* praised the Simon Report for its realism in dealing with the "hard facts" of the subcontinent's vast problems."²²

In the picture drawn by press opinion, the Raj also introduced human rights and the protection of minorities to India, and stood up for the masses of illiterate Indian peasants. The *Spectator* contended that Britain's task was just starting in India: "the work of social amelioration, of hygienic betterment, of irrigation, of education, of emancipation which might be achieved in that country with the help of British men and women is only beginning."²³ Lord Meston, writing in the *Saturday Review*, claimed that Britain was

¹⁹ Lord Meston, "The Simon Report on India," *British Weekly*, 3 July 1930, 282a.

²⁰ "The Simon Report," *Spectator*, 14 June 1930, 964.

²¹ "Simon Commission's Report: A Masterly Survey of the Problem" Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 10 June 1930: 8b.

²² "Towards a Federal India," *Economist*, 28 June 1930, 1432.

²³ "The Round Table Conference," *Spectator*, 15 Nov. 1930, 712.

responsible for “the well-being and the real progress of India’s peoples.”²⁴ In the same paper, Sirdar Iqbal Ali Shah contended that the Indian masses, three-fourths of the subcontinent’s population, simply wanted to be left alone in peace and wanted no part in India’s political struggle. Khan concluded that the Raj was better equipped than the “wildest enemy of British rule” (i.e. the Congress Party) to “better the lot of the impoverished husbandmen.”²⁵ The *Sunday Times* repeated Khan’s sentiments by claiming that British “rule has bettered the lot of the masses of the people.”²⁶ The *Nation & Athenaeum* stated its pride that Britain were the protectors of the Indian “ryot.”²⁷ *Time & Tide* disputed Gandhi’s claims that Congress represented “the interests of the 300,000,000 inarticulate peasants” by stating it was doubtful that Congress “could run India in a manner better calculated to safeguard the interests of the dumb millions than the British.”²⁸

British domestic politics intruded into the issue of Raj’s role as protector of India’s minorities via the *Morning Post*. The paper attempted to place the empire as paramount in the identity of the Conservative Party. The *Post* placed the Conservative party front and center as having the interests of the “loyal minorities” of the subcontinent and would never agree to any coercion of them or the surrender of Britain’s position in India.²⁹ The paper seemed to be looking back to previous centuries when the Tories, the party of the aristocracy and gentry, stood as the paternalistic protectors of their social inferiors in exchange for deference.

²⁴ Lord Meston, “The Crisis in India,” *Saturday Review*, 8 Mar. 1930, 285.

²⁵ Sirdar Iqbal Ali Shah, “Delusions of the Indian Conference,” *Saturday Review*, 15 Nov. 1930, 622. Shah (1894-1969) was an Afghan Sufi who worked for the British Foreign Office.

²⁶ Scrutator, “India in Perspective,” *Sunday Times*, 19 Mar. 1933, 16e.

²⁷ “India’s Opportunity,” *Nation & Athenaeum*, 24 Jan. 1931, 531.

²⁸ “Gandhi at the Conference.” Editorial. *Time & Tide*. 19 Sept 1931: 1078.

²⁹ “Squaring the Round Table.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 20 Jan. 1931: 10b.

Western education and ideas were a major contribution to India via the British according to the press. Supporters of the reforms process pointed to such Westernization as a major justification for the extension of self-government to India. *Time & Tide* argued that the diehards, Conservative opponents of Indian reforms, could not “turn back the clock” in India as Indians had already “come under the influence of Western political ideas.”³⁰ The *Manchester Guardian* echoed this view: “the diffusion of education and the growth of a national spirit make it unsafe for the British Parliament to seek to prolong indefinitely its present control over India.”³¹

Press opinion also linked the Indian nationalist movement to Westernization. The *Sunday Times* in 1930 described the unrest in India as not an indigenous movement “trying to throw off the yoke of alien ideas” since “the impulse and direction of change are borrowed entirely from us.” In 1935 the paper harkened back to Thomas Babington Macaulay, who established English-style higher education in India, and concluded: “We have educated the Indians in Western ideas and taught them to believe in representative institutions.”³² Britain acted as India’s benevolent schoolmaster and guardian, according to the *Sunday Times* in 1934, with the Indian nationalist movement as its product:

All India’s ideas of politics and progress are ours. If she believes in representative institutions, we have taught her to believe; if she believes in liberty, it is due to our education, if she is beginning to be conscious of a national unity, our rule has formed that ideal.³³

The *Spectator* described the Indian nationalist movement as “our own creation” as many native politicians had been “taught in our own educational institutions” and were “the ripe

³⁰ “India – A New Phase,” *Time & Tide*, 5 Dec. 1931, 1892.

³¹ “The New Prospect for India.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 1 Nov. 1929: 10b.

³² Scrutator, “Realities About India,” *Sunday Times*, 10 Feb. 1935, 16d.

³³ Scrutator, “India Report Examined,” *Sunday Times*, 25 Nov. 1934, 18d.

fruit of close association with us and our liberty-loving institutions.”³⁴ The *New Statesman & Nation* seemed to criticize the imperial mission regarding education in order to refute the diehard’s unofficial leader: “Mr. Churchill...referred to the uneducated millions of India -- forgetting or ignoring the fact that their illiteracy and ignorance are nobody’s fault but ours.”³⁵

The English press highlighted the material benefits that British rule had brought to India by describing in general terms Indian prosperity and economic progress under the Raj. Prosperity went hand in hand with British-imposed peace and British-mandated order. The *Saturday Review* and *Daily Mail* claimed that the Indian market and trade were British creations built over two centuries with British capital and investments. Indian trade now reached all corners of the globe thanks to British merchants and ship owners. Slipping backwards economically, diminished material prosperity, would be a result if India severed its relations with Britain.³⁶ The *Morning Post* argued that if India achieved independence the economic infrastructure, such as railways and harbors, “would be taken over, mismanaged and destroyed.”³⁷ The *Yorkshire Post* contended that with British rule came reduced famine mortality on the subcontinent; an uncalled for by-product of economic prosperity with peace and security: overpopulation in certain areas.

The English press trumpeted the Communal Award as the most salient example of British impartiality, justice, and its role in protecting minorities. To expedite the reforms process and to grant Indians a greater share in their own government, the British Government declared the untouchables a separate minority. Untouchables, together with

³⁴ Sir Stanley Reed, “India: Nearing the Goal,” *Spectator*, 11 Nov. 1932, 655.

³⁵ “Conservatives and India,” *New Statesman & Nation*, 8 Dec. 1934, 814.

³⁶ “The Round Table Conference,” *Economist*, 15 Nov. 1930, 891.

³⁷ “The Failure of Funk.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 1 Jan. 1930: 8b.

other minorities such as Muslims and Sikhs, received their own electorates with their own special seats. The award granted the Depressed Classes basic human rights; many in the press hoped this would be the first step for the untouchables gaining full equality. *Truth* emphasized that the British believed that the untouchables “should be accorded their rights as human beings and as a step towards the complete fulfilment of the emancipation from their ancient wrongs, that they should be given special representation in the new Constitutional scheme.”³⁸ The *British Weekly* contended that Britain justly stepped in “as the high caste Hindus had shown themselves unwilling to release the unhappy millions who suffered under cruel bondage.”³⁹

Press accounts emphasized that the award was forced upon the Government as Indians could not agree upon representation amongst themselves; an imposed settlement was inherently unsatisfactory, but viewed as the only way to break the logjam in constitutional progress.⁴⁰ The failure of Indians themselves to solve the conundrum of communal representation proved, according to the *Sunday Times*, that the communal issue was real and “not the invention of interested British statesman anxious to ‘divide and rule.’”⁴¹ The *Manchester Guardian* also sought to dispute Congress accusations of divide and rule. The *Guardian* claimed that the British Government gave every possible encouragement to Hindu and Muslim leaders to settle their differences.⁴² The *Daily Telegraph* argued that the award was cogent proof of the “sincerity of British intentions in the matter of Indian reform.” The *Yorkshire Post* repeated this idea by stating that the

³⁸ “Gandhi’s Suicide Buffoonery,” *Truth*, 21 Sept. 1932, 429.

³⁹ “The Untouchables.” Editorial. *British Weekly*. 29 Sept. 1932: 495d.

⁴⁰ See “The Indian Communal Award,” *Economist*, 20 Aug. 1932, 340; “A New Plan for India,” *New Statesman & Nation*, 20 Aug. 1932, 197; “The Communal Award.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 17 Aug. 1932: 8b.

⁴¹ “Indian Realities,” *Sunday Times*, 29 Nov. 1931, 16c.

⁴² “The Communal Award.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 17 Aug. 1932: 8b.

award illustrated “once more the fundamental justice of British intention.”⁴³ Britain took responsibility for solving the communal problem, though reluctantly, according to the *Times*, as the only alternative was scrapping the entire reforms movement.⁴⁴

The English press also depicted the Poona Pact as an English achievement, although Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar actually negotiated the pact. According to this argument, the pact was only made possible by the Communal Award. The *Times*, for example, contended that the “Poona agreement owes its inspiration to British support of the just claims of a long-suppressed minority.”⁴⁵

In the typical British newspaper leader, peace--defense against potential foreign invaders-- and order--domestic tranquility and maintenance of the law-- were major British contributions to the subcontinent. Many segments of the English press were convinced that enemies with covetous eyes were waiting for the British to leave India so they could swoop in and take the subcontinent for themselves. Britain’s presence in India was necessary, according to the *New Statesman*, as the divided peoples of the subcontinent were “neither willing nor able to accept responsibility for...the protection of their own frontiers.”⁴⁶ *Time & Tide* stated that the “fighting tribes” on India’s northern frontiers “who despise the talkers and lawyers” (once again referring to Congress) “would sweep down and subjugate those territories and peoples if the strong hand of the British were removed.”⁴⁷ For *Truth* the danger came from further north; if Britain abandoned its paternal rule of the subcontinent “the Bolsheviks will march in at once.”⁴⁸

⁴³ “India: A Critical Stage.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 17 Nov. 1932: 8c.

⁴⁴ “The Indian Award.” Editorial. *Times*. 17 Aug. 1932: 11b.

⁴⁵ “Hinduism and Mr. Gandhi.” Editorial. *Times*. 28 Sept. 1932: 13c.

⁴⁶ “The Simon Commission,” *New Statesman*, 12 Nov. 1927, 133.

⁴⁷ “The Riddle of India,” *Time & Tide*, 8 Nov. 1929, 1828.

⁴⁸ “Goosey-Goosey-Gandhi,” *Truth*, 19 Mar. 1930, 482.

British impartiality maintained the stout defense of the subcontinent, according to the press. *Truth* believed that if the army were Indianized, “the races from whom the personnel of the army is drawn would not consent to be governed by those who are destitute as a fighting class.” The *Daily Mail* contended that “in present circumstances an all-Indian army would be totally unable to maintain order or protect India against attack.”⁴⁹ Though not explained by the *Mail*, one can infer that internal divisions in Indian society, especially communalism, rendered India incapable to defend itself. What was left implicit in the *Daily Mail* was explicit in *Time & Tide*; creating a native army commanded by Indian officers “proof against the virus of communal rivalry” would be a miracle. Until that miraculous day came Britain “shall have to retain a certain responsibility for India.”⁵⁰

As all elements of the press viewed internal peace as the *sine qua non* for the reforms process, and the question of who should control the police was a major bone of contention in the debates over the reforms; order was an important issue for the press. Maintenance of British control of the police was a given. Churchill, writing in the *Daily Mail*, asserted that Britain rescued “India from ages of barbarism, intestine war, and tyranny” and that “the withdrawal of British protection would mean the immediate resumption of mediaeval wars.”⁵¹ The *Saturday Review* had a similar view of India’s history. The *Review* stated that before the British arrived, India “was continuously under the sway of foreign military adventurers.”⁵² The *Observer* concluded that in India, with its millions of “variegated elements, many of them conflicting,” a strong executive was

⁴⁹ “Why India Must Go Slow.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 10 June 1930: 10b.

⁵⁰ “India – A New Phase,” *Time & Tide*, 5 Dec. 1931, 1893.

⁵¹ Winston Churchill, “The Peril in India,” *Daily Mail*, 16 Nov. 1929, 10c.

⁵² H.K. Trevasakis, “India – Government or Anarchy?,” *Saturday Review*, 24 Sept. 1932, 314.

needed to uphold law and order.⁵³ The *New Statesman* and *Spectator* claimed that India's fragmented society meant that Indians themselves were not able to maintain internal law and order.⁵⁴ Without the "Pax Britannica...the more warlike races would swallow up the less warlike, who, as it happens, are the most political."⁵⁵ The *Mail*, too, maintained that "India needs British administration as the safeguard of her internal peace and justice."⁵⁶ This sentiment was repeated by the *Sunday Times*: "our presence in India is essential to the Indians. Were we to go, not only we, but they too, would suffer: their country would be plunged into chaos."⁵⁷ The spread of anarchy and terrorism would be absolutely certain, argued the *Morning Post*, "if the British hold on the administration of law and order is relaxed."⁵⁸

The reforms process itself carried important implications for the question of maintaining civil order. Press supporters of the reforms wanted to increase Indian self-government, i.e. grant Indians more responsibilities in ruling themselves. But to achieve this end, many in the press advocated a crackdown on political protesters. Essentially the logic ran that since the British knew what was best for Indians, the Raj must use force at times to give the people of the subcontinent what was necessary for them, though they may resist. The British also firmly believed that "reasonable" Indians supported the Raj in their endeavors. This idea was best expressed by the *Sunday Times*:

There is only one way to deal with this kind of thing [civil disobedience campaign], and that is to oppose it firmly and put it down. There can be no compromise in a matter of this sort... Britain is full of good will to India,

⁵³ "A Plan for All-India." Editorial. *Observer*. 19 Mar. 1933: 16b.

⁵⁴ "The Simon Commission," *New Statesman*, 12 Nov. 1927, 133, and "The Simon Report," *Spectator*, 14 June 1930, 964.

⁵⁵ "The Threatened Boycott in India," *Spectator*, 11 Feb. 1928, 181.

⁵⁶ Daily Mail 4 Mar. 1930

⁵⁷ "Plain Words About India," *Sunday Times*, 16 Mar. 1930, 16b.

⁵⁸ *Morning Post* 17 Nov. 1932

and is proving it by her policy of reforms; but the tactics of the extremists are bound, if they persist, to make her enforce her will absolutely. Lawlessness can only be met by rigid enforcement of the law.⁵⁹

In the *Saturday Review*, Lord Meston argued that the reforms process could not move forward “unless there is peace and order in India. And there can be neither peace nor order until the law is asserted against those who are preparing to defy it.”⁶⁰

The press also portrayed British rule as the protector of India’s Muslims. *Truth* stated that the Raj was necessary for protecting the interests of the Moslems “until Moslems and Hindus compose their differences.”⁶¹ The *Morning Post* claimed that the Raj was the protector of Muslims on the subcontinent:

The Mohammedan knows well that nothing less than his right to exist in India is at stake. Were the British to go, he would have to fight for his life, and in that fight there could be no permanent truce until his community remained as conquerors or fled as fugitives.⁶²

The *New Statesman* noted that it was paradoxical that anti-British agitators depended “almost entirely on the preservation of the British Peace by British guns and bayonets” and pointed out that Congress leaders “would not have much chance of being heard if the Mohammedans and the Sikhs and the hill tribes were set free to deal as they pleased with the Hindu ‘Pundits’ of Bengal.”⁶³

Both supporters and diehard opponents of the reforms process agreed on the importance of civil order and on Britain’s key role in creating that order in the first place. They disagreed on the implications of various reforms measures for civil stability. The *Morning Post* contended that the Gandhi-Irwin Pact lowered British prestige among

⁵⁹ “Plain Words About India,” *Sunday Times*, 16 Mar. 1930, 16b.

⁶⁰ Lord Meston, “The Crisis in India,” *Saturday Review*, 8 Mar. 1930, 286.

⁶¹ “The Simon Solution for India,” *Truth*, 25 June 1930, 1111.

⁶² “India and England.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 15 Sept. 1931: 10b.

⁶³ “Boycott the Boycotters,” *New Statesman*, 4 Jan. 1930, 408.

Indians and so “the cause of law and order (which is a great cause) weakened.”⁶⁴ The pro-reform papers, however, insisted that Irwin had made no concessions to Gandhi on the important issue of law and order and that law breaking or disorder “must and will be firmly met.”⁶⁵ Not only the British Parliament but also “the vast majority of responsible Indian opinion” would support any crackdown by the Government of India against any resumption of civil disobedience by Congress.⁶⁶ The *Yorkshire Post* urged the Government of India to take “whatever measures it may feel compelled to take to maintain order and to resist attempts to undermine its authority.”⁶⁷ Giving in to Gandhi’s demand for Indian independence was the recipe for disaster as without British protection India would be plunged “into a whirlpool of chaos and bloodshed.”⁶⁸ The *Daily Telegraph* reported that the restoration of internal order in India was a prerequisite for success at the second round table conference held in London as a term of the pact committed Congress to attend the meeting.

The *Daily Telegraph* also supported the new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, Irwin’s replacement holding the office from 1931 to 1936, and his efforts to “stamp out terrorism and quell the spirit of lawlessness which has run across India in a wave of hysteria.”⁶⁹ The *Daily Mail* backed the new Viceroy as well for his “drastic measures against terrorism” that, the paper claimed, were also supported by moderate minded Indians. The *Mail* maintained that “*the first duty of the Government in India is to govern.*”⁷⁰ The *Times*

⁶⁴ “The Cash and the Credit.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 6 Mar. 1931: 10b.

⁶⁵ “India and Party Politics.” Editorial. *Times*. 5 Mar. 1931: 15b and “Indian Realities,” *Sunday Times*, 29 Nov. 1931, 16b.

⁶⁶ “Lahore and After,” *Nation & Athenaeum*, 4 Jan 1930, 475.

⁶⁷ “Gandhi’s Ultimatum.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 6 Mar 1930: 8b.

⁶⁸ “Fear.” Editorial. *Daily Express*. 16 Sept. 1931: 10b.

⁶⁹ “Terrorism in India.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 15 Sept. 1931: 10b.

⁷⁰ “The Right Course?” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 2 Dec. 1931: 10b.

argued that there was nothing inconsistent between the Viceroy's crackdown on disorder and the simultaneous pursuit of peace through negotiations at the round table conference. Equating Willingdon's repressive measures with the "suppression of murder," the *Times* contended that they "should be welcomed most by those Indians who look forward to proving their own capacity for civilized administration."⁷¹ The *Daily Herald*, too, supported the maintenance of law and order, but with a caveat that it should not be "based on fear and repression."⁷²

Teaching Indians the difficult and delicate art of self-government was the culmination of all British endeavors on the subcontinent according to the English press. Implicit within the entire eight-year reforms project was the idea that the purpose of the Raj was to run day-to-day operations in India until the Indians could sort out their own problems and India could become a self-governing dominion within the empire like Canada or Australia. The timeline for this goal, according to the diehards, was measured in centuries. *Time & Tide* stated it was the duty of the British to protect the vast subcontinent and tutor "its 320,000,000 people of divers races and creeds" in self-government.⁷³ The *Sunday Times* viewed the British system of education as key to instructing Indians in the arts of self government. It concluded that "our system of education in India has been one long training in the Western idioms of political thought, and there is a long vista of promises that India should advance to liberty along the same road as ourselves and as the Dominions."⁷⁴ The *Saturday Review* affirmed Britain's pledge to guide India to the goal of self-government within the Empire, but argued that

⁷¹ "The Method of Conference." Editorial. *Times*. 2 Dec. 1931: 13b.

⁷² "India." Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 11 Mar 1930: 4a.

⁷³ "Recasting India," *Time & Tide*, 28 June 1930, 800.

⁷⁴ *Scrutator*, "India in Perspective," *Sunday Times*, 19 Mar. 1933, 16e.

“self-government is not an easy art, or one that is learned in a day.” The *Review* concluded that steps should be taken incrementally and “the pace of advance should be determined by the capacity for political progress which India may develop as she moves along.”⁷⁵ This was the same path the other Dominions took, the *Saturday Review* asserted. The *Sunday Times* also concluded in 1935 that India was following the same path as the other Dominions in an empire it described as “a free association of peoples.” This was due, according to the *Sunday Times*, the “faith in the traditional evolutionary methods of British rule and democratic government.”⁷⁶

The English press wrote at considerable length of the various and genuine opportunities offered to Indians for self-rule. Implicitly, all proposals for Indian governmental reform were viewed as chances offered to India for constructive progress towards self-government. Ultimately, according to the press, it was up to Indians to accept or refuse their chances, and to develop the values, abilities, and will to participate in the constitutional experiment. Editorialists seemed to plead with Indians to accept British opportunities for cooperation as legitimate and responded with exasperation when these generous concessions were ignored or rejected out of hand. The frustration expressed by many papers is seen in the *New Statesman*: “If Indian politicians want to make the most of their present opportunities they must realise that [British honesty of purpose] is truth and not blarney.”⁷⁷ The *Spectator* summed up the British sentiment towards India:

In whatever degree the Indians demonstrate their ability to live together in peace and to manage their own affairs to the same degree will the pressure of the ruling hand be lightened.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Lord Meston, “The Crisis in India,” *Saturday Review*, 8 Mar. 1930, 286.

⁷⁶ “An Historic Act.” Editorial. *Sunday Times*. 4 Aug. 1935: 10c.

⁷⁷ “The Simon Commission,” *New Statesman*, 12 Nov. 1927, 133.

⁷⁸ “The Threatened Boycott in India,” *Spectator*, 11 Feb. 1928, 181.

The first such opportunity was the chance to work with the Statutory Commission to investigate the workings of the 1919 Government of India Act. The English press expressed surprise that Indians would not work with the Commissioners, despite all of the obvious advantages that cooperation would bring to India. No offence was intended in excluding Indians from the Commission; Indians simply overreacted according to both supporters and opponents of the reforms process. *Time & Tide* argued that a mixed Commission was simply an impossibility.⁷⁹ Lord Meston, in the pages of the *Sunday Times* blamed Indians themselves for their lack of inclusion on the Commission. He argued that the British Government had been pleading for years for Indians to come up with their own draft constitution to no avail. Meston concluded that it was “the tragedy of Indian Nationalism that it so often misses its greatest opportunities.”⁸⁰ Papers insisted that even though Indians were not directly represented on the Commission committees of the Central and Provincial Legislatures would be consulted. This method would allow “the less extreme Indian elements” (*Time & Tide*) or “authoritative and responsible representatives of the Indian people” (*Economist*) to cooperate and have their views fully heard by the Commissioners.⁸¹ The *Times* stated that Indians would also be able to advise the Joint Select Committee of the House of Commons that would ultimately review the Commission’s Report before it was translated into legislation. This would only be possible “if the elected representatives do not squander their extraordinary opportunities.”⁸² The *Spectator* seemed exasperated with the demonstrations greeting the Simon Commission when it disembarked in Bombay in February 1928. Indians were

⁷⁹ “Untitled,” *Time & Tide*, 2 Dec. 1927, 952.

⁸⁰ Lord Meston, “India’s Constitution,” *Sunday Times*, 13 Nov. 1927, 16.

⁸¹ See “Untitled,” *Time & Tide*, 2 Dec. 1927, 952. and “The Statutory Commission for India,” *Economist*, 12 Nov. 1927, 825.

⁸² “India at the Cross Roads.” Editorial. *Times*. 3 Feb. 1928: 13c.

running a “terrible risk” and had two roads before them: one led to political liberty, the other to political death. The *Spectator* concluded that “we feel a peculiar dismay at the prospect of India refusing to accept the help which is in earnest offered to her.”⁸³

In contrast, the *Manchester Guardian* and *Time & Tide* blamed the British Government for the Indian uproar over the Statutory Commission. These papers contended that if the proposals for consulting Indian opinion were released at the same time as the announcement of the all-Parliamentary commissioners, Indians would have cooperated with the body. Instead, the Government’s actions “gave rise to suspicions which were unjustified.”⁸⁴ The *Manchester Guardian* reasoned that “whatever errors of judgment there may have been in the appointment of the Commission it is now too late to address them” and therefore “to reject the crucial opportunity...would be a lamentable error.” By rejecting “a wonderful opportunity,” Indian leaders worked “only to retard their cause and plant stumbling blocks in their own path.”⁸⁵

Supporters of the Irwin Declaration viewed the proposed round table conference as an excellent opportunity for Indians. The *Daily Herald* argued that Indians had been pleading for years for Dominion status and a round table conference; the Viceroy’s declaration gave them assurances for the former and an invitation to the latter. The door was wide open to a new era of cooperation.⁸⁶ The *Times* and *Manchester Guardian* also described the declaration as a door opened to new opportunities. The *Times* considered Irwin’s statement as clearing the air of distrust and discord, while the *Guardian* viewed the conference offer as an opportunity for “all those Indian politicians who have felt unable to

⁸³ “The Threatened Boycott in India,” *Spectator*, 11 Feb. 1928, 181.

⁸⁴ “Untitled,” *Time & Tide*, 2 Dec. 1927, 952.

⁸⁵ “Indian Leadership.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 3 Feb. 1928: 10c.

⁸⁶ “India.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 1 Nov. 1929: 6a.

deal with the Simon Commission” to discuss “constitutional questions with the British Cabinet.”⁸⁷ This idea was also expressed by the *Yorkshire Post* which stated that the round table forum offered “an opportunity for the less hot-headed of Indian leaders to offer more moderate counsels.”⁸⁸ Anticipating the commencement of the first round table conference, the *Daily Telegraph* hoped that Indian politicians would seize the opportunity extended to them by Parliament to play “a decisive part in the enormous labour of constructive policy.” The *Telegraph* expected, as a result, that Indians would “be moved to a more responsive temper.”⁸⁹ *Truth* contended that little could be accomplished on the road to responsible self-government without the cooperation or good will of Indians. If these conditions were offered by Indians, according to *Truth*: “then the road stretches clear before us, along which Indians and Britons can walk side by side towards the fulfilment of their common destiny.”⁹⁰

At the conclusion of the conference, supporters of the reforms process placed their hopes in the Indian delegates returning to the subcontinent to translate agreements made at the meeting into concrete actions on the ground. Much depended on the ability of the delegates to convince their fellow Indians, especially the Congress Party, to accept the results of the Round Table. The *Times* saw the possible results in Manichean terms:

the uphill road to complete self-government lies open to them if they have the courage to face it, and that it rests in their hands to convince their countrymen that it is a better road to travel than the slippery slopes of revolution.⁹¹

The *Economist* expressed hope that “the Congress leaders will have the patriotism, the

⁸⁷ “A New Prospect for India.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 1 Nov. 1929: 10b.

⁸⁸ “India’s Future.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 2 Nov. 1929: 10b.

⁸⁹ “Simon Commission’s Report: A Masterly Survey of the Problem” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 10 June 1930: 8b.

⁹⁰ “The Simon Solution for India,” *Truth*, 25 June 1930, 1111.

⁹¹ “The Conference Adjourns.” Editorial. *Times*. 20 Jan. 1931: 13b.

courage, and the wisdom” to accept the conclusions of the conference, though they did not participate in the proceedings. It argued that Congress should congratulate the returning delegates as they “obtained the free and willing verdict of this country in their favour.”⁹² The *Daily Herald* desired that Congress would “respond to the hand of friendship held out to them” by ending its civil disobedience campaign. They would then be invited to “join in the final framing of the new Constitution that will give their country that very freedom for which they have been fighting.”⁹³ The *Spectator* stated that the safeguards agreed to at the conference were necessary to protect imperial interests, but would “gradually disappear in proportion as Indians prove their capacity for complete autonomy.” The paper questioned: “are the Indians going to let slip such a glorious opportunity?” adding ominously “if the opportunity is lost it may not recur.”⁹⁴

The Communal Award was also presented an excellent opportunity for Indians to settle grave social issues peacefully amongst themselves. The British Government claimed that it was ready to modify the award if the communities involved unanimously agreed. The press hoped that the unpopularity of the award would spur Indians to cooperate in order to change the imposed settlement. *Time & Tide* described the award as a “*ballon d’essai*” produced “in the hope that its critics may produce something better.”⁹⁵ The *Economist* concluded that the success of the award depended less on the settlement itself than on the Indians developing “a real will to make a constructive experiment in constitutional government within the limits of what is to-day practically realizable.”⁹⁶

During the remainder of the reforms process the press speculated over whether

⁹² “The Conference and the Future,” *Economist*, 24 Jan. 1931, 155.

⁹³ “Britain’s Pledge.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 20 Jan. 1931: 8b.

⁹⁴ “Towards an Indian Constitution,” *Spectator*, 17 Jan. 1931, 68.

⁹⁵ “The Indian Award,” *Time & Tide*, 20 Aug. 1932, 897.

⁹⁶ “The Indian Communal Award,” *Economist*, 20 Aug. 1932, 340.

Indians, or more specifically the Congress Party, would ultimately accept and work with the final form of the constitution. The key question was over safeguards. Britain could only do so much; in the end success would depend on Indian readiness to work with the reforms scheme. The constitution would be the greatest opportunity and the press hoped that the Indian leaders would set aside their wrecking tactics and embrace the chance to achieve a workable democracy.

English press coverage of the Indian reforms process from 1927 to 1935 was steeped in the rhetoric of the imperial mission. It asserted that Britain had brought peace and order to the formerly chaotic subcontinent; anarchy would return, as well as foreign invaders, if Britain relinquished its role as paramount power in India. The Raj provided many benefits for Indians. It served to unify diverse communities, provided material economic benefits, and introduced British education and Western ideas, especially democracy. The most important role for the Raj, according to the press, was as imperial arbiter over the varied peoples of India: the British alone were able to be impartial amongst the elements of Indian society constantly at odds with each other. Objective, detached, and imbued with the rational conception of Western justice, the Raj protected the numerous minorities of India and introduced the concept of human rights for all. Because of these constructive qualities, Britain's Parliament justly claimed final authority for India, according to the press. The British knew what was best for India and its people, and, via Parliament, they could impose reforms that would, in the end, be for the ultimate benefit of Indians. The British offered several opportunities for Indians to cooperate along the road of reform, demonstrate their qualities and aptitude for self-government and eventually achieve Dominion status within the empire.

Chapter 4

“Divided by differences of religion, language, custom and race” Perceptions of India, 1927-35

A country two-thirds the area of the United States, with two and a half times its population; speaking more than 200 languages, divided by profound religious differences subdivided into innumerable castes -- 70 millions of Moslems standing immovably in opposition to 200 million Hindus; 60 millions of Untouchables on the fringe of the Hindu system disinherited and oppressed by the privileged castes within; vast deserts of illiteracy...a closely organised British India surrounding 700,000 square miles of Indian States, paternally ruled under medieval customs, and standing stiffly on their treaty rights.

■ “The Simon Report,” *New Statesman*, 14 June 1930, 297.

No doubt if men were perfectly rational Indians would demand at least one hundred years for education and training before consenting to undertake the risks and responsibilities of self-government.

■ “The Indian Debates.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 8 November 1929: 10b.

The exasperation felt by British editors towards Indian resistance to the reforms process is often palpable. They found the actions of Congress politicians who stymied British reform at every turn utterly baffling. And as the press was unanimous in its conception of the imperial mission, it was equally agreed in its view of India. Newspapers and journals of all shades of political opinion and from London to the provinces held the same presumptions about the subcontinent and its people. In the composite British press portrait, India appeared as a mind-boggling huge geographic mass with a staggeringly enormous and extremely diverse population, at stages of development so varied that “almost every stage of civilisation is represented within its borders.”¹ In general, India was backward; its politicians were irrational and irresponsible; its people divided and motivated by religious hatreds.

The implicit wish of most papers and journals (though not necessarily the diehard

¹ Scrutator, “Simon Commission’s Report,” *Sunday Times*, 15 June 1930, 14. See also Sir Stanley Reed, “India: Nearing the Goal,” *Spectator*, 11 Nov. 1932, 655; “The Threatened Boycott,” *Spectator*, 11 Feb. 1928, 181; “The Conference and the Future,” *Economist*, 24 Jan. 1931, 155 and “The Indian Commission – Survey,” *Economist*, 14 June 1930, 1316; “A Unique Occasion in India’s History.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 13 Nov. 1930: 12b; “The Simon Report,” *Spectator*, 14 June 1930, 964.

press), though only explicit in some, was that Moderate/or Liberal (the English press used these terms interchangeably) Indian politicians would finally opt for cooperation with the British and take over the political leadership from Congress. Indian Moderates and Liberals, according to the press view, would cooperate with the British Government; the evolution of India toward Dominion status depended on such an environment of cooperation and trust. Few editors had any hope that Congress politicians could or would create such an environment.

Some papers went further and questioned whether democracy would ever suit India. With its own long and glorious history and special conditions, India should perhaps develop its own forms of government rather than be forced to accept a British-style constitution. Some papers stressed how different the subcontinent was in comparison to the other Dominions. Therefore, India could not simply follow the same course as, say, Canada or Australia; new modes of government would have to be created and adapted to India's unique circumstances. Needless to say, India's distinctive diversity would make this a long and arduous process.

The implicit inferiority of the "Indian/Eastern mind" was a key assumption in the English press. A key part of Eastern minds was "a kind of mystical or emotional attraction which results in a kind of ecstatic enthusiasm neglectful of practical problems and material responsibilities."² Hence, "Oriental human nature" contained "an element of fanaticism which cannot easily be captured by the net of reason and calculation."³ The Oriental and the Occidental stood in sharp contrast:

Mass opinion in the East is not so decidedly influenced by the logic of facts, and is far more liable to be affected by 'whispering campaigns' of false

² "India Round Table Conference." Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 12 Nov. 1930: 8b.

³ "Gandhi Versus the Viceroy," *Time & Tide*, 11 Apr. 1930, 465.

propaganda than is public opinion in Western countries.⁴

In the British press Indians appeared almost as naughty little children who refused to do their lessons or eat their vegetables; willful, obdurate, overly emotional, and prone to tantrums. Like schoolchildren, Indian nationalists probed their tutors and protectors for weaknesses that they could exploit. Sometimes the schoolboy analogy was used explicitly, as in this instance by the *Saturday Review*:

Britain must beware of finding herself in the embarrassing position of a big boy who, having begun justifiably smacking a small boy's head for cheek finds that chastisement elicits sobs intermittently interrupted by the obstinately repeated cheek. Such obstinate perseverance in ill-doing quite unreasonably wins the sympathy of the bystanders and disheartens the punisher of the incorrigible.⁵

The worst schoolboy of them all in India, according to the press, was Gandhi. Gandhi argued "with more than Eastern subtlety" but his goals were entirely impractical: preaching pacific rebellion and non-violence would only provoke disorder.⁶ Thus, the *Sunday Times* argued that Lord Irwin's moderation in not arresting Gandhi during his salt march could be misinterpreted by Indians. The Viceroy's

restraint may be misunderstood by the Eastern mind; and if it be accompanied by an apparently undue deference to the wishes of men who, whatever they are granted, will always demand more, may easily be mistaken for weakness.⁷

The *Daily Mail* echoed this sentiment. Toleration "is not understood in the East, where weakness has never been honoured or respected."⁸

Not surprisingly, the diehards attempted to use the East/West dichotomy to put the brakes on the reform movement but the pro-reform papers like the *Economist* admitted that

⁴ "Mr. Gandhi's Ultimatum," *Economist*, 17 Sept. 1932, 495.

⁵ "The Round Table Adjourns," *Saturday Review*, 24 Jan. 1931, 110.

⁶ "Gandhi Begins." Editorial. *Observer*. 9 Mar. 1930: 16b.

⁷ "The Viceroy's Task," *Sunday Times*, 9 Mar. 1930, 16b.

⁸ "Weakness in India." Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 17 Mar. 1930: 12b.

Oriental “temperament and tradition needs quite a different form of government.”⁹ The *Daily Mail* was the most fervent and vocal critic of imposing democracy upon India. The *Mail* argued, with typical overstatement:

To transplant from this country to a tropical region of Asia a form of government which even here is breaking down, and is entirely alien to Asiatic tradition seems one of the saddest experiments that history records.¹⁰

On the pro-reform side of the argument, Lord Peel, writing in the *Sunday Times*, recognized that transferring “Western Parliamentary institutions into the old soil of India is a daring constitutional effort.” He contended that the Commissioners in the Simon Report did their best to trim and adapt Western ideas and institutions to their new surroundings.¹¹

Papers on both sides of the political divide argued that India was unlike any other part of the British Empire and was especially dissimilar to the White Dominions. Therefore, some papers argued, India and Dominion status were entirely unsuited for each other, while others contended that India would need to take a new route along the road to self-government. Some papers suggested sidestepping the communal electorates issue by setting up “more personal forms of government, or look[ing] for other forms of representation such as might be developed from political seeds that were indigenous.”¹² The reforms process was an advance into the unknown where “self-government in India may not necessarily develop altogether on Western lines.” This was because “India has yet to show whether the full British conception of self-government is suitable to Indian

⁹ “Le Roy Le Veult,” *Economist*, 3 Aug. 1935, 220.

¹⁰ “Vague Talk in Cloudland.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 20 Jan 1931: 8b; for a similar example in the *Mail* see “Steering into Danger.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 17 Aug. 1932: 8b. See also “An Indian Incarnation.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 12 Nov. 1930: 10b.

¹¹ Lord Peel, “The Remaking of India,” *Sunday Times*, 29 June 1930, 16e. Peel served as Secretary of State for India from 1922 to 1924.

¹² *Scrutator*, “India in Perspective,” *Sunday Times*, 19 Mar. 1933, 16d.

character, tradition and conditions.”¹³ According to the Simon Report, India presented a “constitutional problem...unlike any other in history and calls for a solution adapted to her own special circumstances.”¹⁴ The first round table conference had to deal with the “special needs and difficulties of that vast country of three hundred millions of people” as well as India’s relationship with the Indian States and the British Empire.¹⁵ The subcontinent was a “land of infinite diversity” and “the heir of ancient but almost forgotten civilisations, whose soul has been harried for centuries by foreign domination and internal strife.”¹⁶ India had never formed “one organic body-politic.” Instead “throughout the ages this aggregate of territories has never been subject to one rule, has never formed one State” not even under the Mauryas or Moghuls.¹⁷ Dominion status was “a process of growth and not a gift” and India was still lacking “in certain obvious spheres of self-government.” A key prerequisite of Dominion status meant “the bridging by Indians themselves of their deep cleavages of race, caste, and religion.”¹⁸

The topic of India achieving Dominion status became even more contentious after the Irwin declaration. The term “Dominion status” was not precisely defined by law until the Statute of Westminster of 1931. The Balfour Declaration of 1926, later encapsulated in the Statute of Westminster, defined Dominions as

autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.¹⁹

¹³ “The India Report.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 22 Nov. 1934: 10b.

¹⁴ “The Indian Commission – Survey,” *Economist*, 14 June 1930: 1316.

¹⁵ “The Indian Conference.” Editorial. *Times*. 12 Nov. 1930: 15b.

¹⁶ Lord Meston, “The Simon Report on India,” *British Weekly*, 3 July 1930, 312.

¹⁷ “Reforms for India,” *Time & Tide*, 25 Mar. 1933, 345.

¹⁸ “The Goal of India.” Editorial. *Times*. 7 Feb. 1935: 15b.

¹⁹ Hansards, 11 Dec. 1931, 22 & 23 George V c.4

Some papers attempted to portray Dominion status as inappropriate or even a step down in position for India; the subcontinent should find its own form of self-government better suited to its own conditions. India was a “great and proud Empire” and it was “almost an outrage to propose that she should be reduced to the status of a Dominion.”²⁰ Communal divisions and the separation between British India and the Native States made Dominion status inappropriate for India. India could

never, as far as it is possible to look forward into the dim future, have a constitution that would be in any way comparable to the constitutions of Canada or Australia or New Zealand... The thing is simply not possible, either now or probably a hundred years hence.²¹

Even difficult cases for Dominion status, such as South Africa or the Irish Free State, were “very small and simple propositions by comparison with India.”²² Dominion status implied “a form of Indian Constitution which may not prove to be the best development of Indian political genius or best adapted to the diverse conditions of the Peninsula.”²³ This sentiment was best summed up by the *Times*: “The conditions of India differ in essence, and not merely to degree, from the conditions of Canada, New Zealand, and the other countries known as British Dominions; that a self-governing India of the future may find some more appropriate form of expression.”²⁴ India’s religious diversity ensured that it could never “have a Constitution even resembling that of any other Dominion.”²⁵

²⁰ “An Indian Incarnation.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 12 Nov. 1930: 10b. Also see “Lord Irwin and Mr. Benn,” *Truth*, 13 Nov. 1929, 829.

²¹ “Lord Irwin’s Blunder,” *New Statesman*, 9 Nov. 1929, 149.

²² J.L. Garvin, “India and the Crisis,” *Observer*, 3 Nov. 1929, 16c.

²³ “India’s Future.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 2 Nov. 1929: 10b.

²⁴ “The Ultimate Goal.” Editorial. *Times*. 1 Nov. 1929: 11b.

²⁵ “The Indian ‘Crisis,’” *Spectator*, 9 Nov. 1929, 653. Also see Sir Stanley Reed, India: Nearing the Goal,” *Spectator*, 11 Nov. 1932, 655; “The Simon Report,” *Spectator*, 14 June 1930, 964; and “The Threatened Boycott in India,” *Spectator*, 11 Feb. 1928, 181; “The Conference and the Future,” *Economist*, 24 Jan. 1931, 155 and 11 Feb. 1928; “An Unwise Statement of Policy.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 2 Nov. 1930: 10c; Harold Cox, “Realities in India,” *Sunday Times*, 21 Aug. 1932, 8f and Scrutator, “Simon Commission’s Report,” *Sunday Times*, 15 June 1930, 14e.

Editors frequently emphasized that these divisions constituted major stumbling blocks to Dominion Home Rule. The *Daily Mail*, for example, described India as “*the most diversified, discordant, confused complex of Oriental peoples and religions existing in the world.*”²⁶ The *British Weekly* agreed:

The time has not yet come when administrative and legislative independence can be granted to a country which includes many races and religions, a powerful caste system, and a group of native States each governed by its own ruler.²⁷

The *Daily Telegraph* contended that democracy could never succeed on the subcontinent because of India’s divisions.

[S]o divided by nature and man is the semi-continent, so inapt for any unity not imposed by a paramount and impartial influence; so manifold, intricate, double-crossed are the rival forces and ideals. Neither democracy, nor anything like democracy, will rule India in this century.²⁸

Press leaders on the controversy over the Statutory Commission tended to focus on these divisions as the primary reason why Indians were not—and should not be--Commissioners.²⁹ The divisions of India were also the reason why the British Government needed to resort to the Communal Award according to the press.³⁰

The English press also stressed the high illiteracy rate on the subcontinent, although press reports of this rate varied. The *Saturday Review* contended that only eighty-two out of every thousand on the subcontinent could read or write.³¹ The *Daily Mail* placed the

²⁶ “Real Justice for India!” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 14 Sept. 1931: 10b. *Mail’s* emphasis. Also see “Why India Must Go Slow.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 10 June 1930: 10b.

²⁷ “The Peril in India.” Editorial. *British Weekly*. 16 Jan. 1930: 343c.

²⁸ “An Unwise Statement of Policy.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 2 Nov. 1930: 10c.

²⁹ See “The India Commission.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 9 Nov. 1927: 8b and Lord Meston, “India’s Constitution,” *Sunday Times*, 13 Nov. 1927, 16.

³⁰ See “The Conference Ends.” Editorial. *Sunday Times*. 18 Jan. 1931: 12b, “The Goal of India.” *Times*. 7 Feb. 1935: 15b, and “Gandhi’s Vow.” Editorial. *British Weekly*. 15 Sept. 1932: 455d.

³¹ Sirdar Ikbal Ali Shah, “Gandhi and His Mission,” *Saturday Review*, 15 Mar. 1930, 318.

illiteracy rate at 95 percent in 1930 and 86 percent in 1932.³² No reason was given for the discrepancy by the *Mail* (perhaps a mass literacy drive). The *Economist* did not mention exact numbers but described the people of India as “a largely illiterate population.”³³

Not only were Indians divided and largely illiterate, these divided and backward peoples were in constant conflict with each other. The situation on the subcontinent as “congeries of peoples divided by racial and religious hates” and also “divided by differences of religion, language, custom and race.”³⁴ The *Times* saw in the Simon Report an India having “more linguistic and racial differences and deeper social cleavages than Europe.”³⁵ This sentiment was also seen in the *Observer*: India contained “contrasts of races and creeds and systems more numerous than in Europe; the inward antagonisms of religion and breed more vehement.”³⁶ The subcontinent was “a warring sect-ridden continent of peoples pretending to be a nation.”³⁷ Separate electorates were necessary on the subcontinent as “the lambs and the lions in India will not lie down together.”³⁸ While democracy worked in Britain, the *Morning Post* argued, because of its united electorate and responsible government, in India “all the minorities have insisted upon separate representation. In fact, every part has cried out in fear of the domination of the others.”³⁹

The most important and crippling division in India according to the English press was the supposedly age old conflict between Hindus and Muslims. The press took a largely negative view of Hinduism. Hinduism was depicted as anti-Western: irrational,

³² “A Blunder at the Start.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 14 Nov. 1930: 12b and “Gandhi Climbs Down.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 27 Sept. 1932: 10b.

³³ “The New India,” *Economist*, 24 Nov. 1934: 967.

³⁴ “India in the Crucible,” *Truth*, 1 Jan. 1930, 12 and “The Indian Proposals,” *Truth*, 22 Mar. 1933, 444.

³⁵ “India’s Reactions.” Editorial. *Times*. 19 June 1930: 15b.

³⁶ J.L. Garvin, “India and the Crisis,” *Observer*, 3 Nov. 1929, 16c.

³⁷ “The Bombay Mob Wins.” Editorial. *Daily Express*. 20 Jan. 1931: 8b.

³⁸ “A New Plan for India,” *New Statesman & Nation*, 20 Aug. 1932, 196.

³⁹ “Squaring the Round Table.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 20 Jan. 1931: 10b.

immoral, an obstacle to progress. The most damning condemnation of Hinduism came from Lord Meston in the *Sunday Times*:

There exists in India...a section of Hinduism -- able, insidious, and powerful -- which will never be reconciled to British control. No political concessions will appease it, no compromise will abate its demands. It has no use for our ideas of democracy; it detests the whole scheme of Western civilisation; it hankers after the restoration of its own ancient rule of life... It survived and absorbed the reforming faith of Buddha; it survived and defeated its Moslem conquerors; it believes it can survive and eradicate British rule. Its strength lies in the fears and superstitions of the millions.⁴⁰

A few months later, Meston presented orthodox Hinduism as diametrically opposed to Western values. To Meston, the Simon Report embodied British ideals such as liberty and human rights, while to orthodox Hinduism “neither equality or opportunities nor liberty is consistent with its views of life and eternity.”⁴¹ Hinduism stood as the greatest barrier to reform, and contrary to British benign influence:

That our Western culture and Western creeds will shake its domination is its constant fear; and it is ill-disposed to a political system which brings Western influences in its train.⁴²

The *Saturday Review* viewed Hinduism as a veritable cancer of the subcontinent and the Congress Party as simply a Hindu organization. It described the history of India as “the history of a country paralysed by the cramping Brahmin system and unable to make any effective resistance against invaders.” Hinduism, a type of “Bolshevism in dress clothes” was “suave, seductive, and sinister.” It “has first attracted and then ruined everything with which it has come in contact -- everything except Islam.” Hinduism stood for “laxity of thought and principle and practice.”⁴³ To the Hindu, even “murder

⁴⁰ Lord Meston, “The Indian Irreconcilables,” *Sunday Times*, 5 Jan. 1930, 12f.

⁴¹ Lord Meston, “The Simon Report on India,” *British Weekly*, 3 July 1930, 312.

⁴² Lord Meson, “Sunshine and Cloud in India,” *British Weekly*, 12 Mar. 1931, 483a.

⁴³ H.K. Trevasakis, “India – Government or Anarchy?” *Saturday Review*, 24 Sept. 1932, 314.

and sodomy are not sins...They are religious rites.”⁴⁴

This depiction of Hinduism as extreme perversion appeared in other papers as well. Both *Truth* and *Time & Tide* referred positively to the American Katherine Mayo’s book *Mother India* (1927), a sharp critique of Hindu culture that sought to expose the “disgusting and immoral” religious rites and domestic habits of many of the Hindu castes, as an authority on Hindu culture. *Time & Tide* concluded, with considerable understatement, that the book “is not calculated to influence public opinion in favour of large extensions of Indian home rule.”⁴⁵

The caste system particularly troubled British journalists. This “most rigid social system” obstructed meaningful social and political change.⁴⁶ The *Sunday Times* described the caste system (in a not-so-oblique reference to the Labour Party) as “a petrified trade and professional unionism from which there is no escape for anyone who is born into it.”⁴⁷ Untouchability, an “unparalleled curse imposed on one-fifth of the Hindu multitudes,” constituted the most vicious aspect of caste.⁴⁸

The untouchables, *Truth* asserted, since “the dawn of history have been treated by their ‘brother’ Hindus with greater harshness than a self-respecting European would show to the meanest of the dumb creation.”⁴⁹ The *Statesman* declared Untouchability, an abominable system “which condemns forty millions of Indians to lifelong hereditary degradation,” to be incompatible with a democratic constitution.⁵⁰ Churchill, in the *Daily*

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ “The Indian Commission,” *Truth*, 23 Nov. 1927, 943 and “Untitled,” *Time & Tide*, 11 Nov. 1927, 1001.

⁴⁶ “Mr. Gandhi’s Achievement,” *Spectator*, 1 Oct. 1932, 389.

⁴⁷ Scrutator, “Simon Commission’s Report,” *Sunday Times*, 15 June 1930, 14e.

⁴⁸ “Mr. Gandhi’s Achievement,” *Spectator*, 1 Oct. 1932, 389.

⁴⁹ “Gandhi’s Suicide Buffoonery,” *Truth*, 21 Sept. 1932, 429.

⁵⁰ “Mr. Gandhi’s Last Challenge,” *New Statesman & Nation*, 17 Sept. 1932, 304; see also “Women and Untouchables,” *Truth*, 24 Aug. 1932, 282.

Mail, agreed: Dominion status could “not be attained while India is prey to fierce racial and religious dissensions” and while Hindus treat “fellow human beings...as ‘Untouchables.’”⁵¹

This negative portrait of Hinduism reinforced the British press’s contempt for the Congress Party. Many British editors viewed “Hindu” and “Congress” as synonymous. The *Morning Post*, for example, declared that “the Congress doctrine of ‘Nationalism’ has no place for the Mohammedan any more than for the British: it is based on Hinduism and invokes the Hindu gods.”⁵² In a not-so-veiled reference to Congress, *Truth* noted that the “extremist Hindus who chatter so incessantly about democracy and the rights of the oppressed (i.e. themselves) have never done anything to alleviate the wretched lot of the Untouchables.”⁵³ Gandhi’s campaign against untouchability received little notice. The *Daily Mail*, which claimed that Indian politicians considered the depressed classes “worse than dogs,”⁵⁴ even argued that Gandhi sought “to exalt the Hindu race and religion above all the other races and religions of India.”⁵⁵

The depiction of Indian Muslims contrasted sharply with the very negative portrayal of Hinduism in the British press. A “strong minority” surrounded by a “threatening sea of Hinduism,” -- Muslims were praised for their religious purity and political unity.⁵⁶ The *Saturday Review*, for example, described Indian Islam as “for religious, moral and political discipline, for a strong government as against anarchy” and

⁵¹ Winston Churchill, “The Peril in India,” *Daily Mail*, 16 Nov. 1929, 10c.

⁵² “India and England.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 15 Sept. 1931: 10b.

⁵³ “Gandhi’s Suicide Buffoonery,” *Truth*, 21 Sept. 1932, 429.

⁵⁴ “India’s Odd Welcome.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 4 Feb. 1928: 8b.

⁵⁵ “Real Justice for India!” *Daily Mail*. 14 Sept. 1931: 10b. *Mail’s* emphasis.

⁵⁶ “Pathetic Contentment.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 4 Feb. 1928: 10b.

for a “faith [kept] pure from Hindu seduction and defilement.”⁵⁷ In a similar vein, *Time & Tide* depicted the Muslims as “a minority but conscious of their military superiority and of a fellowship with all Islam beyond the peninsula.”⁵⁸ The paper also portrayed the Muslims as “the most powerful and united of the Indian minorities.”⁵⁹

The English press attempted to depict Indian Muslims, both tacitly and overtly, as natural allies of the British Raj against a common enemy, “the rule of a revolutionary minority of Hindus.”⁶⁰ The Muslims, “apart from Mr. Jinnah...form a definite conservative group.”⁶¹ The *Daily Mail* encouraged the Muslims to insist upon “a larger measure of segregation” beyond simply their recognized separate electorates.⁶² The Muslims and the Princes [of the Native States], the *Saturday Review* argued, were the “only two forces which can hope to stand out against the Congress.”⁶³ *Truth* asserted that Muslims were understandably obdurate about minority representation because “bitter experience has taught them what to expect when Hindus are in the majority on any public body.”⁶⁴ Muslims “would be the biggest fools in the world to put their heads in the lion’s jaws after the warning they have had and they will not do it.”⁶⁵

Muslim opposition to Congress and wariness of Gandhi’s leadership were repeated themes. The *Times*, describing the boycott of the arrival of the Simon Commission, observed that the Muslims refused to join.⁶⁶ The *New Statesman* contended that Muslims

⁵⁷ H.K. Trevaskis, “India – Government or Anarchy?” *Saturday Review*, 24 Sept. 1932, 314.

⁵⁸ “The Riddle of India,” *Time & Tide*, 8 Nov. 1929, 1828.

⁵⁹ *Time & Tide* 19 June 1930

⁶⁰ “The Failure of Funk.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 1 Jan. 1930: 8b.

⁶¹ G.T. Garratt, “Issues at the Indian Conference,” *Nation & Athenaeum*, 15 Nov. 1930, 339.

⁶² “Real Justice for India!” *Daily Mail*. 14 Sept. 1931: 10b.

⁶³ Sir Michael O’Dwyer, “India Under Swaraj,” *Saturday Review*, 10 Aug. 1935, 16.

⁶⁴ “The Simon Solution for India,” *Truth*, 25 June 1930, 1111.

⁶⁵ “The Round Table Conference Begins,” *Truth*, 9 Sept. 1931, 391.

⁶⁶ “India at the Cross Roads.” Editorial. *Times*. 3 Feb. 1928: 13c.

were “ice cold” to Gandhi’s salt march⁶⁷ while *Truth* warned that Muslim opposition meant “it is a fairly safe prediction that the civil disobedience march will, at the best, not pass off without communal collisions.”⁶⁸ The *New Statesman & Nation* argued that the Muslims were uncomfortable with the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and were watchful of further British moves that could undermine their position.⁶⁹

The British press saw the divide between Muslim and Hindu as a “gulf which is already so wide and deep that it has never been bridged.”⁷⁰ The Muslims and the other minorities “were quite unable to find any *modus vivendi* with the Hindu majority.”⁷¹ The minorities of the subcontinent, especially the Muslims, would never accept a Hindu Raj nor would the Muslims would ever “consent to be ruled by the very unwarlike Hindus.”⁷² Lord Meston saw the Hindu-Muslim divide “as intractable.” He added ominously that “some settlement must be reached before a federal Government becomes possible; otherwise there seems no escape from civil war.”⁷³ The *Morning Post* painted an apocalyptic picture of a communal bloodbath if the British abandoned its paramount position on the subcontinent:

The Mohammedan knows well that nothing less than his right to exist in India is at stake. Were the British to go, he would have to fight for his life, and in that fight there could be no permanent truce until his community remained as conquerors or fled as fugitives.⁷⁴

Papers stressed the need for a peaceful resolution to the communal conflict as a

⁶⁷ “Untitled,” *New Statesman*, 29 Mar. 1930: 794.

⁶⁸ “The Great Soul on the March,” *Truth*, 12 Mar. 1930, 422.

⁶⁹ “Untitled,” *New Statesman & Nation*, 14 Mar. 1931, 93.

⁷⁰ “India and England.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 15 Sept. 1931: 10b.

⁷¹ “Federalism by Force.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 2 Dec. 1931: 10b.

⁷² “Gandhi Begins.” Editorial. *Observer*. 9 Mar. 1930: 16b, 8 Mar. 1931, and “Lord Irwin’s Blunder,” *New Statesman*, 9 Nov. 1929, 148.

⁷³ Lord Meson, “Sunshine and Cloud in India,” *British Weekly*, 12 Mar. 1931, 483a.

⁷⁴ “India and England.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 15 Sept. 1931: 10b.

precondition for any political advancement. Yet the press downplayed the bloodshed and emphasized the link between political policy and communal violence. In 1927, for example, *Truth* predicted a “spate of invective” to flow over India before the Statutory Commission could report, as the Hindus were “hated and despised by the Moslem minority.”⁷⁵ Similarly, the *Morning Post* blamed the Montagu reforms for creating “racial favouritism” which resulted in “fierce and bloody conflicts between Hindu and Moslem.”⁷⁶ Two years later, the *Daily Mail* contended that the communal hostility had “grown more violent and murderous since the era of so-called reform began.”⁷⁷ The *Spectator*, too, linked reform and communal violence as “this rivalry, as was only natural, has to a large extent fed upon the very political ambitions stirred by the reforms so far granted.”⁷⁸ Even the *Manchester Guardian* claimed that reform led to increased communal tensions: “The prospect of self-government fills the Moslem and Hindu communities with anxieties, ambitions, and mutual suspicions.”⁷⁹

Faced with the absolute “Otherness” of India, British editors turned to a more familiar, slightly less “Other” other: Ireland. The *Observer* depicted Islam as India’s Ulster; Muslims would “never accept in any shape or form the rule of a Hindu majority. Never. No certainty in the whole world is more definite and formidable than this.”⁸⁰ The *Morning Post* noted that the British government was unable to force Protestant Ulster to submit to rule by the majority Roman Catholic Irish population and warned that “the division between these two was a shallow ditch compared with the Himalayan gulf which

⁷⁵ “The Indian Commission,” *Truth*, 23 Nov. 1927, 943.

⁷⁶ “Pathetic Contentment!” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 4 Feb. 1928: 10b.

⁷⁷ “Why India Must Go Slow.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 10 June 1930: 10b.

⁷⁸ “The Simon Report,” *Spectator*, 14 June 1930, 964.

⁷⁹ “The Simon Report.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 10 June 1930: 10a.

⁸⁰ *Observer* 3 Nov. 1929

separates Hindu and Mohammedan.”⁸¹

The need for a peaceful resolution to the communal conflict became a particular issue with the second round table conference as the issue of communal representation remained unresolved at the meeting. The *Saturday Review* concluded that both groups must show that “the new constitution will be proof against the attacks of one community upon another.”⁸² Muslims and Hindus must resolve their age-old differences, *Truth* stated, as “a fuller measure of self-government must remain an ideal of the future until the Moslems and the Hindus reconcile their differences.”⁸³ The *Yorkshire Post* accused the communal conflict for torpedoing the second conference. The *Post* concluded:

the Indian peoples continue in the paradoxical position of being offered very large extensions of liberty, which they much desire, but find themselves unable to take because of internecine disagreement over the first step.⁸⁴

In contrast, the *Manchester Guardian* insisted that the reforms might ultimately bring the conflicting communities together. It described the Hindu-Muslim feud as “the wound that cripples” India which could “be healed by quiet, constitutional exercise at home.”⁸⁵ *Truth*, in 1934, also contended that the coming constitution would bring the Hindus and Muslims together.

Once the communities, ceaselessly watchful of one another are brought to the point that they must either work this Constitution or leave to their opponents the spoils of office there will be a quick acceptance of actualities.⁸⁶

⁸¹ “Federalism by Force.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 2 Dec. 1931: 10b. See also “The Riddle of India,” *Time & Tide*, 8 Nov. 1929, 1828; Harold Cox, “Realities in India” *Sunday Times*, 21 Aug. 1932, 8f; “Vague Talk in Cloudland.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 20 January 1931: 8b.

⁸² Sir Louis Stuart, “The Round Table Conference,” *Saturday Review*, 8 Nov. 1930, 586. Stuart served as Chief Judge at Oudh.

⁸³ “Farewell to the Conference,” *Truth*, 21 Jan. 1931, 82.

⁸⁴ “An Offer and a Challenge.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 2 Dec. 1931: 8b.

⁸⁵ “Lord Reading and the India Debate.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 6 Nov. 1929: 10b.

⁸⁶ “India’s Future Government,” *Truth*, 28 Nov. 1934, 821. Also see *Times* 15 Sept. 1931, “The Round

The British press felt the Raj had another strong ally, along with the Muslims, against the threat of the Hindu dominated Congress: the Indian Princes. Editors viewed the princes not as Eastern despots but as politicians with whom the British could work. Hence, the *Daily Mail* argued that the Conservative Party should ally with the Indian princes to settle the question of India's future government.⁸⁷ Each side on the reform debate sought to co-opt the princes into their camp. Both sides, however, treated the princes as another significant minority, much like the Muslims or untouchables, opposed to the potential prospect of Congress rule.

Diehards promoted the idea that a natural alliance between Britain and the princes existed. According to the *Daily Mail*, the princes “who know their own race intimately,” advocated diehard policies against Congress. They “are always telling us that we have shown too much indulgence to British India.”⁸⁸ These friends of Britain would be “dominated by Hindu lawyers” in an Indian federation and so “should not surrender one jot of their authority to a Hindu intrigue.”⁸⁹ *Truth* concurred with the *Daily Mail*'s assessment: “the great princes...have no more intention of being ruled by a debating society of Hindu lawyers and journalists than being governed by Stalin or Feng.”⁹⁰

The *Daily Mail* and the *Morning Post* as well, continued to back the princes up to late 1934. The *Mail* declared that the princes disliked the reforms process to such a degree

Table Adjourns,” *New Statesman*, 24 Jan. 1931, 456, “Britain and India's Future,” *Truth*, 2 Dec. 1931, 846, and “The Pledge to India,” *Spectator*, 5 Dec. 1931, 758.

⁸⁷ *Daily Mail* 6 Mar. 1931

⁸⁸ *Daily Mail* 4 Mar. 1930

⁸⁹ “Real Justice for India!” *Daily Mail*. 14 Sept. 1931: 10b; see also “Steering into Danger.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 17 Aug. 1932: 8b.

⁹⁰ “Lord Irwin and Mr. Benn,” *Truth*, 13 Nov. 1929, 829. Feng Yuxiang (1882-1948): Warlord in Republican China.

“that they have *to be bribed or threatened into a show of acceptance of its blessings.*”⁹¹

The *Mail* and *Morning Post* asserted that the princes opposed the Joint Select Committee proposals: “*the Princes do not want them.*”⁹² Insisting that the Government was attempting to railroad Britain into accepting the reforms process in spite of the opposition of the princes, the *Post* argued that at the Conservative meeting at the Queen’s Hall, various speakers claimed that the princes “were in favour of a scheme which, as the Government must now know, they are by no means disposed to accept.”⁹³

The pro-reform press, however, claimed that the princes were major proponents of the reforms process—a claim that became a prominent issue with the arrival of the princes at the first Indian conference in the autumn of 1930. The *New Statesman* described the princes’ position at the first round table conference as very close to the principles of the British Indian delegates and noted that the princes were “taking pains to make it known that they and their followers do not in the least fit into the popular notion of an Oriental potentate, enslaved by drink and the zenana.”⁹⁴ Content to recognize the paramount position of the British Crown, these Maharajahs were not unreasonable in their unwillingness “to recognise the authority of popular Calcutta lawyers.”⁹⁵ The *Manchester Guardian* concurred. Just as unsatisfied with the political status quo on the subcontinent as Congress or the Indian Liberals, the princes would likely support the swift creation of an All-Indian federation – and Britain would benefit: with a quarter of the seats in the Central Legislature granted to the princes, and a third of the seats allocated to Muslims and other minorities, “the danger of a Congress-dominated Legislature would no

⁹¹ “The Indian Gamble.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 19 Dec. 1934: 10b. *Mail’s* emphasis.

⁹² “The India Revolt.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 15 Dec. 1934: 12b.

⁹³ “At the Queen’s Hall.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 5 Dec. 1934: 10b.

⁹⁴ “India and the Round Table,” *New Statesman*, 8 Nov. 1930, 138.

⁹⁵ “Untitled,” *New Statesman*, 2 Nov. 1929, 109.

longer arise.”⁹⁶

Other pro-reform papers agreed that the inclusion of princes into the proposed federation was vital as they would provide both balance and stability. The combined forces of the princes and Muslims would be “so strong that the Congress extremists who would sweep India into tumult will have no chance of a majority.”⁹⁷ With princely cooperation, the Federation of India could be a “valuable influence for steadiness and stabilisation, including resistance to secession propaganda and anarchical intrigues.”⁹⁸ The *Times* declared that the princes’ position was in flux. The Maharajahs emphasized their loyalty to the imperial connection but “have lately shown themselves more and more sympathetic with British Indian aspirations, so long as their own sovereign rights are generally maintained in a federal India.”⁹⁹

Another group, much less organized than the Muslims or princes, that the British press hoped would be a bulwark against Congress were the moderates, also known as the Indian Liberals. In British press leaders, the terms “moderates” and/or “Liberal” referred to any Indian willing to cooperate and work with British authorities. The moderates/Liberals did not form any popular political party or even a cohesive group. While diehard politicians contended that the moderates were simply more mild-mannered extremists, most sections of the press agreed that cooperation with the moderates was necessary for the reforms to work. Pro-reform papers expressed faith that the moderates/Liberals would be able to influence the extremists to cooperate, if not able to

⁹⁶ “The Indian Princes and the Round-Table Conference.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 5 Nov. 1930: 8b. See also “The New Prospect for India.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 1 Nov. 1929: 10b.

⁹⁷ “A Plan for All-India.” Editorial. *Observer*. 19 Mar. 1933: 16b.

⁹⁸ “Lords and India.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 19 Dec. 1934: 8b.

⁹⁹ “The Indian Conference.” Editorial. *Times*. 12 Nov. 1930: 15b.

take control of Indian politics themselves.¹⁰⁰

The pro-reform press viewed the Indian moderates, implicitly, much like Western politicians: rational, in favor of progress, practical, reasonable, responsible, and cooperative. These men were the antithesis of the extremists who populated the Congress Party:

Congress attracts its followers by appeals to the emotions. The moderate cannot hope to compete with the extremist in these. He can only hold the country by showing it a severely practical policy evidently likely to yield practical results. It is plain that the moderate cannot hope to achieve results except by securing the co-operation of the British Government.¹⁰¹

The *Spectator* considered British support for moderates essential. At the conclusion of the first round table conference it stated that the Indian Liberals “will have a difficult and hazardous time before them” on their return to the subcontinent “but they may be assured that they will have the constant sympathy and support of all British well-wishers of India.”¹⁰²

When faced with Congress boycotts of the Simon Commission, Irwin’s reform plans, and the first Round Table Conference, the pro-reform press turned with hope to the Indian moderates. Even the diehard *Saturday Review* hoped that the moderates would support the Simon Commission.¹⁰³ *Truth* contended that the Congress boycott of the Commission was irrelevant as many Indian moderates offered their cooperation. It stated that

responsible leaders of opinion, like Lord Sinha, have expressed their

¹⁰⁰ The two most prominent Indian moderates mentioned in the press were Tej Bahadur Sapru (1875-1949) and V.S. Srinivasa Sastri (1869-1946). Sastri was a member of Congress from 1908-22 but quit over the non-cooperation movement. Both men helped form the Indian Liberal Party in 1910, but it was a marginal organization, at best.

¹⁰¹ “The Moderates’ Choice.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 2 Jan. 1930: 8c.

¹⁰² “Towards an Indian Constitution,” *Spectator*, 17 Jan. 1931, 68.

¹⁰³ “Untitled,” *Saturday Review*, 12 Nov. 1927, 650.

willingness to help the Commission in every way, and their co-operation will have much more influence with the people of India than the hysterical hostility of the extremists.¹⁰⁴

The *Daily Telegraph* gave its seal of approval to the Irwin Declaration and the proposed Indian conference as “all sections of moderate opinion” in India “hailed it with relief and even with rejoicing.”¹⁰⁵ *Time & Tide* praised the moderates for their work at the first round table conference while simultaneously criticizing Gandhi and Congress:

opinion in this country has been impressed as never before with the seriousness of Indian claims and the political capacity of India’s statesmen... There should be little vitality left in the legend that political consciousness in India is confined to a small group of saintly irresponsibles and embittered intellectuals.¹⁰⁶

But the pro-reform support of the moderates was not unconditional. The *New Statesman* regarded cooperation with the moderates as essential but they noted that they “have not yet shown themselves very helpful.”¹⁰⁷ The moderates were a chaotic political group, the *Manchester Guardian* conceded; they had “many distinguished leaders but they have no organised party and no agreed, definite, and practicable policy.”¹⁰⁸

The diehard press view of the Indian moderates was best expressed by the *Daily Mail*:

Our politicians delude themselves with the idea that there exists in India a ‘moderate body of opinion’ which will prevent the extremists from carrying out the policy that they publicly avow their intention of pursuing. Yet this

¹⁰⁴ “The Simon Commission,” *Truth*, 8 Feb. 1928, 238. Lord Sinha died within a month of the publication of this leader.

¹⁰⁵ “Raising False Hopes in India.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 6 Nov. 1929: 12c. Also see “India’s Future.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 2 Nov. 1929: 10b; “Boycott the Boycotters,” *New Statesman*, 4 Jan. 1930, 408, “The Simon Proposals,” *New Statesman*, 28 June 1930, 356, and “India and the Round Table,” *New Statesman*. 8 Nov. 1930, 138; “Lahore and After.” Editorial. *Times*. 2 Jan. 1930: 13b and “The Conference Adjourns.” Editorial. *Times*. 20 Jan. 1931: 13b.

¹⁰⁶ “India’s Draft Constitution,” *Time & Tide*, 17 Jan. 1931, 56. See also “India and the Communal Decision,” *Truth*, 24 Aug. 1932, 282.

¹⁰⁷ “Boycott the Boycotters,” *New Statesman*, 4 Jan. 1930, 408.

¹⁰⁸ “The Moderates’ Choice.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 2 Jan. 1930: 8c.

‘moderate body’ invariably surrenders to the extremists.¹⁰⁹

The *Morning Post* disputed the “touching faith” that Irwin and Hoare held in the Indian Liberal Party in order to attack the reforms process. The *Post* argued that “even if these Indian politicians had all the virtues which we have not noticed in our own, they have neither organisation nor hold in India.”¹¹⁰

The English press was unanimous in the belief that Indians were ultimately responsible for causing India’s problems and therefore accountable for solving them, underscoring the need for continued British rule. In the end, all sections of the press agreed that Indian progress depended entirely upon the capacity of Indian leaders for leadership and capability in exercising responsible government. The *Manchester Guardian*, for example, stated that Indians needed to resolve their own issues and seize the opportunities offered to them:

If the leaders of Indian opinion can settle their own differences and construct a policy which faces the facts of the situation they have to-day a wonderful opportunity.¹¹¹

There were difficulties to be overcome before Indian self-government could become a reality and Indian leaders “know them as well as the Viceroy or the Secretary of State. They are invited to co-operate in overcoming them.”¹¹² The *Herald* pleaded with Congress to set aside their obstructionist tactics and cooperate following the inaugural round table conference:

Is it too much to hope that the Congress leaders will respond to the hand of friendship held out to them? If they will cease their civil disobedience campaign, there will...be an amnesty. They will be invited to join in the final framing of the new Constitution that will give their country that very

¹⁰⁹ “Gandhi Climbs Down.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 27 Sept. 1932: 10b.

¹¹⁰ “The Spirit of Partners.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 18 Mar. 1933: 10b.

¹¹¹ “Indian Leadership.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 3 Feb. 1928: 10c.

¹¹² “India.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 8 Nov. 1929: 6a.

freedom for which they have been fighting.¹¹³

Churchill, writing in the *Daily Mail*, stated that India's progress toward Home Rule "depends upon the self-discipline and self-regeneration of the Indian peoples themselves."

Churchill added that British "faithful and friendly aid" will always be offered to Indians at every stage.¹¹⁴ If Indians refused to work with a constitution including safeguards "the choice will be theirs," the *Daily Telegraph* contended.¹¹⁵ Indians had the power, the *Economist* declared, to achieve their goals within their grasp, if only they would recognize that fact:

the constitution she demands and... the realisation of the dignity of status to which she aspires depends solely on the use to which she puts the tremendous responsibility entrusted to her hands.¹¹⁶

The *Economist* also held Gandhi personally accountable for determining India's future path:

upon [Gandhi's] shoulders now rests a tremendous responsibility. A future which will fulfil Indian ambitions is within India's grasp. Is it possible that Mr. Gandhi will deliberately choose to place impediments between the hand and the prize? Or...will he abandon the policy of obstruction which might spell years of disturbance, suffering and disappointment for millions of his fellow-countrymen... India's future lies in Indian hands.¹¹⁷

Lord Meston, in the *Sunday Times*, upbraided Indians for essentially excluding themselves from the Statutory Commission:

For this rebuff they have only themselves to blame. Time after time have they been invited...to show exactly what they want, to produce their own draft of a constitution. There has been plenty of tall talk, but no draft

¹¹³ "Britain's Pledge." Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 20 Jan. 1931: 8b.

¹¹⁴ Winston Churchill, "The Peril in India," *Daily Herald*, 16 Nov. 1929, 10c.

¹¹⁵ "Shaping India's New Constitution." Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 27 Dec. 1932: 6b.

¹¹⁶ "The Conference and the Future," *Economist*, 24 Jan. 1931: 155.

¹¹⁷ "An End and A Beginning," *Economist*, 5 Dec. 1931, 1051. See also "Indian Crossroads." Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 2 Dec. 1931: 8b, "The Pledge to India," *Spectator*, 5 Dec. 1931, 758, and "A Stage in a Process." Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 2 Dec. 1931: 8b.

constitution...It is the tragedy of Indian Nationalism that it so often misses its greatest opportunities.¹¹⁸

Truth concluded in imagery seemingly more suitable for a fairy tale: “we can do little without the good will of Indians. If that is forthcoming, then the road stretches clear before us, along which Indians and Britons can walk side by side towards the fulfilment of their common destiny.”¹¹⁹ The *Saturday Review* used Cinderella-like imagery in order to describe Dominion status and India. The *Review* stated that Dominion status was

not an incantation to be uttered by Britannia with a wave of her wand as the prelude to a transformation scene. It is the outward symbol of a conscious unity which India herself must achieve.¹²⁰

Truth, again, opted for rhetoric redolent of the folk tale and the trope of the young hero on a quest: “for better or worse India has attained its manhood; it must now show by acts -- and not by words as hitherto -- that it can acquit itself as a national unit.”¹²¹ *Truth* also claimed that the success or failure of the eventual India Act depended “on the loyalty and patriotism with which the various sections of Indian opinion work together for one common end.” *Truth* added with a hint of drama: “The hour of India’s opportunity has struck. Will her sons’ patriotism and brains rise to the argument?”¹²²

A key assumption, largely implicit, in the English press was that Congress was unrepresentative of all the varied peoples of the subcontinent. It viewed the Congress

¹¹⁸ Lord Meston, “India’s Constitution,” *Sunday Times*, 13 Nov. 1927, 16. Also see “Peace in India?” *Truth*, 11 Mar. 1931, 379, “India’s Constitution – The Next Step.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 2 Dec. 1931: 12b, “The Method of the Conference.” Editorial. *Times*. 2 Dec. 1931: 13b, “The Communal Award.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 17 Aug. 1932: 8b, “Indian Realities,” *Sunday Times*, 29 Nov. 1931, 16b and “The Indian Communal Award,” *Economist*, 20 Aug. 1932: 340.

¹¹⁹ “The Simon Solution for India,” *Truth*, 25 June 1930, 1111.

¹²⁰ “The Real Indian Problem,” *Saturday Review*, 12 Apr. 1930, 445.

¹²¹ “Farewell to the Conference,” *Truth*, 21 Jan. 1931, 82. See also “A New Plan for India,” *New Statesman & Nation*. 20 Aug. 1932, 196, “Decisions on India.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 17 Aug. 1932: 8b, “The White Paper.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 18 Mar. 1933: 10b.

¹²² “India’s Coming-of-Age,” *Truth*, 4 Jan. 1933, 14. Also see “Le Roy Le Veult,” *Economist*, 3 Aug. 1935: 220, “The India Debate.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 12 Feb. 1935: 8b, Scutator, “India Report Examined,” *Sunday Times*, 28 Nov. 1934, 18f.

Party as just a noisy minority that represented Western educated Hindus, a miniscule proportion of the Indian population. Congress catered only to its narrow interests and aimed to exalt Hindus over all the minorities of the subcontinent. The British Raj, therefore, was the true representative of the Indian masses because of its impartiality and commitment to Western justice. This argument was especially prominent when Congress declared itself in favor of complete independence and sent Gandhi as a delegate to the second session of the round table talks.

The *Saturday Review* described Congress, “the politically minded and educated,” as “merely a trivial part of the population numerically, but comprise the slave races of India as against the fighting races.”¹²³ Congress only represented “a small political interest to which the overwhelming majority of their fellow-subjects are absolutely indifferent,” the *Daily Express* claimed.¹²⁴ The *Daily Mail* also described Congress as “a handful of excited Nationalists who do not amount to 1 per cent. of their number.”¹²⁵ Churchill in the *Mail* contended that Dominion status

cannot be attained while the political classes in India represent only an insignificant fraction of the three hundred and fifty millions for whose welfare we are responsible.¹²⁶

The Congress Party only “represents an infinitesimal part of the Indian population,” the *Sunday Times* insisted.¹²⁷ The *Morning Post* portrayed Congress as “neither national or representative” and “it is not even elected by the small group of Western educated Hindus for which it stands...but the Mohammedans stand aloof.”¹²⁸

¹²³ “Muddling Through to Chaos,” *Saturday Review*, 24 Nov. 1934, 423.

¹²⁴ “Fear.” Editorial. *Daily Express*. 16 Sept. 1931: 10b.

¹²⁵ *Daily Mail* 4 Mar. 1930

¹²⁶ Winston Churchill, “The Peril in India,” *Daily Herald*, 16 Nov. 1929, 10c.

¹²⁷ “Plain Words About India.” Editorial. *Sunday Times*. 16 Mar. 1930: 16c.

¹²⁸ “The Failure of Funk.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 1 Jan. 1930: 8b. Also see “India and the Commission.”

Certain papers admitted that Congress was prominent and influential while also describing it as unrepresentative. The *New Statesman* depicted Congress as “a hotch potch of political extremists representing a mere handful of the population of India.” The *Statesman*, however, conceded that Gandhi “speaks for millions” and “he alone makes the Congress Party really important,”¹²⁹ while the *Economist* insisted that “the Congress represents no inconsiderable part” of politically active Indians.¹³⁰ In contrast, *Time & Tide* depicted Congress as a “non-representative group of extremist politicians,” but admitted that its cooperation would have to be secured in order to make the reforms process a success.¹³¹

More specifically, the English press universally viewed the Indian National Congress as the greatest obstacle to Indian self-government. The organization was branded, implicitly or explicitly, as solely composed of and representing the Hindus. The negative portrayal of Congress began with the naming of the Statutory Commission and its arrival in India. The *Times* claimed that non-inclusion of Indians on the commission was only a pretext for agitation.¹³² The *Daily Telegraph* criticized organizers of the boycott of the Commission for basing their actions upon misconceptions¹³³ and cautioned them to recollect “the grave disorder which in the past has attended the attempt to enforce such a proclamation by violence and threats.”¹³⁴ The boycott of the Commission, the *Sunday Times* stated, was “a hysterical agitation to no purpose” which would “only give the outside

Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 3 Feb. 1928: 8b, “Vague Talk in Cloudland.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 21 Jan. 1931: 8b and 13 Jan. 1930, and “Pathetic Contentment!” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 4 Feb. 1928: 10b.

¹²⁹ “Boycott the Boycotters,” *New Statesman*, 4 Jan. 1930, 408.

¹³⁰ “The Choice Before India,” *Economist*, 4 Jan. 1930: 3.

¹³¹ “Gandhi at the Conference,” *Time & Tide*, 19 Sept. 1931, 1078 and “Gandhi and India,” *Time & Tide*, 21 Feb. 1930, 226.

¹³² “India at the Crossroads.” Editorial. *Times*. 3 Feb. 1928: 13c.

¹³³ “India’s Constitution.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 9 Nov. 1927: 10c.

¹³⁴ “India and the Commission.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 3 Feb. 1928: 8d. The reference here is to the post-World War I noncooperation campaigns and the subsequent outbreaks of violence.

world reason to ask whether India is really fit for the liberty which she claims.”¹³⁵ In the *Sunday Times* Lord Meston contended that Parliament rightly excluded “extremists” from representation on the Commission as “the value of the Nationalists’ co-operation has been gauged by the consistently negative character of their own attitude.”¹³⁶ The *Manchester Guardian* charged the “Nationalists” with “a bankruptcy of leadership” for refusing to cooperate with the Simon Commission, which the paper described as a real opportunity of stating their case. The *hartal* was “a symptom of essential irresponsibility which cannot be ignored,” the *New Statesman* argued. The boycott only demonstrated “in a wholly gratuitous manner their unfitness for any further immediate installment of self-government.”¹³⁷ The Commission would receive, *Truth* predicted, a “torrent of Bengali abuse, which is the only form of criticism known to the *baboo*.”¹³⁸

The Irwin Declaration elicited little comment on how Indians reacted to the statement or how it would impact the nascent reforms process. Only three papers, the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Telegraph*, and *British Weekly* noted that Indian nationalists interpreted the declaration to guarantee immediate Dominion status, with the proposed conference to draft a constitution. The three papers chastised Indian leaders for purposefully misinterpreting the proclamation.¹³⁹ The *Manchester Guardian* and *Yorkshire Post* viewed the Viceroy’s declaration as letting Britain and India start the reforms process with a clean slate. The *Post* claimed that the statement outlined the path ahead and expressed hope that it “would restore to the saner Indian leaders their control of the movement and

¹³⁵ Lord Meston, “India’s Constitution,” *Sunday Times*, 13 Nov. 1927, 16.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ “Untitled,” *New Statesman*, 11 Feb. 1928, 549.

¹³⁸ “The Indian Commission,” *Truth*, 23 Nov. 1927, 942.

¹³⁹ Winston Churchill, “The Peril in India,” *Daily Mail*, 16 Nov. 1929, 10c, “India and Dominion Status.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 1 Nov. 1929: 10c and “The Crisis in India.” Editorial. *British Weekly*. 2 Jan. 1930: 12d.

enable them to moderate the hot-headed enthusiasm of ‘Young India.’”¹⁴⁰ The *Manchester Guardian* stated that Indian leaders had a new opportunity to change its tactics and cooperate with the British Government:

The method of stormy agitation has been tried out. It has achieved little but demoralisation...There is therefore some ground for hope that India’s educated class may...decide after all to swing away from those leaders who are inviting them to a course which may lead straight to violence and to try the effect of a few years of patient construction work within the Constitution.¹⁴¹

The English press met the Congress declaration of independence on 1 January 1930 with widespread criticism. The *Times* described the Lahore convention as essentially organized anarchy:

The scenes and speeches...the chaos amid which the Congress conducts its business, the wildly revolutionary sentiments of its orators, the resolute detachment of the Moslem minority...the half-hearted endorsement of violence and the universal contempt for practical progress.¹⁴²

The *Economist* also depicted the Congress meeting as “a picture of vociferous agitation and irresponsible enthusiasm in abundance; but certainly not one of a united national will or a constructive practical policy.”¹⁴³ The *New Statesman* agreed:

Congress is in no sense a representative assembly. A considerable proportion of the political leaders are there with their immediate followers, but as a whole its composition is extremely haphazard, and many of its ‘delegates’ are self-appointed, representing nobody but themselves...its decisions carry only a strictly limited authority and sometimes almost no authority.¹⁴⁴

The British Government would not be “hustled and bullied by threats of outrage” by Congress, the *Saturday Review* contended. It described the party as “powerful out of ratio

¹⁴⁰ “India’s Future.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*, 2 Nov. 1929: 10b.

¹⁴¹ “Lord Reading and the Indian Debate.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*, 6 Nov. 1929: 10b.

¹⁴² “Lahore and After.” Editorial. *Times*, 2 Jan. 1930: 13b.

¹⁴³ “The Choice Before India,” *Economist*, 4 Jan. 1930: 3.

¹⁴⁴ “Boycott the Boycotters,” *New Statesman*, 4 Jan. 1930, 408.

to its numbers; it has fired the imagination of young India widely and deeply; it has no hesitation in playing on the passions of the mob.”¹⁴⁵ The *Spectator* expressed hope that the results of the first round table conference would ultimately reconcile the Indian extremists. The paper believed that “a crumbling process will set in which will detach an increasing number of Indians from the extremist position. In the end that position will become untenable.”¹⁴⁶ The *Manchester Guardian* described the supporters of Congress as “inarticulate millions” and blind followers, while the *Morning Post* depicted the party as a criminal organization, unfit for running a self-governing India:

the leaders of [the Congress] Party and some twenty thousand of its deluded followers, are now in prison, either for breaking the law or incitement to break it...they have opposed every measure taken by the Government to suppress [murder and terrorism].¹⁴⁷

The pro-reform section of the English press, implicitly or explicitly, expressed hope that the reforms process would channel Congress into responsibility. This idea was best expressed by the *Daily Telegraph* in February 1935:

the Bill now before Parliament has forced Congress members to fight the elections and return to the Legislatures. For any section to stand aside would be to throw rule into the hands of its opponents. Self-government contains within itself the force that compels co-operation. Responsibility for legislation begets responsibility among the members of the Legislatures.¹⁴⁸

The Irwin declaration would guide millions of young Indians into “useful constructive

¹⁴⁵ Lord Meston, “The Crisis in India,” *Saturday Review*, 8 Mar. 1930, 286. See also *Daily Mail* 4 March 1930; J.L. Garvin, “A Vision of India,” *Observer*, 15 June 1930, 16c; “Simon Commission’s Report: A Masterly Survey of the Problem.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 10 June 1930: 8b.

¹⁴⁶ “Towards an Indian Constitution,” *Spectator*, 17 Jan. 1931, 68.

¹⁴⁷ “The Round Table and After.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 27 Dec. 1932: 8b and *Morning Post* 17 Nov. 1932. Also see “India.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 2 Jan 1930: 4a, “Mr. Gandhi’s New Policy,” *Spectator*, 4 Jan. 1930, 4, “Jephthah’s Daughter.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 14 June 1930: 10b and “Squaring the Round Table.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 20 Jan. 1931: 10b, “India in the Crucible,” *Truth*, 1 Jan. 1930, 12, and *Times* 15 Sept. 1931.

¹⁴⁸ “Political Evolution in India.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 7 Feb. 1935: 14c.

channels,” the *Yorkshire Post* anticipated.¹⁴⁹ The *Manchester Guardian* contended that Congress would ultimately decide to come into the reforms process and work the machinery of government “possibly in a hostile and even wrecking temper, but at least to work it...and finding some satisfaction in working it, forget, perhaps, that they had even wanted to wreck it.”¹⁵⁰ The *Manchester Guardian* declared with the Irwin-Gandhi Pact

Mr. Gandhi has the power to turn the forces he has so successfully used in opposition to the Government into creative channels. He has most effectively used the weapon of passive resistance; now it is for him to show that he can do as well with creative co-operation.¹⁵¹

The *Manchester Guardian* affirmed “the sooner the new Constitution can be got going and provide Indians with something to work for the sooner the spirit of non-cooperation will disappear.”¹⁵² It was the task of the British Government, the *Sunday Times* claimed, to turn “agitators into administrators, and so framing a constitution as to prevent disaster until responsibility sobers.”¹⁵³ The *Yorkshire Post* expressed hope that during the two years until the India Act went into effect in early 1937 it would be “time enough for Indian public opinion to take stock of the new position and, especially, of the vastly increased responsibilities which Indian public men must assume.”¹⁵⁴

Some sections of the English press expressed praise, if grudgingly given, for Congress. Lord Meston, writing in the *British Weekly*, praised Congress for its “driving-power, tenacity; and no constitutional scheme would be complete unless those qualities are enlisted in its service.” Meston hoped that these qualities were now “available for constructive, instead of destructive, patriotism” and in the end all depended

¹⁴⁹ “India’s Future.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 2 Nov. 1929: 10b.

¹⁵⁰ “The Round Table and After.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 27 Dec. 1932: 8b.

¹⁵¹ “The Truce in India.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 4 Mar. 1931: 8b.

¹⁵² “The Caravan Moves On.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 13 Dec. 1934: 10b.

¹⁵³ Scrutator, “India Report Examined,” *Sunday Times*, 25 Nov. 1934, 18d.

¹⁵⁴ “India’s New Constitution.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 3 Aug. 1935: 10b.

“on the sense of responsibility which the extremist leaders now display.”¹⁵⁵ The *Manchester Guardian* described Congress as the “largest and best-organised political movement in India.”¹⁵⁶ While Indian nationalism was not all pervasive, the *Sunday Times* claimed, the Congress minority was “entitled by intellect to very respectful consideration.”¹⁵⁷ Congress was “not solely composed of extremists” and would be influenced by the cooperation exemplified at the first round table conference, the *Times* admitted.¹⁵⁸ Even the anti-reform *Saturday Review* expressed grudging respect for Congress:

whether you like it or not, it is undeniable that the only effective political party in India to-day is the Congress Party. Like me you may have no sympathy with some of its actions, but neither can we forget its existence. It is definitely there, and future constitution makers have to reckon with the Indian Nationalists.¹⁵⁹

Gandhi and Congress often appeared in the British press as one and the same. British journalists depicted the Mahatma as the undisputed leader of the Congress Party and of Indian nationalism.¹⁶⁰ The *British Weekly* described Gandhi as having “a strong hold on the ignorant masses.”¹⁶¹ In its view “men of violence” used Gandhi’s “high reputation for their own desperate purposes.”¹⁶² The *Spectator* expressed fear that Gandhi was “letting loose forces which may pass entirely out of his control.”¹⁶³ Gandhi was an “unscrupulous agitator... guilty of conspiracy against the Government of India,” according

¹⁵⁵ Lord Meson, “Sunshine and Cloud in India,” *British Weekly*, 12 Mar. 1931, 483a.

¹⁵⁶ “Mr. Gandhi Comes to London.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 14 Sept. 1931: 8b.

¹⁵⁷ T. Earle Welby, “Problems of the Round Table,” *Sunday Times*, 20 Sept. 1931, 16e.

¹⁵⁸ “The Indian Conference.” Editorial. *Times*. 12 Nov. 1930: 15b.

¹⁵⁹ Sirdar Iqbal Ali Shah “Delusions of the Indian Conference,” *Saturday Review*, 15 Nov. 1930, 622.

¹⁶⁰ Only one paper, the *Times*, mentioned Nehru the younger. It described him as “the young Harrovian Communist” whose program, the *Times* prophesied, “can result in nothing but a series of revolutions and civil wars or else in an India permanently divided.” “Lahore and After.” Editorial. *Times*. 2 Jan. 1930: 13b.

¹⁶¹ “The Peril in India.” Editorial. *British Weekly*. 16 Jan. 1930: 343c.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ “Mr. Gandhi’s New Policy,” *Spectator*, 4 Jan. 1930, 4.

to *Truth*.¹⁶⁴ *Time & Tide* claimed that the “Gandhi-ites are playing with the high explosive of lawlessness, disorder and communal riots; and they know it.”¹⁶⁵ In 1930 the *Nation & Athenaeum* warned that Gandhi was traveling down the same disastrous road he trod in 1922:

That veteran saint (whose motives it is doubtless impious to analyze, but whose activities it may none the less be a duty to resist) has apparently once more convinced himself, in spite of bitter experience to the contrary in the past, that non-co-operation and non-violence are compatible terms. Can the hot-heads be sure that there will not be another orgy of penitence and self-disgust on his part when the blood begins to flow?¹⁶⁶

Many papers were particularly vicious in their condemnation of Gandhi and his tactics. The press commonly portrayed Gandhi as a “half-naked leader” armed with “Machiavellian craftiness,”¹⁶⁷ “fanaticism and impracticality,”¹⁶⁸ “a lunatic or a humbug,”¹⁶⁹ the “Oriental Pied Piper of Hamelin,” “the implacable enemy of the British in India;” or simply a “fanatic” and a “megalomaniac.”¹⁷⁰ More specifically, papers described Gandhi’s salt march as “partly childish” and “partly ecstatically fanatical,”¹⁷¹ “Gandhi’s war upon British authority,”¹⁷² a revolutionary act led by Gandhi “under his tattered flag of non-violence”¹⁷³ and the “first act of the ‘war of civil disobedience’ against

¹⁶⁴ “India in the Crucible,” *Truth*, 1 Jan. 1930, 12.

¹⁶⁵ “Gandhi and India,” *Time & Tide*, 21 Feb. 1930, 226.

¹⁶⁶ “Lahore and After,” *Nation & Athenaeum*, 4 Jan. 1930, 474. Also see “India,” *Spectator*, 15 Mar. 1930, 412, and *Times* 4 Mar. 1930

¹⁶⁷ “Untitled.” Editorial. *Daily Express*. 13 Mar. 1930: 10b.

¹⁶⁸ “The Viceroy’s Task.” Editorial. *Sunday Times*. 9 Mar. 1930: 16c.

¹⁶⁹ “The Great Soul on the March,” *Truth*, 12 Mar. 1930, 422.

¹⁷⁰ “The Round Table Adjourns,” *Saturday Review*, 24 Jan. 1931, 110, “Under the Mango Tree.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 26 Sept. 1932: 10b, and “Mr. Gandhi’s Threat,” *Time & Tide*, 17 Sept. 1932, 990.

¹⁷¹ “Gandhi’s Ultimatum.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 6 Mar. 1930: 8b.

¹⁷² “The Incendiary.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 6 Mar. 1930: 10b and “Yours Very Truly!” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 12 Mar. 1930: 10b.

¹⁷³ Lord Meston, “The Crisis in India,” *Saturday Review*, 8 Mar. 1930, 285.

the Government of India.”¹⁷⁴

The *Spectator* stated that there was no need for conflict between British authorities and Gandhi as “the goal Mr. Gandhi has proclaimed for India is the goal accepted, in everything but some secondary details, by the Government of Great Britain.” The paper added that “immense will be [Gandhi’s] responsibility if he refuses peace and chooses war now.”¹⁷⁵ *Truth* stated that Indians needed to renounce Gandhi and Congress in order to demonstrate their fitness to work the machinery of self-government.¹⁷⁶ Gandhi was the antithesis of a British statesman, according to *Time & Tide*, as he had “no gift for the kind of constructive work necessary for the working out of the new policy. His genius finds free play and spiritual refreshment only in obstructive or destructive agitations.”¹⁷⁷

The *Times* criticized Gandhi for his protest backed by the threat of suicide against the Communal Award.¹⁷⁸ It was a pity that Gandhi needed to put his life in danger in order to bring his fellow Hindus into agreement, the *Manchester Guardian* contended.¹⁷⁹ The *Daily Mail* expressed modest relief that Gandhi ended his fast following the Poona Pact, though claimed that “his influence is seldom used except to do mischief, and as a political leader he is almost invariably wrong.”¹⁸⁰ The *Yorkshire Post* praised Gandhi for accomplishing “something that many who know India judged to be impossible.” However, the *Post* added that Gandhi, by reviving civil disobedience, “showed himself to be once again a poor statesman and a worse judge of men and events.”¹⁸¹ *Truth* used the

¹⁷⁴ “Untitled.” Editorial. *Daily Express* 7 Mar. 1930: 10b.

¹⁷⁵ “The Pledge to India,” *Spectator*, 5 Dec. 1931, 758.

¹⁷⁶ “Gandhi’s Suicide Buffoonery,” *Truth*, 21 Sept. 1931, 429.

¹⁷⁷ “After the Indian Conference,” *Time & Tide*, 12 Dec. 1931, 1426.

¹⁷⁸ “Hinduism and Mr. Gandhi.” Editorial. *Times*. 28 Sept. 1932: 13c.

¹⁷⁹ “The Gandhi Agreement.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 26 Sept. 1932: 8c.

¹⁸⁰ “Gandhi Climbs Down.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 27 Sept. 1932: 10b.

¹⁸¹ “After the Fast.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 27 Sept. 1932: 8b.

opportunity of the Poona Pact to condemn Gandhi as a hypocrite: “in all the years that Gandhi has been prominent in British-Indian politics, though he has talked more than enough, he has not lifted a finger, or sacrificed one glass of goat’s milk, to lighten the lot of the Untouchables.”¹⁸² The *Economist* described the fast as “not only painful but also unreasonable” and disputed Gandhi’s claims to represent the Depressed Classes, stating that they had their own organization and representatives.¹⁸³ Gandhi was not a political prisoner but in jail because “he refused to dissociate himself from the law-breaking campaign of civil disobedience. He can release himself to-morrow morning if he will give a simple undertaking not to break the law again,” the *Daily Express* declared.¹⁸⁴

Many English papers on the pro-reform side of the debate actually expressed respect, if not outright praise, for Gandhi. However, any positive sentiment was usually coupled closely with criticism. The *Manchester Guardian* depicted Gandhi as having a “larger personal following than any other individual now alive in the world. His influence is the more remarkable in that it is based entirely on moral qualities...He is their prophet, the prophet of Indian nationalism.”¹⁸⁵ The *Daily Telegraph* depicted the Poona Pact as “a success that may have historic consequences.”¹⁸⁶ Gandhi’s salt march, the *Economist* claimed, would be seen as a farce if he was not “a man of unusual distinction.” However, the *Economist* also described him as “childish and irresponsible.”¹⁸⁷ The *Daily Herald* commended Gandhi but also contended he needed to change tactics:

Mr. Gandhi has shown in the past, amongst other qualities of greatness, a fine courage in realizing and avowing his own mistakes. He has now an

¹⁸² “Gandhi and the Untouchables,” *Truth*, 28 Sept. 1932, 465.

¹⁸³ “Mr. Gandhi’s Ultimatum,” *Economist*, 17 Sept. 1932: 495.

¹⁸⁴ “Should Gandhi Go Free.” Editorial. *Daily Express*. 29 Dec. 1932: 8b.

¹⁸⁵ “Mr. Gandhi Comes to London.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 14 Sept. 1931: 8b.

¹⁸⁶ “Shaping India’s New Constitution.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 27 Sept. 1932: 6b.

¹⁸⁷ “Mr. Gandhi on the March,” *Economist*, 29 Mar. 1930: 698.

opportunity of rendering another great service to his country by realizing that the wise policy... [is] co-operating with the British Government.¹⁸⁸

C.F. Andrews, one of the few dissenting voices expressed in the British press, writing in the *Nation & Athenaeum*, criticized the Simon Report because it was hostile to Gandhi.

He claimed that the report

entirely fails to realize how his supreme personality has moulded and fashioned the Indian nation which is now coming to birth and has restored Indian national courage...Mr. Gandhi is regarded by the Commissioners throughout almost as an intruder, whose only object is to upset the best-laid constructive political reforms which the British Government has to offer.¹⁸⁹

The picture the English press painted of India was one of a country unable to rule itself and in need of British tutelage. India was depicted as fundamentally different from the West and unlike any other dominion in the empire. The divide between Hindus and Muslims loomed wide. All sides of the press agreed that the Congress Party and Gandhi were unrepresentative of India as a whole. Coupled with the overwhelming positive view of the British imperial mission, the negative portrayal of India and Indians would seem to lead to the press to oppose the reforms process across the board. However, as will be seen in the next two chapters, the majority of the English press supported the reforms process.

¹⁸⁸ "India." Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 2 Jan. 1930: 4a.

¹⁸⁹ C.F. Andrews, "What India Resents," *Nation & Athenaeum*, 21 June 1930, 368.

Chapter 5

Fulfilling or Scrapping the Imperial Mission? Views of the Reforms Process, 1927-March 1931

We are satisfied that Lord Irwin, one of the best Viceroys who have ever presided over India, did not point to the inevitable destination of the Indian reforms without very good reason. As the man on the spot he had a better opportunity than anybody else to judge the opportuneness of his words.

■ “The Indian ‘Crisis,’” *Spectator*, 9 Nov. 1929, 653.

We cannot give democracy and self-government to India. We have got to force it upon her and force it in our own way, listening to those over there who are willing to co-operate with us in our self-imposed task, but paying no attention whatever to those who are not.

■ “Boycott the Boycotters,” *New Statesman*, 4 Jan. 1930, 409.

The Viceroy’s statement, intended to mean nothing here at home, was intended to mean – or to be taken as meaning – a great deal in India. Lord Irwin, with the best intentions, has been betrayed into a piece of opportunism that has, or will have when its true character is understood, seriously damaged the prestige of the British *Raj* in the eyes of a people that is already suspicious.

■ “Notes of the Week,” *Saturday Review*, 16 Nov. 1929, 569.

As the previous two chapters have demonstrated, the English press firmly believed in the British imperial mission and held negative views of India and its peoples. Nevertheless, by August 1935, the majority of papers supported the reform measures. Granted, they still viewed the process as a tremendous risk; success for the most part depended upon Indians finding their sense of responsibility. In the end, the pro-reform press calculated that the gamble was worth taking, often citing the precedent of Ireland as an example of the dangers of withholding reforms too long.

The argument over the reforms process terminating with the India Act of 1935 came down to a basic idea in respect to the British imperial mission. The pro-reform section of the English press contended that the reforms were the culmination of the imperial mission: the reforms would allow the Indians finally to demonstrate their responsibility and knowledge of self-government imparted by their tutors. The reforms

would solidify India's position within the British Empire based on mutual cooperation and respect. The diehards, however, argued that the reforms repudiated the imperial mission: Britain was shirking its duties to provide just rule to the subcontinent and its many divided races and creeds. The reforms would lead to inevitable disaster: chaos on the subcontinent, the dissolution of the empire, and ultimately the ruin of Britain. Diehards recommended slowing the reforms process to a glacial pace, if not a dead stop. The impetus for moving forward should originate with Indians and not be imposed by Britain. Both pro-reformers and diehards saw their solution as the salvation of India and the empire and regarded their opponents' resolution as guaranteed ruin for India and Britain as well.

The diehards were an amorphous group of parliamentarians, aristocrats, former members of the Indian Government and Indian Civil Service, and former military officers. Notables included Winston Churchill, Lord Rothermere, Lord Carson, Rudyard Kipling, Lord Meston and Lord Sydenham. They were united in their desire to keep India firmly within the British Empire. Diehards spawned two lobbying organizations to promote their cause: the Indian Empire Society, formed in 1930, and the Indian Defence League, founded in June 1933, growing out of the Parliamentary India Defence Committee. Former members of the Government of India, such as provincial governors, dominated the former group while parliamentarians directed the latter organization, comprising fifty-seven MP's and twenty-eight peers.

To complicate the situation there was also a third group, that I have labeled the British moderates, that floated in between the reformers and diehards. The British moderates supported the reforms process but also called for a more strict enforcement of law and order in India, particularly against Congress. This group, which included

defectors from the anti-reform side (the *Spectator*, *New Statesman*, *Sunday Times*, and *Truth*) did not criticize Irwin though it seemed to disagree with his conciliatory policies.

The British moderates justified their call for a crackdown by reasoning that only the extremists and law breakers would receive the brunt of British justice while the loyal masses would be unaffected by such measures. Somewhat unexpected was the lengths that many British moderate papers were willing to go to impose reform by force, if necessary. The pro-reform papers were willing to trust the “men on the spot” as the best to deal with unrest on the subcontinent. The diehard papers assumed that harsh discipline was just a matter of course in the empire; Britain had authority and needed to exercise it.

Although the reforms process began in 1927, the press did not even begin to consider the reforms policy as an ongoing process until the Irwin Declaration in 1929. The views of the reforms on both sides were inextricably tied to the negative view of Indians and British domestic politics. From 1929 through March 1931 the debate can best be described as a clash between Irwinism and the diehard thesis, between concessions and repression:

The Viceroy...has become a bone of contention at Westminster and in the Press, some saying openly that this idealistic, conscience-controlled Cecilian is leading India towards a grave effusion of blood, while others approve his attitude and declare that England will agree to the demand for self-government. On the whole, the outlook is not reassuring.¹

Hence, while the *Daily Herald* claimed that the Irwin Declaration changed the political situation overnight and converted “a dangerous situation . . . into one more hopeful than has existed for many long months,”² the *Daily Mail* regarded the Declaration as a repeat of

¹ “The Indian Situation,” *Time & Tide*, 24 Jan. 1930, 94.

² “India.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 5 Nov. 1929: 6a.

“the disastrous policy of 1919” in which the Government of India gave in “to their avowed enemies instead of enforcing the law against those who announce their intention of breaking it.”³

The *Economist*, *Daily Herald*, *Manchester Guardian*, and *Times* described the Viceroy’s statement as a fresh reassurance to Indians, a reaffirmation of British policy towards India laid down by Montagu twelve years earlier. Irwin’s statement was

a clear announcement to the people of India that the purpose and object of the Government’s India policy are identical with those have been repeatedly affirmed by their own political leaders.⁴

Answering the critics who contended that the declaration might be misinterpreted, the *Economist* stated that immediate Dominion status was not Irwin’s intention.⁵ The *Times* also expressed optimism about the Irwin Declaration. It stated, referring to the conference proposal, that “the atmosphere is better because a fresh door has been opened to cooperation.”⁶ The *Times* expressed regret at the choice of the words “dominion status” but reminded its readers that the words had been used before, by such notables as Montagu and Lords Reading and Birkenhead.⁷

The pro-declaration section of the English press also shrugged off any claims that the Viceroy had failed to treat the Simon Commission with respect as without substance.⁸ The *Nation & Athenaeum*, for example, claimed that the authority of the Statutory Commission was not impaired by the Viceroy’s declaration, as the Commission was “not

³ Sir Michael O’Dwyer, “Government and Indian Extremists,” *Daily Mail*, 4 Nov. 1929, 19b.

⁴ “India.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 1 Nov. 1929: 6a.

⁵ “The Indian Problem in Parliament,” *Economist*, 9 Nov. 1929, 856.

⁶ “The Indian Reaction.” Editorial. *Times*. 8 Nov. 1929: 10b.

⁷ “The Ultimate Goal.” Editorial. *Times*. 1 Nov. 1929: 10b.

⁸ “India.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 8 Nov. 1929: 10b.

concerned...with the ultimate goal of our policy in India.”⁹ The *Spectator* praised Irwin as “one of the best Viceroys who have ever presided over India:” such a man “did not point to the inevitable destination of the Indian reforms without very good reason.”

These papers also hailed Irwin’s call for a round table conference. The *Spectator* not only welcomed the proposal for the round table conference but argued it was the most important part of the Viceroy’s declaration.¹⁰ The *Observer* contended that there was no dispute over the final goal of self-government for India but only over “the rate and tempo of progress.”¹¹ As early as 1929 the *Manchester Guardian* warned of the risks of withholding reforms from India: “the growth of a national spirit make it unsafe for the British Parliament to seek to prolong indefinitely its present control over India.”¹²

The majority of the press, however, disparaged the Viceroy’s declaration as well-meaning but fundamentally misguided and guaranteed to damage “the prestige of the British *Raj* in the eyes of a people that is already suspicious.”¹³ *Truth*, for example, described the Viceroy’s actions as “mischievous” but stated that “no doubt his intentions were the best.”¹⁴ The *Daily Telegraph* contended that the Viceroy’s gamble to corral Congress into cooperation would not pay off: “if the Government and Lord Irwin hoped to ameliorate an anxious situation in India...they are likely to be disappointed.”¹⁵ The *New Statesman* insisted that nationalist Indians would misunderstand the vague phrase

⁹ G.T. Garratt, “A New Phase in India,” *Nation & Athenaeum*, 9 Nov. 1929, 195.

¹⁰ “The Indian ‘Crisis,’” *Spectator*, 9 Nov. 1929, 652. See also “The Ultimate Goal.” Editorial. *Times*. 1 Nov. 1929: 10b. and “India and Dominion Status.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 1 Nov. 1929: 10c.

¹¹ J.L. Garvin, “India and the Crisis,” *Observer*, 3 Nov. 1929, 16c.

¹² “The New Prospect for India.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 1 Nov. 1929: 10b.

¹³ “Notes of the Week,” *Saturday Review*, 16 Nov. 1929, 569.

¹⁴ “Lord Irwin and Mr. Benn,” *Truth*, 13 Nov. 1929, 829. See also “The India Debate.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 6 Nov. 1929: 10b.

¹⁵ “India and Dominion Status.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 1 Nov. 1929: 10c. The *Morning Post* opposed the declaration but only in terms of its negative view of Indians (as seen in the last chapter) and concern with British domestic politics (that will be demonstrated in the penultimate chapter).

“Dominion status” to mean immediate self-government and, moreover, that “Lord Irwin must have known that it would be taken that way in India and must have intended that it should be.”¹⁶

Many papers opposed Irwin’s declaration on the grounds that it undermined the Simon Commission. The *Saturday Review* suggested that the British Government wait for the committee to give its report as the commissioners may or may not see Dominion status for India as feasible. The paper contended that the Government needed to choose between the commission and the declaration.¹⁷ The *Daily Express* declared that the Simon Commission opposed the Viceroy’s statement and claimed that the commission, being a statutory one named by all parties of Parliament, was more important than the Viceroy.¹⁸ The *Sunday Times* criticized the British Government as tactless for the declaration impinged on the authority of the Statutory Commission. The *Sunday Times* claimed the statement was a *fait accompli* and that the Viceroy “urged the step upon the Government.”¹⁹

Others, however, did not see a conflict between Irwin’s Declaration and the Commission. The *Daily Telegraph* depicted the declaration as “a departure from the course of prudence” but agreed with the *Yorkshire Post* that the Viceroy’s use of the phrase Dominion status “was not intended, and could not be intended, to cut the ground from under the feet of the Simon Commission.”²⁰

¹⁶ “Lord Irwin’s Blunder,” *New Statesman*, 9 Nov. 1929, 148. Also see “Untitled,” *New Statesman*, 2 Nov. 1929, 109, and “The Riddle of India,” *Time & Tide*, 8 Nov. 1929, 1828.

¹⁷ “Notes of the Week,” *Saturday Review*, 9 Nov. 1929, 530. Also see “Notes of the Week,” *Saturday Review*, 2 Nov. 1929, 498.

¹⁸ “The Political Situation Boils Over,” *Daily Express*, 2 Nov. 1929, 1a.

¹⁹ “Red Herrings and Realities: The Indian Crisis,” *Sunday Times*, 3 Nov. 1929, 165.

²⁰ “India’s Future.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 2 Nov. 1929: 10b. Also see “The Future of India.” Editorial.

This tug-of-war between the Irwin Declaration and the Simon Commission turned out to be meaningless when Congress declined Irwin's offer and opted for a declaration of independence, made at their Lahore conference on 31 December 1929. Opponents of the declaration claimed that the Viceroy's statement led directly to the Congress pronouncement for independence; supporters of Irwin disputed that contention. This dispute was best summed up by the *Nation & Athenaeum*:

There will be some who hold that had the Viceroy's pronouncement not been subjected to criticism in Parliament it might have reaped its full fruits in the adhesion of the Congress leaders to the plan of a round-table-conference. There will be others to maintain that this pronouncement itself, by raising false hopes and expectations, was among the causes that precipitated the Congress into its act of perilous madness.²¹

The British moderates did not blame Irwin for Congress's declaration but did call for a tougher stance, though they were careful to differentiate their conception of law and order from old-fashioned repression.

Criticism of the Irwin Declaration persisted into January 1930, reignited by the Congress declaration of independence. The *British Weekly* and *Saturday Review* argued that the independence declaration resulted from Congress' misinterpretation of the Irwin declaration while *Time & Tide* and *Daily Mail* contended that the Viceroy's attempt to appease the Indian nationalists had failed miserably. The *British Weekly* sniffed that Lord Irwin "probably regrets that he did not guard his words more carefully" now that Congress had taken his reference to dominion status to mean self-government.²² The *Saturday Review* also blamed the "well-intentioned error of the now famous Viceregal declaration"

British Weekly. 7 Nov. 1929: 203d.

²¹ "Lahore and After," *Nation & Athenaeum*, 4 Jan. 1930, 474.

²² "The Peril in India." *British Weekly*. Editorial. 16 Jan. 1930: 141d.

for pushing Congress into a policy of complete independence.²³ *Time & Tide* was far less generous: Irwin “no doubt knew what was in the wind when he declared dominion status to be India’s goal...the time and manner of his statement invested it with significance that could hardly have been unintentional.”²⁴ The *Daily Mail* contended that the Irwin declaration which “was taken by Hindus as promising a grant of Dominion status to India, has not appeased the extremists but only whetted their appetite for mischief.”²⁵ The *Morning Post* did not mention Lord Irwin by name but blamed the conciliatory policy of the Government of India, a policy that not only failed to placate Congress but encouraged revolution: “British authority might almost be said to have abdicated, since it permits to pass such insults and challenges to its prestige and power.” The *Post* claimed that if Congress achieved its goal of independence “there would be civil war, anarchy, endless dole for the Indian people, as in those times before we governed India.”²⁶ Lloyd George, writing in the *Daily Mail*, presented the choices for the British in India in Manichean terms: “Shall we abandon our Empire in the East, or do we intend to stand by our undoubted responsibilities whatever the hazard or cost?”²⁷

The *Economist* was the only paper to defend Irwin at this time by stating that the Viceroy made his declaration with “the hope that his great influence might be used to help India in her peaceful progress along the road of political self-realisation.”²⁸ The paper also took the larger view of the reforms process and why it should proceed in spite of the Congress declaration:

²³ “The Crisis in India,” *Saturday Review*, 4 Jan. 1930, 4.

²⁴ “The Indian Problem,” *Time & Tide*, 3 Jan. 1930, 1.

²⁵ “Mr. Baldwin and India.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 2 Jan. 1930: 8b.

²⁶ “The Failure of Funk.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 1 Jan. 1930: 8b.

²⁷ *Daily Mail* 13 Jan. 1930

²⁸ “The Choice Before India,” *Economist*, 4 Jan. 1930, 3.

The promise of 1917 was made by a country grateful for the assistance of India during the war and convinced that political freedom is the only tolerable condition for nations. It is a thought still far from the mind of the British nation that it is possible for a free country such as ours to continue to hold in political subjection, indefinitely against its will, a vast country such as India.²⁹

Without mentioning the Viceroy, the *Manchester Guardian* and *Times* supported the reforms in spite of the Congress declaration. The *Manchester Guardian* attributed the reforms process to Montagu, not Irwin, and highlighted the difficulties that needed to be overcome on the road to self-government. In spite of the difficulties the *Guardian* advocated accelerating the process with the “Montagu scheme for the gradual transfer of the functions of government piecemeal” as the most practicable method.³⁰ There was nothing new or surprising in the actions of Congress, the *Times* claimed, and therefore it should not “deflect in the slightest degree the course of British policy.”³¹

The *Spectator*, switching from the anti-reform to moderate stance, strangely took the view that the reforms process must carry on although with increasingly enforced order and regulation; essentially Britain is going to impose more self-government with an iron fist whether the Indians liked it or not:

Great Britain must... behave ‘firmly’; but we use that word not in its earlier bad sense of suppression as a sufficient policy in itself, but in the sense of consistency in keeping the real objective in view. The real objective is that the peoples of India shall be brought without unnecessary delay to the state in which they shall be recognized as a community in all respects equal to the great self-governing Dominions of the British Commonwealth.³²

The *Spectator* sought to differentiate the limits of law and order to protect law abiding subjects and punishing terrorists. It stated that “law must never lapse into restrictions and

²⁹ “The Choice Before India,” *Economist*, 4 Jan. 1930, 3.

³⁰ “The Moderates’ Chance.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 4 Jan. 1930: 8c.

³¹ “Lahore and After.” Editorial. *Times*. 2 Jan 1930: 13c.

³² “Mr. Gandhi’s New Policy,” *Spectator*, 4 Jan. 1930, 4.

repressions which become vexatious and provocative. Freedom to express political opinions must be distinguished from freedom to do evil deeds.”³³ This sentiment was echoed by the *New Statesman*. Until the goal of forcing self-government upon India had been achieved: “We must continue really to govern India until we have taught her to govern herself... we must continue to show her what government means.”³⁴ Britain should pursue the reforms process, working with those willing to cooperate, and ignoring “such exhibitions of political irresponsibility and extravagance as have been given by the Congress.”³⁵ The *Times*, *Sunday Times*, and *Daily Herald* also linked the reforms process with a strict enforcement of the law:

so far as this country is concerned, there can be no more question of going back upon it than there is of tolerating the anarchy which the Congress both preaches and illustrates in its own affairs.³⁶

Truth called for harsh measures to be taken against Congress as Gandhi and his supporters were guilty of conspiracy versus the Government of India and Britain:

The time has come to call a halt. We have reached...the limits of concession...they should be dealt with as conspirators. If strong measures are not taken, and taken quickly, the firebrands will set India ablaze, and the conflagration will only be quenched at great cost in lives and misery.³⁷

Irwin’s conciliatory policies in India came under great scrutiny during Gandhi’s salt march in March 1930. The big question at this time revolved around whether or not to arrest Gandhi. Supporters of the Viceroy argued that ignoring Gandhi would lead to his march and movement to peter out on its own. Arresting Gandhi would only turn him into

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ “Boycott the Boycotters,” *New Statesman*, 4 Jan. 1930, 408.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ “Lahore and After.” Editorial. *Times*. 2 Jan 1930: 13c. See also Lord Meston, “The Indian Irreconcilables,” *Sunday Times*, 5 Jan. 1930, 12f and “India.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 2 Jan. 1930: 4a.

³⁷ “India in the Crucible,” *Truth*, 1 Jan. 1930, 12.

a martyr and lead to native resistance and bloodshed. Irwin's detractors contended that his policy was one of weakness that would only encourage the extremists to plot further troubles that invariably led to violence. Only a firm crackdown on Gandhi and his followers and a stern enforcement of the law would end the latest civil disobedience movement and engender loyalty to the Raj amongst Indians.

The pro-reform section of the English press grew during the salt march. The *Yorkshire Post* praised the Viceroy for his conciliatory policy and claimed that the British people supported him and his policy:

Lord Irwin's policy throughout his Viceroyalty has been to endeavour to enlist moderate opinion against the Gandhi methods, in the hope that sane Indian opinion would perceive that in co-operation and collaboration lies India's route to self-government. It is not denied that he has met with considerable success, and it obviously cannot be denied that in that policy he has behind him the weight of public opinion in this country. If his policy now put to the test has its deserved success Gandhi's highly dramatised march to the coast will have such little political effect...that it will need no repression.³⁸

The *Times* and *Daily Telegraph* defended Irwin as he was the "man on the spot." The *Telegraph* reasoned that since the Viceroy had not arrested Gandhi he would be "amply justified" as "he regards the situation as well in hand" while the *Times* contended that "those who are directly responsible for public order" were better qualified to deal with Gandhi and his disciples than critics in Britain who lacked direct knowledge of the subcontinent.³⁹ The prompt arrest of Gandhi would not end the agitation in India as Irwin's critics propounded. The Viceroy's detractors did not understand "the psychology of the Hindu masses:" Gandhi's disciples would follow him into prison if Gandhi were

³⁸ "Gandhi's March." Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 17 Mar. 1930: 8b.

³⁹ "Mr. Gandhi's Wild Threat." Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 3 Mar. 1930: 10b and "The Reply to Mr. Gandhi." Editorial. *Times*. 8 Mar. 1930: 13b.

imprisoned.⁴⁰ The *Spectator* attempted to rally its readers to support the Viceroy while chiding his detractors: “The Viceroy deserves the support of all Englishmen and the very careful restraint of those who are his critics.”⁴¹ Gandhi, the *Economist* claimed, was seeking martyrdom and therefore courted arrest. The paper praised the Government of India for not playing into Gandhi’s hands.⁴² *Time & Tide*, jumping to the pro-reform side of the debate, backed the Viceroy for following the correct course of not arresting Gandhi.⁴³

Many papers in the moderate camp remained unswayed by the pro-reform arguments during Gandhi’s march. The *Daily Herald* supported the enforcement of law and order “but law and order respected by a people that feels itself free. Not law and order based on fear and impression.” The *Herald* regarded repression as the Birkenhead and Rothermere way and concluded that “official terrorism is as wrongheaded as it is wicked.”⁴⁴ The *Manchester Guardian* equivocated over how to deal with Gandhi and the salt march. The *Guardian* feared that anything could happen if Gandhi was allowed to pursue his goals unchecked yet expressed caution that “the friction generated in restraining his activities” may excite violence in explosive areas of the country. The paper rode the fence in expressing hope “that the Government of India will hit upon the right admixture of firmness and discretion -- the mixture so easy to prescribe in words, so difficult to arrive at in action.”⁴⁵ In spite of its hedging, the *Manchester Guardian* condemned the institution of imperialism: “The rule of one country by another is and is now felt to be a monstrous and

⁴⁰ “The Reply to Mr. Gandhi.” Editorial. *Times*. 8 Mar. 1930: 13b.

⁴¹ “India,” *Spectator*, 15 Mar. 1930, 412.

⁴² “Mr. Gandhi on the March,” *Economist*, 29 Mar. 1930, 698.

⁴³ “Indian Affairs,” *Time & Tide*, 18 Apr. 1930, 494.

⁴⁴ “India.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 11 Mar. 1930: 4a.

⁴⁵ “Gandhi, the Princes, and India.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 4 Mar. 1930: 10b.

indefensible system.”⁴⁶

Three of the four English moderate papers, the *Sunday Times*, *New Statesman & Nation*, and *Truth* continued to support the reforms process while criticizing the Irwin conciliation methods, though the *Statesman* and *Truth* would later withdraw their calls for the arrest of Gandhi. The *Sunday Times* rode the fence during the salt march: the paper supported the reforms process in general, blamed the Irwin declaration for stirring up the extremists, and called for sterner measures:

There is only one way to deal with this kind of thing, and that is to oppose it firmly and put it down. There can be no compromise in a matter of this sort... Britain is full of good will to India, and is proving it by her policy of reforms; but the tactics of the extremists are bound, if they persist, to make her enforce her will absolutely. Lawlessness can only be met by rigid enforcement of the law.⁴⁷

The *Sunday Times* wanted the policy of reforms to move forward but did not want Britain bullied into “ill-considered concessions” by the extremists.⁴⁸ The *New Statesman & Nation* also equivocated over the best course of action in dealing with the salt march. Initially the paper stated that Gandhi’s arrest, followed by the incarceration of other Congress leaders, would lead to the collapse of the whole movement. Perhaps to justify its own stance, the *Statesman* claimed that some Indians called for harsher methods against Gandhi: “In certain quarters in India, both British and Moslem, there is a cry for swift and comprehensive measures of repression.”⁴⁹ However, at the conclusion of the march the paper seemed to countenance the Viceroy’s tactics in dealing with Gandhi: “The Mahatma, instead of being a martyr, has become slightly ridiculous, and the inevitable effect of that

⁴⁶ “Gandhi and the Viceroy.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 12 Mar. 1930: 10b.

⁴⁷ “Plain Words About India,” *Sunday Times*, 16 Mar. 1930, 16b.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ “Untitled,” *New Statesman*, 15 Mar. 1930, 725. Also see “Untitled,” *New Statesman*, 8 Mar. 1930, 689.

has been to weaken his campaign.”⁵⁰ *Truth* also advocated the immediate arrest of Gandhi as the paper equated civil disobedience with rebellion which would inevitably lead to violence. Gandhi’s arrest would lead to the abrupt collapse of the entire movement and nip any trouble in the bud.⁵¹ Gandhi was a “megalomaniac,” according to *Truth*, and if he were able to carry out his plans “there is no limit to the harm he might do by inciting the inflammable and ignorant masses to resist the Government.”⁵² However, a week later the paper rescinded its request to have Gandhi incarcerated; instead the paper stated that “he should be put under medical, not penal, restraint” as he was suffering from “*folie de grandeur*.”⁵³ Of the moderate papers only the *Sunday Times* and *Truth* attacked Irwin for policies that Indians were bound to misread as British weakness.⁵⁴

The diehard press remained recalcitrant in its negative opinion of the Viceroy, his tactics, and the reforms process. The *Daily Mail* condemned the Viceroy for not arresting Gandhi especially after Gandhi’s ultimatum. The *Mail* denounced Irwinism in its entirety:

The latest performance of Lord Irwin...has deepened the impression of weakness produced by his notorious proclamation of last October, with its foolish talk of Dominion status for India. His proclamation, as the world knows, has since been exploited in every possible way by the seditious and disloyal. But the Viceroy has even now not learned wisdom... Thus does Lord Irwin continue the tradition of timid surrender to the extremists which he has set up, and thus does he show his complete incapacity to deal firmly with a grave situation.⁵⁵

The people of Britain wanted Gandhi arrested for effectively declaring war on British

⁵⁰ “Untitled,” *New Statesman*, 12 Apr. 1930, 1.

⁵¹ “Gandhi’s Latest Threat,” *Truth*, 5 Mar. 1930, 379.

⁵² “The Great Soul on the March,” *Truth*, 12 Mar. 1930, 422.

⁵³ “Goosey-Goosey-Gandhi,” *Truth*, 19 Mar. 1930, 481.

⁵⁴ “The Great Soul on the March,” *Truth*, 12 Mar. 1930, 422 and “The Viceroy’s Task.” Editorial. *Sunday Times*. 9 Mar. 1930: 16c.

⁵⁵ “Yours Very Truly!” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 12 Mar. 1930: 10b.

authority.⁵⁶ The *Mail* was stringent in its advice regarding Irwin's policies in general: "*the policy of surrender to the extremists in India must stop.*"⁵⁷ The *Morning Post* echoed the *Mail*'s advocacy of harsh repression against Gandhi and condemning Irwin's appeasement policy. Extremists plotted rebellion and burnt the Union Jack

while Lord Irwin has confined himself to strong words and the occasional prosecution of subordinates. This is to repeat the disastrous policy of Lord Chelmsford and if the results are similar the Indian Government and the British Government will have themselves to blame.⁵⁸

Similarly, Lord Meston, writing in the *Saturday Review*, criticized the Viceroy for his high and mighty language about peace and order while "the Union Jack is being pulled down, the red flag hoisted, Independence Day proclaimed, and preparations made for widespread breaches of the peace and a general defiance of the law."⁵⁹

The argument over the reforms intensified when the Statutory Commission, after nearly three years work, issued its report in June 1930. The pro-reform papers in general praised the Simon Report, with one glaring exception. The unanimity of the Commissioners in issuing their recommendations, the *Times* contended, meant that there should be no dispute in Britain over "the essential features of the problem to be solved."⁶⁰ Lord Peel, writing in the *Sunday Times*, praised the commissioners for framing their recommendations in the report "in a spirit of genuine sympathy" with the hopes, claims, and aspirations of Indian public men. The paper also described the transplanting of Western parliamentary institutions into India as "a daring constitutional effort" and

⁵⁶ "The Incendiary." Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 6 Mar. 1930: 10b.

⁵⁷ "Weakness in India." Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 17 Mar. 1930: 12b.

⁵⁸ "Rebels by Permission." Editorial. *Morning Post*. 3 Mar. 1930: 10c.

⁵⁹ Lord Meston, "The Crisis in India," *Saturday Review*, 8 Mar. 1930, 285.

⁶⁰ "The Importance of Unanimity." Editorial. *Times*. 10 June 1930: 15b.

commended the commissioners for adapting them to their new home.⁶¹ While the *Nation & Athenaeum* supported the reforms, it criticized the Statutory Report for not going far enough:

The Report as a whole is exactly what might have been expected from a group of able politicians viewing India from the British standpoint...it is clear that the Commissioners are not specially endowed with sympathetic understanding or imaginative insight. They may give us sound advice on the machinery of government but if the active co-operation of Indian leaders is to be secured, it must be through the Round Table Conference.⁶²

Some papers supported the reforms policy without giving explicit countenance or censure to the report. Many of them placed the burden of progress on Indians to develop responsibility. The *New Statesman & Nation* supported the reforms policy, albeit through the Indian moderates, by stating that repression of Indian opponents of reform as the only dire alternative. The *Statesman* suggested a constitution “which the reasonable elements in the body of Indian nationalism will accept” or Britain should be prepared to govern in the face of active and passive resistance. It concluded that “sooner or later this will lead to the breakdown of peaceful government and the rule of the sword.”⁶³ The *Spectator*’s main concern was over the issue of Dominion status for India. Dominion status had been promised and there “can be no going back upon that pledge of British intention.”⁶⁴ However, the *Spectator* argued that Dominion status was not a concrete thing that could be granted but instead a “condition of co-operative independence within the British Commonwealth which has been achieved by the people of a Dominion themselves.”⁶⁵ The *British Weekly*, too, put the onus of responsibility for moving forward with the reforms

⁶¹ Lord Peel, “The Remaking of India,” *Sunday Times*, 29 June 1930, 16f.

⁶² “The Simon Report,” *Nation & Athenaeum*, 14 June 1930, 338.

⁶³ “The Simon Proposals,” *New Statesman*, 28 June 1930, 356.

⁶⁴ “The Simon Report,” *Spectator*, 14 June 1930, 964.

⁶⁵ “The Federation of India,” *Spectator*, 28 June 1930, 1036.

after the report upon Indians. The Simon Report closed no doors or fixed any barriers against India gaining autonomy within the empire, the *British Weekly* claimed. The pace of reform depended “entirely upon the good will and responsibility of all parties,” a scarcely veiled reference to the Congress party.⁶⁶

Some papers preferred to equivocate over the Simon Report. Both the *Economist* and *Manchester Guardian* supported the reforms by contending that the report split the extremes and offered a middle course between them. The document would be unsatisfying to those who hoped for a shortcut to responsible government, the *Economist* argued, and also those who advocated autocracy as the best method of rule for India. The paper claimed the Simon Report advocated a solution adapted to India’s special circumstances.⁶⁷ The *Manchester Guardian* stated that the Simon Report offered no “encouragement to those who think it possible to demonstrate that the people or peoples of India are permanently incapable of self-government.” But the report also dashed the hopes of those who wished to see British rule withdrawn immediately “by the mere use of the words Dominion status.”⁶⁸ *Truth* appeared to support the Commission’s Report but contended little could be accomplished without the support of Indians. However, it is difficult to decipher the paper’s views of the reforms process: “The Simon Report is a guarantee that we intend to proceed in the future as we have acted in the past.”⁶⁹ The *New Statesman* refuted Lord Rothermere and the *Morning Post*, which wanted to abandon all political advance in India, by claiming that the Simon Report declared “the Diehard creed

⁶⁶ “The Simon Report on India.” Editorial. *British Weekly*. 26 June 1930: 255c.

⁶⁷ “The Indian Commission – Survey,” *Economist*, 14 June 1930: 1315.

⁶⁸ “The Simon Report.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 10 June 1930: 10b.

⁶⁹ “The Simon Solution for India,” *Truth*, 25 June 1930, 1111.

is dead.”⁷⁰

The anti-reform press interpreted the report as condemning the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms and almost all the policies that followed in their wake.⁷¹

Time & Tide denounced the 1919 reforms while comforting the diehards:

Those -- and they are in the great majority -- who do not see how the British can hold India by abdicating in effect, and handing over to the hostile Indian Nationalist Party, are reassured by a Report which cuts a lot of dead wood away from the Indian Constitution and improves it, while retaining in the hands of the Viceroy and the Provincial Governors the real power.⁷²

The Simon Report would disappoint those in England and India who hoped for recommendations for a rapid transition to self-government. The *Morning Post* described Britain's pledge to give self-government to India as conditional, a “Jephtah's vow;” as Indians had not cooperated, Parliament could restrict, if not withdraw the pledge. A pledge fulfilled, the paper argued, would lead to anarchy in India and the financial ruin of Britain: “Would it be a breach of faith to change a policy which -- as the Commission hardly troubled to conceal -- has been disastrous from every point of view?”⁷³ The *Daily Mail* also predicted that the implementation of the reforms policy would “mean the ruin of India and of the British Empire;” Yet in an apparent shift in perspective, the paper accepted the inevitability of the reforms but argued that the progress towards responsible government must be slow.⁷⁴

The conclusion of the first Round Table Conference in January 1931 gave the press

⁷⁰ “The Simon Report,” *New Statesman*, 14 June 1930, 296.

⁷¹ See, for example, “Recommendations of the Simon Commission,” *Saturday Review*, 28 June 1930, 808, and “-- or Restrict.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 10 June 1930: 10b.

⁷² “Recasting India,” *Time & Tide*, 28 June 1930, 820.

⁷³ “Jephtah's Daughter.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 14 June 1930: 10b. Jephtah's vow refers to a story in the Book of Judges of a promise made rashly.

⁷⁴ “Why India Must Go Slow.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 10 June 1930: 10b.

a new opportunity to comment upon the reforms process. The reaction to the meeting was largely positive, with the conference roundly praised as “a monument of good will and constructive ability.”⁷⁵ The *Nation & Athenaeum*, *Daily Herald*, and *Manchester Guardian* took a similar line: speed up the reform policy and place much responsibility in the hands of Indians.

The Government of India lacked popular support, the *Nation & Athenaeum* argued. Because “desperate conditions demand desperate remedies” a new constitution should be written “as speedily and methodically as possible” by trusting implicitly “those Indians to whom we intend to transfer our responsibilities,” i.e. the moderates.⁷⁶ The *Nation & Athenaeum* objected to the diehards’ “bayonet theory of government” for two reasons:

First, there is not a scrap of evidence to show that they have the beneficent effect so confidently predicted by Lord Rothermere, and secondly, the present generation of Englishmen is less prone to this form of activity than was the last.

After the horrors of the Great War, “modern England is not likely to embark on a policy of repression upon the advice of a few disgruntled old officials and soldiers.”⁷⁷ The *Daily Herald* claimed that there was little difference between the official British and the Congress positions, even though Congress did not attend the conference. The official stance, responsible government with safeguards, was “surely that very ‘substance of independence’ for which Mr. Gandhi asks.” The paper reasoned that “Indians will not disregard that substance to struggle for a shadow.”⁷⁸

⁷⁵ “Towards an Indian Constitution,” *Spectator*, 17 Jan. 1931, 68. See also “New Hope for India.” Editorial. *British Weekly*. 22 Jan. 1931: 343e; “The Round Table Adjourns,” *New Statesman*, 24 Jan. 1931, 456; “The Conference and the Future,” *Economist*, 24 Jan. 1931, 155.

⁷⁶ “India’s Opportunity,” *Nation & Athenaeum*, 24 Jan. 1931, 530.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ “Britain’s Pledge.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 20 Jan. 1931: 8b.

Some papers were evasive in their analysis of the meeting. The *Times* expressed pessimism at the conclusion of the conference. The paper claimed that much was debated but very little defined and many formidable problems went unsolved in spite of much battling and quarrels.⁷⁹ The *Saturday Review* claimed that there was a consensus that the conference was neither a success nor failure as no one had their worst fears or highest hopes realized.⁸⁰ The *Sunday Times* declared the results of the conference “indeterminate”: neither a complete failure nor achieving any definitely formulated result.⁸¹ *Truth* seemed to try to reconcile its opposition to the reforms with the pledges Britain made for Indian self-government:

Truth has always been of the opinion, and still is, that for Britain to surrender its present position in India will not be for the benefit of India and Indians. But the fact remains that Indian nationalism has grown so strong in recent years that it can make, in the name of millions, certain demands. In reply we made promises on which we cannot now go back, even if we were so dishonest as to want to do so.⁸²

Diehards remained stalwart against the reforms, even after the first round table conference. Lord Lloyd, writing in the *Daily Mail*, claimed that “responsible self-government with safeguards” was a contradiction in terms. The results of the first conference meant “nothing less than the surrender of our Indian Empire” and the end of Britain’s influence not only in India but also in Asia. Lloyd believed that Britain’s influence was the same as its imperial mission: “That influence has for years upheld the things that we in this country think good -- justice, honest dealing, and as far as possible a

⁷⁹ “The Conference Adjourns.” Editorial. *Times*. 20 Jan. 1931: 13b.

⁸⁰ “The Round Table Adjourns,” *Saturday Review*, 24 Jan. 1931, 109.

⁸¹ “The Conference Ends. Editorial. *Sunday Times*. 18 Jan. 1931: 12b.

⁸² “India and the Future,” *Truth*, 28 Jan. 1931, 126.

fair field for every individual and race and religion.”⁸³

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact proved to be the last major act of Irwin’s Viceroyalty and one of the more controversial of his actions in India. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact, essentially an armistice between the Government of India and Congress, was agreed to by the Viceroy and Gandhi after weeks of negotiations in early March 1931. Gandhi and the Viceroy came to the negotiating table as both feared that Congress may have to resort to violence to break the stalemate with the Government of India. By the agreement Congress suspended its campaign of civil disobedience. Gandhi agreed to attend the second Round Table Conference in exchange for the release of political prisoners, the return of confiscated property, and a relaxation of some emergency coercive powers. The pact split the English press into three camps. Supporters hailed it as great work towards peace and understanding but opponents described the truce as an abject surrender, while the British moderates rode the fence by praising and condemning the pact and/or the Viceroy in equal measure.

On the pro-reform side, the *British Weekly* perhaps went a bit overboard in praising the accord and its makers:

The first week of March, 1931, will be counted among the great works of British and Indian history. We congratulate Lord Irwin on the triumph of his patient diplomacy, and Mr. Gandhi on his realisation of the needs of the hour. Each of these statesmen is at heart an idealist, and they are well fitted to understand each other.⁸⁴

The *New Statesman & Nation* and the *Daily Herald* praised the agreement as a “victory for common sense,”⁸⁵ and the *Yorkshire Post* praised Irwin for establishing an atmosphere of

⁸³ “Vague Talk in Cloudland.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 21 Jan. 1931: 8b.

⁸⁴ “Great News from India.” Editorial. *British Weekly*. 5 Mar. 1931: 468d.

⁸⁵ “Untitled,” *New Statesman & Nation*, 7 Mar. 1931, 49. See also “The Delhi Victory.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 5 Mar. 1931: 8b.

reason and restraint.⁸⁶ The *Economist* echoed this sentiment. The paper depicted the settlement as “an honourable agreement substituting reasoned discussion and negotiation for intransigent resistance and the repressive measures consequential upon it.”⁸⁷ *Time & Tide* and the *Times* both argued against the diehard view of the pact as a surrender; the Viceroy did not yield “anything of real importance in exchange for the valuable assistance of the Congress party in the resumption of the Round Table Conference.”⁸⁸ All sensible people in both countries would welcome the pact, *Truth* claimed, though the paper also described the agreement, perhaps derisively, as a “*fait accompli*.”⁸⁹ The paper later explained its rationale for supporting the pact as the alternative course would lead invariably to disaster: “It is obviously impossible to hold down an awakened India by force...Such an attempt would lead [to] a period of horrors [and] capitulation.”⁹⁰

The moderates preferred to remain evasive. The *Sunday Times* praised the Viceroy, but with reservations: “His integrity is undoubted, and he was worked for the kind of settlement *which he conceives to be the right one* with a singleness and tirelessness that command the respect of all.”⁹¹ The *Sunday Times* expressed uncertainty that the compromise was “really best suited to the implacable realities of the situation” but admitted that the alternative to the accord was “too plain and too sinister for anyone to contemplate without horror.”⁹² Lord Meston, writing in the *British Weekly*, reserved judgment on the agreement. He stated that if Gandhi could convince his followers to

⁸⁶ “‘Armistice’ in India.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 5 Mar. 1931: 8b.

⁸⁷ “The India Truce,” *Economist*, 14 Mar. 1931, 547.

⁸⁸ “Success in India,” *Time & Tide*, 7 Mar. 1931, 274. Also see “The Terms of the Indian Settlement.” Editorial. *Times*. 6 Mar. 1931: 15c.

⁸⁹ “Peace in India?” *Truth*, 11 Mar. 1931, 379.

⁹⁰ “Mr. Baldwin and the Diehards,” *Truth*, 18 Mar. 1931, 431.

⁹¹ “India and Home: The Government’s Position,” *Sunday Times*, 8 Mar. 1931, 14b. My emphasis.

⁹² *Ibid*.

honor his pledge then Irwin's policy of patient diplomacy would be rewarded.⁹³ The Gandhi-Irwin agreement was a truce at best to the *Daily Telegraph*. Congress did end its civil disobedience campaign but at the same time, by forcing the Government of India into concessions, Gandhi had successfully challenged the authority of the Raj and lowered the prestige of the Government of India.⁹⁴

The diehards were even less convinced of the pact's benefits. Lord Peel, in the *Sunday Times*, while affirming Britain's respect for the Viceroy, argued that the need for a settlement was "a condemnation of the conduct of affairs in the past," i.e. Irwinism. Examples Peel gave were "the attempt to create an atmosphere...for the Simon Commission, and some relaxation in the strict assertion of the law" and concluded that these actions "had only too much influence on the prolongation and development of these disturbances."⁹⁵ The *Saturday Review* depicted the accord as a surrender by the Viceroy to Gandhi which would cost Irwin's successor dearly.⁹⁶ The *Morning Post* railed against Irwinism without, oddly, mentioning the Viceroy. The paper decried the Government of India negotiating on equal terms with a rebel "if not in arms then with boycott and 'civil disobedience' in hand" who "abated nothing in his demands of 'complete independence' and the elimination of British rule."⁹⁷ The *Post* regarded the pact as a great victory for Gandhi which had lowered the prestige of the British and weakened the cause of law and order. Mourning the accord as a "tragic blunder" and a new low in British rule in India,

⁹³ "Mr. Baldwin and India." Editorial. *British Weekly*. 12 Mar. 1931: 483e.

⁹⁴ "Peace – But at What Price?" Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 5 Mar. 1931: 10b and "The Compromise With Gandhi." Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 6 Mar. 1931: 12b.

⁹⁵ "India and Home: The Government's Position," *Sunday Times*, 8 Mar. 1931, 14b.

⁹⁶ "Notes of the Week," *Saturday Review*, 7 Mar. 1931, 326.

⁹⁷ "The Cash and the Credit." Editorial. *Morning Post*. 6 Mar. 1931: 10b. See also "What Gandhi's Triumph Means." Editorial. *Observer*. 8 Mar. 1931: 14b.

the *Daily Express* indirectly attacked the Viceroy:

Is British authority so low that we could not bring [the end of civil disobedience] about through respect for the law? Is our administration so feeble that we must bribe the Indians to obey the law? British prestige in the East has been struck a terrible blow.⁹⁸

The *Daily Mail* was not so oblique in its condemnation of Irwin and his methods. It condemned the “sentimental weakness of Lord Irwin” and charged that Irwin had allowed Gandhi “that convicted criminal and avowed enemy of the British Empire to dictate to him.”⁹⁹ The *Mail* declared civil disobedience the victor on the subcontinent, a weapon that Congress only effectively holstered, not thrown away.

Why did so many papers dead-set against the Irwin Declaration in November 1929, welcome the reforms process, albeit with stringent security measures attached, by March 1931? With the end of Irwin’s Viceroyalty, the British moderates melded into the pro-reform camp. Why did so many Conservative-leaning papers support the Labour Government on the issue of imperial reform? Was the British moderate position just a weigh-station, a temporary stop to cover a rather sharp u-turn in policy? Perhaps that is why so many papers condemned the Viceroy’s policies without mentioning Irwin.

⁹⁸ “Mr. Gandhi’s Terms.” Editorial. *Daily Express*. 6 Mar. 1931: 10b.

⁹⁹ “Lord Irwin Surrenders.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 4 Mar. 1931: 10b.

Chapter 6

Speed Up or Slow Down?

Views of the Reforms Process, December 1931-5

To Mr. Churchill the scheme appeared as the imposition upon India of 'a system wholly unsuited to the welfare of its people and abhorrent to all who speak in their name.' Sir Austen Chamberlain sees in it a steady pursuit of the British tradition of 'welcoming as they become fit the assistance of what have been subject peoples in the government of their own country.'

■ "Parliament's Voice on India." Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 13 December 1934: 14b.

By way of facilitating the passage of this thoroughly unpopular and mischievous measure through Parliament Ministers are *playing a kind of confidence trick on the country*. They are going to and fro asserting that Great Britain is already pledged to give India parliamentary government here and now. This is *pure bunkum*. *Great Britain is not pledged to do anything of the kind*.

■ "Pure Bunkum." Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 7 February 1935: 10b.

No one can reasonably criticize their [Diehard opposition] anxiety as to the possible consequences of the coming change...but supporters of the Federal Scheme are right in their conviction that risks must be faced now if for the more serious risks are not to be faced in years to come.

■ "Le Roy Le Veult." Editorial. *Times*. 3 August 1935: 11b.

The late summer and autumn of 1931 witnessed a dramatic upheaval in British politics, with the resignation of the Labour Government and the formation of the National Government in August; and the general election of October, which reduced the number of Labour opposition seats in the Commons to 52.¹ With the establishment of the National Government, a new Secretary of State, Samuel Hoare, took over the India Office. Hoare, who held the office until June 1935, successfully steered the reforms through the difficult shoals of Parliament, culminating in the Government of India Act of 1935.

After August 1931, for the most part, the press ceased to debate whether reform in India would happen but rather what shape reform should assume. The main contentious

¹ The Conservative dominated the National Government, controlling 473 seats. The National Government split the Labour party. MacDonald, putting country ahead of party, remained as Prime Minister bringing with him only a handful of his party with him (known as National Labour). The rest of the party expelled MacDonald and his National cohorts and formed the Labour opposition, but comprised only 52 MP's.

issues over the reforms were whether Indians would receive full autonomy on the provincial level (including control of important portfolios such as the police), to what degree, if any, of responsibility Indians would get in the central government, and what safeguards were deemed necessary to preserve good government in India. Another key issue was how to deal with the Congress Party and its campaigns of civil disobedience. The press debate became more polarized, with the moderates moving fully into the pro-reform column, leaving the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, *Morning Post*, and *Saturday Review* in the diehard camp. The main bone of contention was the issue of safeguards to allow the Viceroy and Provincial Governors special powers to intervene whenever necessary to maintain British responsibilities and interests. Both sides saw the safeguards, as spelled out in the White Paper, as necessary. The pro-reform papers viewed them as strong enough while the diehards considered the safeguards insufficient.

With Irwin's five-year Viceroyalty expiring in 1931, India received a new Viceroy, Freeman Freeman-Thomas, the first Marquess of Willingdon. Willingdon proved to be a total departure from his predecessor. He scrapped the reconciliatory policies of Irwin and favored much stricter policies against Congress. The new Viceroy incarcerated Gandhi in 1931 (until 1933) and suppressed Congress's civil disobedience campaign by filling the prisons with thousands of Congressmen. Willingdon also sought to conciliate moderate Indians willing to cooperate in the reforms process. Yet of all the papers, only the *Daily Herald* objected to Willingdon's crackdown. The *Herald* warned that Indians were suspicious that Willingdon was "preparing not only the suppression of

terrorism but the repression of the Congress movement,”² a drastic step that would drive moderate Indian opinion into the arms of the extremists.

The second Indian round table conference, noted for Gandhi’s attendance as the sole representative of Congress, wrapped up its deliberations in December 1931. The meeting accomplished little; discussions quickly devolved into bickering over reserved seats for religious minorities. The majority of the press, however, viewed the meeting in a positive light and praised the Prime Minister’s closing speech.³ The *Observer* and *Sunday Times* both reaffirmed the British pledge to Indian self-government, albeit with safeguards.⁴ While the *Economist* expressed pessimism at the results of the conference, the *Times* and *Daily Telegraph* commended MacDonald for not committing the country to a surrender and reassured “those who hoped (or feared) that a full grown Federal Constitution for India could be conjured like a rabbit out of a hat.”⁵ *Time & Tide* attacked the opponents of progress:

the romantic folly of our oratorical and journalistic diehards, who fancy that a handful of foreigners can, by brute force or low cunning, continue for an indefinite period to repress or uplift a population of three-and-a-half hundred million after it has come under the influence of Western political ideas⁶

Speaking for the “journalistic diehards,” the *Morning Post* claimed that the conference accomplished nothing and worried that the reforms policy was “dangerously

² “Indian Crossroads.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 2 Dec. 1931: 8b.

³ See “Untitled,” *New Statesman & Nation*, 5 Dec. 1931, 701, “An End and A Beginning,” *Economist*, 5 Dec. 1931, 1051, “The Promise to India.” Editorial. *British Weekly*. 3 Dec. 1931: 176c, and “The Pledge to India,” *Spectator*, 5 Dec. 1931, 758.

⁴ “The Next Stage in India.” Editorial. *Observer*. 6 Dec. 1931: 14b and “Indian Realities,” *Sunday Times*, 29 Nov. 1931, 16b.

⁵ “The Method of Conference.” Editorial. *Times*. 2 Dec. 1931: 13b; “India’s Constitution – The Next Step.” *Daily Telegraph*. 2 Dec. 1931: 12b. Also see “An End and A Beginning,” *Economist*, 5 Dec. 1931, 1051, and “An Offer and a Challenge.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 2 Dec. 1931: 8b.

⁶ “India: The New Phase,” *Time & Tide*, 5 Dec. 1931, 1893.

rash.”⁷ The conference was a wasted effort, the *Daily Express* claimed, as it contended that India’s problems were economic, not political: “The masses of India are not clamouring for a new status – they are clamouring for food and a chance to live like human beings.”⁸ *Truth* was adamant that there should be “no yielding to the demand for the immediate responsibility at the centre” because of the problems posed by the communal divide.⁹ The *Daily Mail* used the opportunity to praise the sterner methods employed by the new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, and to renew its attack against Irwin and Irwinism:

drastic measures against terrorism, such as are already producing so good an impression among the loyal in Bengal. *The first duty of the Government in India is to govern. If it has shaken off the disastrous levity which it has shown in the immediate past that will be a great gain...*The weakness shown in India in the last two years has lowered our prestige and credit throughout the world.¹⁰

Two important developments in 1932 — the Communal Award and the Poona Pact — generated a series of press leaders. The press response to the Communal Award of August 1932 was largely uniform. Most editors viewed the Award as the necessary consequence of the failure of Indian communities to come to an agreement amongst themselves. The *Spectator* and *Truth* hailed the Award as another example of British justice,¹¹ and the *Economist* congratulated the Government for “finding a solution which...should...appeal to all moderate-minded men as a sane and judicial settlement.”¹²

⁷ “Federalism by Force.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 2 Dec. 1931: 10b.

⁸ “No Constitution-Mongering Now.” Editorial. *Daily Express*. 3 Dec. 1931: 10b.

⁹ “Britain and India’s Future,” *Truth*, 2 Dec. 1931, 846. The *Saturday Review* did not comment on the conclusion of the conference.

¹⁰ “The Right Course?” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 2 Dec. 1931: 10b.

¹¹ “India,” *Spectator*, 20 Aug. 1932, 221 and “India and the Communal Decision,” *Truth*, 24 Aug. 1932, 282.

¹² “The Indian Communal Award,” *Economist*, 20 Aug. 1932, 340.

In contrast, the *Daily Telegraph* described the imposed settlement as “vitaly unsatisfactory” but noted that the representatives of the Indian communities had requested the Government to assume the responsibility; thus “no more cogent proof could be given of the sincerity of British intentions in the matter of Indian reform.”¹³

Not all editors praised the Communal Award. The *Morning Post* expressed disquiet at the award as it was an imposed scheme: “There is a fundamental antimony in the idea of conferring freedom by compulsion.”¹⁴ The *Daily Mail* disapproved of the award as it was not democratic. It also claimed the agreement would lead to bitter struggles between the communities and, eventually, to chaos. The *Mail* advocated its usual solution: slow down the pace of reform: “we hope *that the Government will move very cautiously in carrying out its present proposals...Its most earnest supporters are most uneasy at this new scheme and with good cause.*”¹⁵ The *New Statesman & Nation* agreed that the representation of separate communities offended democratic doctrine but was necessary as the Indian communities would not cooperate with each other. Until the “lambs and lions in India” will lie down together “a uniform system of joint electorates remains Utopian.”¹⁶

Because it was an agreement between Indians, the Poona Pact did not lead to the same sort of debate over British policy. The *Manchester Guardian* alone felt it necessary to recommend that the British Government accept the agreement as it was a settlement between Indians; the Communal Award was only made because Indians had originally

¹³ “Cabinet’s Plan for India.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 17 Aug. 1932: 8b.

¹⁴ “Freedom, by Order.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 17 Aug. 1932: 8b.

¹⁵ “Steering into Danger.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 17 Aug. 1932: 8b. *Mail’s* emphasis

¹⁶ “A New Plan for India,” *New Statesman & Nation*, 20 Aug. 1932, 196.

failed to reach a settlement on separate electorates.¹⁷ While not advocating that the British Government should reject the Poona agreement, the *Morning Post* expressed concern that the effects of Gandhi's fast had set a bad precedent. Gandhi had been imprisoned for "seditious conspiracy," the *Post* claimed, and that he threatened to take his own life "unless he had his own way." This maneuver, the paper declared, was another crime as "no subject has the right to take his own life, and to make such a threat was to levy a sort of blackmail, to which no Government can submit without a certain loss of prestige."¹⁸ On the other hand, the *New Statesman & Nation* declared the Poona agreement as a victory for Gandhi and the Untouchables not over the British Government "but over his own people"¹⁹ while the *British Weekly* expressed hope that Gandhi would return to public life with "his efforts will be directed towards the practical relief of the Untouchables."²⁰

Other press leaders attempted to justify the British Government's actions or to portray the British as the true heroes of the tale. The untouchables should recognize the British, not Gandhi, as the true author of "their charter of emancipation," *Truth* stated.²¹ Gandhi's fast was not against the British Government or the Communal Award, the *Spectator* emphasized, but against the "privileged castes of Hinduism" in order to compel them to face "the hideous fact of Untouchability."²² The *Times* commended the Government for refusing to back down and modify or suspend the Communal Award under Gandhi's protest backed by the threat of suicide. The paper considered the Poona

¹⁷ "The Gandhi Agreement." Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 26 Sept. 1932: 8c.

¹⁸ "Under the Mango Tree." Editorial. *Morning Post*. 26 Sept. 1932: 10b.

¹⁹ "Untitled," *New Statesman & Nation*, 1 Oct. 1932, 362.

²⁰ "The Untouchables." Editorial. *British Weekly*. 29 Sept. 1932: 495c.

²¹ "Gandhi and the Untouchables," *Truth*, 28 Sept. 1932, 465.

²² "Mr. Gandhi's Achievement," *Spectator*, 1 Oct. 1932, 389.

Pact as evidence that justified the Government's position on the matter and also its policy towards the minorities of India in general.²³ Even the *Daily Mail* claimed that the agreement at Poona represented the essentials of the British Communal Award.²⁴

The final installment of the round table talks concluded in December 1932; the meeting, like its predecessor, accomplished little. British apathy towards this Indian conference is reflected in the lack of press comment. In the aftermath of the round table conference, however, safeguards became a vital issue.²⁵ Proposed safeguards included British control of India's defense, day-to-day government in the hands of the Viceroy and provincial Governors, and British management of Indian finance.

Papers on both the pro-reform and diehard sides attempted to minimize the potential results of the safeguards, though for opposite reasons: the pro-reformers contended that the safeguards would be minimal and only exercised in emergencies while the diehards claimed that they were weak and useless. The *Daily Telegraph* restricted its conception of self-government to include "such safeguards as provide against all serious possibility of disorder."²⁶ Indians should work the new constitution, the *New Statesman & Nation* suggested, as most of the safeguards "are not likely to be effective, and that many of the present obstacles will disappear automatically."²⁷ The *Morning Post*, too, contended that the safeguards were worthless pointing to Ireland as a precedent. The paper considered this especially dangerous as Lord Willingdon declared Congress the

²³ "Hinduism and Mr. Gandhi." Editorial. *Times*. 28 Sept. 1932: 13c.

²⁴ "Gandhi Climbs Down." Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 27 Sept. 1932: 10b.

²⁵ See "Success at the Round Table." Editorial. *Times*. 27 Dec. 1932: 11b, G.T. Garratt, "India and the Conference," *New Statesman & Nation*, 31 Dec. 1932, 850 and "India: A Critical Stage." Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 27 Dec. 1932: 8c.

²⁶ "Shaping India's New Constitution." Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 27 Dec. 1932: 6b.

²⁷ G.T. Garratt, "India and the Conference," *New Statesman & Nation*, 31 Dec. 1932, 850.

only party in India that could be expected to work the constitution. The *Post* also claimed that all gestures designed to placate Congress from Montagu to Irwin had failed.²⁸

Pro-reform papers preferred describing the reforms process in general terms. *Truth* declared that with the end of the final round of the conference India drew closer to its goal of responsible government within the empire. The paper highlighted the slow evolution of the new constitution that would ultimately be implemented by the Imperial Parliament in a new Government of India Act.²⁹ The *Daily Herald* expressed hope that if the coming India Bill were “bold in essentials” and “courageously fulfil[led] the pledges given to India” then there would be no need for arguing over details.³⁰ The *Economist* best summed up the pro-reform stance by describing the reforms process as the

greatest constitutional experiment of modern times. The attempt to transfer responsibility by peaceful evolution from alien rulers to an Eastern people....and to implant Western ideas of democracy in an Asiatic country...that is effectively administered as a single unit, is a unique event in history...Its success or failure will profoundly affect the history of the world, and...will influence for good or ill the future relations...between the white and colored races.”³¹

On 17 March 1933 the British Government published its White Paper on Indian constitutional reform, essentially a first draft of a new constitution. The overwhelming majority of papers supported the proposals; only four lined up in opposition. The major bone of contention in the debate over the White Paper in the English press was the issue of safeguards. The pro-reform section viewed the safeguards as necessary and effective while the diehards argued that the safeguards were too weak and ineffectual. The *Daily*

²⁸ “Without Their Host.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 27 Dec. 1932: 8b.

²⁹ “India’s Coming-of-Age,” *Truth*, 4 Jan. 1933, 14.

³⁰ “The Acid Test.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 28 Dec. 1932: 8b.

³¹ “The India Conference Ends,” *Economist*, 31 Dec. 1932, 1236.

Mail and *Daily Herald* agreed, for opposite reasons, that responsible self-government was simply not possible with safeguards.

The pro-reform press praised the document and railed against the diehards for wanting “to put the clock back to a time before the Reforms.”³² All depended “on whether the volume of support from sober and practical men in both countries is sufficient to put the British and Indian extremists in a minority too inconsiderable to be dangerous.”³³ It was too late to turn back or stand still on the reforms process. As the *Economist* explained,

there can be no turning back on the road upon which we have set our feet. For better or worse Britain is pledged to give India her chance to attain, with such measure of transitional guidance as is essential to the beginning of a great experiment, the full status of responsible self-government.³⁴

The majority of the press supported the safeguards contained in the White Paper, especially the powers of provincial Governors to rule by decree without approval of the Indian-controlled legislatures. Editorialists described the safeguards as “very extensive” and “very powerful;” yet “really no more than appropriate to the scope of the changes”³⁵ and supported by the “better part of British opinion.”³⁶ Britain was undertaking “an experiment in democracy without parallel...at a time when democracy seems somewhat discredited in Europe itself,” the *Yorkshire Post* stated, and “therefore we are bound to neglect no precaution to secure success.”³⁷

Papers of the Left and far Right agreed in opposing the safeguards, though for

³² “The Draft Indian Constitution.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 18 Mar. 1933: 12b.

³³ “The India of To-morrow,” *Spectator*, 24 Mar. 1933, 414.

³⁴ “The India White Paper,” *Economist*, 25 Mar. 1933, 625.

³⁵ “Reforms for India,” *Time & Tide*, 25 Mar. 1933, 346.

³⁶ Ibid., “A Plan for All-India.” Editorial. *Observer*. 19 Mar. 1933: 16b, “The Draft Indian Constitution.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 18 Mar. 1933: 12b.

³⁷ “Indian Draft Constitution.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 18 Mar. 1933: 10b.

differing reasons: too strong versus too weak. For the left-leaning press, the safeguards constituted nothing short of an insult to Indian national hopes. The *Daily Herald* depicted the White Paper scheme as the fulfillment of the pledge to grant responsible self-government to India. However, the *Herald* confusingly criticized the safeguards as the negation of responsible self-government, though the paper concluded that the existence of the safeguards may be wise.³⁸ The White Paper reforms were drawn up, claimed the *New Statesman & Nation*, with an “absurd over-emphasis upon the question of ‘safeguards’” without any regard for the millions of Indians but for domestic political reasons, i.e. placating the Conservative diehards.³⁹

Yet the Conservative diehards refused to be placated. The *Daily Express* unequivocally described the White Paper as a “document of surrender;” the British Government was effectively hoisting the white flag over the Indian Empire.⁴⁰ In the diehard view, the White Paper scheme was overly complicated and self-government with safeguards was either oxymoronic or dangerous: “*If the safeguards are effective then India is not going to have self-government. If they are ineffective then the risk to India and the Empire is going to prove terrific.*”⁴¹ The scheme assumed that “the Indian extremist politicians” would work with the new constitution in a spirit of partnership. The diehards, however, knew that Congress would approach the reforms “in the spirit of wreckers.”⁴²

Diehard opposition failed to stop the parliamentary process. A joint

³⁸ “Not Good Enough.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 18 Mar. 1933: 10b.

³⁹ “The Future of India,” *New Statesman & Nation*, 25 Mar. 1933, 377.

⁴⁰ “Surrender!” Editorial. *Daily Express*. 18 Mar. 1933: 10b.

⁴¹ “The Perilous Experiment.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 18 Mar. 1933: 10b. *Mail’s* emphasis.

⁴² *Ibid.* See also Sir Lionel Haworth, “India and Ideals of Empire,” *Saturday Review*, 18 Mar 1933, 257 and “The Spirit of Partners.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 18 Mar 1933: 10b.

Parliamentary Select Committee chaired by the future Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, reviewed the White Paper proposals and published its Report in November 1934. The committee made minor changes to the White Paper, mostly strengthening the safeguards. The revised document became the basis of the Government of India Bill. The issue of safeguards remained contentious.

The pro-reform press commended the committee and described the document as a great state paper. They described the report as a fair appraisal with a “full sense of responsibility” to India⁴³ as well as a “leap in the dark” with obvious perils but contended that the dangers of not taking that leap were more ominous.⁴⁴ The *Economist* advocated accelerating the timetable of the reforms process as “speed is now the essence of the problem” as India was relatively quiet and it feared that Indians would lose patience with the deliberate pace of the reforms. The pro-reform press also criticized the diehards. The report was not as “a concession forced at the bayonet’s point or as a weak yielding to the forces of disorder”⁴⁵ and viewed the only alternative to the reforms policy was to hold India by coercive force which would only eventually unite the Indian people against the Raj. Any such policy would fail within only a few years.⁴⁶

Safeguards remained a focus of press concern. The pro-reform papers insisted that the safeguards would vanish as Indians mastered the art of self-government, but were absolutely necessary at the outset “in the interests of India herself.”⁴⁷ The *Sunday Times* best summed up the pro-reform view of the safeguards: “our task in India is to give the

⁴³ “The New India,” *Economist*, 24 Nov. 1934, 967. Also see “India’s Future Government,” *Truth*, 28 Nov. 1934, 820.

⁴⁴ “The Future of India,” *Spectator*, 23 Nov. 1934, 780.

⁴⁵ “The New India,” *Economist*, 24 Nov. 1934, 967.

⁴⁶ J.L. Garvin, “India and the Issue,” *Observer*, 25 Nov. 1934, 18c.

⁴⁷ “A Great State Paper.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 22 Nov. 1934: 10b.

utmost measure of political freedom that is consistent with her safety and well-being.”⁴⁸ The existence of safeguards was justified since Indians had yet to demonstrate whether the British conception of self-government was suitable to the “Indian character.”⁴⁹ More specifically, they agreed with the Linlithgow committee’s recommendation that strong safeguards were necessary to prevent political interference with the discipline or the ordinary work of the police force.⁵⁰ The police should be put under the control of native provincial ministers as without Indian control “there could be no education of Indian party-leaders in the sterner meanings of practical responsibility.”⁵¹

Turning aside its pro-reform stance as it saw the reforms as not going far enough, the *Daily Herald* argued that the latest report would lead to a constitution that would only exacerbate, not end, the bitter struggle between the Raj and Indian nationalists. The report’s proposals were “shot through and through with timidity and distrust” designed to give away as little as possible. The new constitution should be framed “as to enable India to reach Dominion status by a process of internal development without recourse to further Acts of Parliament.” Such a constitution, the *Daily Herald* contended, would “have been accepted and worked with enthusiasm.”⁵²

The diehards remained steadfast in their opposition to Indian reform, though their numbers in the press were dwindling rapidly; the *Daily Mail* would be the only paper to oppose the joint committee’s report. The *Daily Mail* contended that the report proposed handing over of India “to the control of men thoroughly hostile to Britain – to the

⁴⁸ Scrutator, “India Report Examined,” *Sunday Times*, 25 Nov. 1934, 18d.

⁴⁹ “The India Report.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 22 Nov. 1934: 10b.

⁵⁰ “New Constitution for India.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 22 Nov. 1934: 14b.

⁵¹ J.L. Garvin, “India and the Issue,” *Observer*, 25 Nov. 1934, 18c.

⁵² “A Wasted Opportunity.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 22 Nov. 1934: 10b.

Congress Party, who have been sweeping the board in the Indian elections with violent denunciations of British villainy.” As far as the safeguards were concerned, the *Mail* was adamant that the police remain in British control to ensure the maintenance of law and order.⁵³ The *Morning Post* iterated its contention that the reforms process should slow down, if not halted entirely. The paper claimed that “there is no obligation to go an inch further or a minute faster than prudence would allow” and expressed hope that there would be no more irrelevant talk of violating pledges. The *Morning Post*, like the *Mail*, warned that the committee effectively recommended handing over the Government of India to Congress domination. The paper supported the report’s call for additional safeguards on the grounds of a “well-justified mistrust of such politicians.” Safeguards were essential as maintaining law and order was difficult enough even with a strong Viceroy at the helm, the *Post* claimed. The paper speculated that this would be nearly impossible with Congress in charge of the police:

How much more difficult when many if not most of the real powers are transferred to the Ministers of an aggressive and truculent political party, ready to resign or appeal to a well-controlled electorate at any act of gubernatorial opposition!⁵⁴

According to the *Saturday Review*, the committee, MacDonald, and Baldwin were giving away “the reality of power to our enemies in India.” The *Review* added that there was not a single clause that strengthened British strength or prestige but hundreds that paved the way “for the loss of our Indian Empire.”⁵⁵ The White Paper “is now waste paper,” the *Daily Express* declared, as it was effectively torn up by the committee. The *Express* also

⁵³ “More Sham Safeguards.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 22 Nov. 1934: 12b.

⁵⁴ “New Wine in Old Bottles.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 22 Nov. 1934: 10b.

⁵⁵ “Muddling Through to Chaos,” *Saturday Review*, 24 Nov. 1934, 423.

decried the committee for its lack of unanimity.⁵⁶

The Joint Select Committee Report came up for debate in Parliament in mid-December 1934. The pro-reform press acknowledged the risks of reform but continued to argue that the risks were worth taking. The *Times* supported Lord Halifax (as Lord Irwin had become) for his firm conviction that the “scheme of the Report is wise and workable.” The paper also, equally unsurprisingly, defended Halifax from the unmerited abuse he received for “his great work of appeasement.”⁵⁷ The *Yorkshire Post* refuted diehard fears that Indian racial characteristics and religious distinctions rendered them unsuited for self-government. No one denied these factors created risks and difficulties; hence the safeguards recommended by the Joint Committee, the *Post* argued. The paper countered the diehards by favoring moving forward in spite of the hazards: “to suppose that we can escape risks and difficulties by doing nothing, or by giving India so little that no Indian would work what we gave, seems to us...a delusion.”⁵⁸ The *Economist* also claimed that the road of reform was full of difficulties and great risks “but they are less serious than those of any alternative course.” The British public “has given only casual attention to the discussion” as it already came to the conclusion “that the question of principle is decided once for all.”⁵⁹ The diehards could only delay, not stop, the reforms process, the *Daily Telegraph* argued. The paper affirmed that Britain was not committed by promises or pledges “but by the whole past course of our governing of India.”⁶⁰ *Truth* contended that for the past seven years every government official in India has been

⁵⁶ “India Report.” Editorial. *Daily Express*. 22 Nov. 1934: 10b.

⁵⁷ “Their Lordships Concur.” Editorial. *Times*. 19 Dec. 1934: 15b.

⁵⁸ “The Conservative Decision.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 5 Dec. 1934: 12b. Also see “Lords and India.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 19 Dec. 1934: 8b.

⁵⁹ “India in the Commons,” *Economist*, 15 Dec. 1934, 1134.

⁶⁰ “Emphatic Approval in the Lords.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 19 Dec. 1934: 12b.

anticipating change. The longer debate could be prolonged in Parliament it would only give an opportunity for opinion against the new order in India to gather headway ultimately making it more difficult to inaugurate the new constitution.⁶¹

The *Daily Mail* proved to be the only paper to oppose the joint committee's report. The British people heartily disliked the Government's India policy, the *Mail* claimed, and praised Churchill for his "damaging indictment" of that policy in the Commons debates. The Joint Select Committee proposals were simply a repetition of the plan tried in the Irish Free State that ended in a complete failure. The *Daily Mail* argued that the Irish policy did not steady the "wild men" and "the risk that they will do the same in India is obvious."⁶²

The Government introduced the India Bill to Parliament in February 1935. The Bill was simply the culmination of the reforms process, the *Times* claimed, dating from the 1919 Act. The Bill followed "the plain straight course which has been clearly laid down for the last fifteen years...from which successive British Governments, of all shades of domestic politics, have never for a moment turned aside."⁶³ The *Daily Telegraph* declared that all parties in Britain understood that any change in the form of the Indian government must give the Indian people more control over their own affairs. There was no controversy over the grant of self-government to India but only over the pace of the advance: "Labour would proceed with less caution...Mr. Churchill and his friends would lengthen the period of experiment."⁶⁴ India will be kept in the empire voluntarily or not at all, the *Yorkshire Post* argued, as the British public would not

⁶¹ "The Commons and India," *Truth*, 19 Dec. 1934, 936.

⁶² "The Indian Gamble." Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 19 Dec. 1934: 10b.

⁶³ "The Goal of India." Editorial. *Times*. 7 Feb. 1935: 15b.

⁶⁴ "India Within the Empire." Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 12 Feb. 1935: 12b.

consent to a reconquest of an India determined to repudiate its connection with the Crown.⁶⁵ The *Economist* declared that the moral of Britain's imperial history was the polar opposite of the diehard thesis of stopping the clock of progress. The India Bill was an act of constitution-making on a stupendous scale especially at a time when the principles of parliamentary democracy were under challenge in many countries around the world. This fact added to the significance of the "effort to take a great Eastern people another step along the road of self-government."⁶⁶ *Time & Tide* described the standoff over safeguards: Indians did not like or want the safeguards but Parliament would not remove them but neither side wanted to restart the reforms process from scratch.⁶⁷

Not everyone was happy with the final Act. The *Manchester Guardian* and *Daily Herald* expressed regret that the Dominion status pledge, contained in the preamble of the 1919 Act and the Irwin Declaration, was not included in the latest Bill; the papers hoped the promise would be added before the Act became law.⁶⁸ The *Herald* added that "pledges are of little value if fulfilment can always be deferred to some dim future."⁶⁹ The *Morning Post* disputed the contention that Dominion status was implied in the Bill and railed against the "paper safeguards" that would fail to conciliate "a seditious Congress...in full cry after a retreating Government."⁷⁰ The *Daily Mail* disagreed with any assertion that Britain pledged itself to give India parliamentary government here and now contending that Government Ministers were "*playing a kind of confidence trick on*

⁶⁵ "The India Debate." Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 12 Feb. 1935: 8b.

⁶⁶ "A New Constitution for India." *Economist*, 2 Feb. 1935, 235.

⁶⁷ "The India Bill." *Time & Tide*, 9 Feb. 1935, 178.

⁶⁸ "British Aims in India." Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 7 Feb. 1935: 8b and "Dateless Pledge." Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 7 Feb. 1935: 10b.

⁶⁹ "Dateless Pledge." Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 7 Feb. 1935: 10b.

⁷⁰ "Still on the Run." Editorial. *Morning Post*. 7 Feb. 1935: 10b.

the country” in order to assure the passage of “this thoroughly unpopular and mischievous measure through Parliament.”⁷¹ The *New Statesman & Nation* opposed the Bill and attacked one of the assumptions of British rule: the Raj brought economic prosperity to India. No good could come of an imposed constitution. The *Statesman* claimed that India would not be reconciled to the proposed constitution nor could “any Indian Government emerge from it capable of grappling creatively with the desperate social and economic problems of a sub-continent that is little better than a vast rural slum.”⁷²

The diehards would not accept defeat easily and go quietly into the night. The *Morning Post* viewed the Indian reforms as a symptom of the decline of the Conservative Party specifically and Britain in general, without speaking specifically of the joint committee report:

This country would be safer with men of less subtlety and more courage and the British public, or we are much mistaken, will be heartily grateful to Mr. Churchill for his vigorous protest against the defeatism of the Conservative leader. As for the result of the debate, it seems to us of less consequence than the fact that there is against this surrender a solid phalanx which may be the made the core of a great movement of national revival.⁷³

The *Post* reasoned that many Conservatives voted for the reforms because they feared Socialism and wished to ensure the safety of the National Government, rather than because of the merits of the question at issue.⁷⁴ The British people heartily disliked the Government’s India policy, the *Daily Mail* asserted; a feeling strengthened by Churchill’s scathing indictment of the scheme in the House of Commons. The *Mail* applauded the

⁷¹ “Pure Bunkum.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 7 Feb. 1935: 10b. *Mail*’s emphasis

⁷² “An Imposed Constitution,” *New Statesman & Nation*, 9 Feb. 1935, 165.

⁷³ “The Unwanted Gift.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 13 Dec. 1934: 12b.

⁷⁴ “Can They Afford It?” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 19 Dec. 1934: 10b.

seventy-seven Conservatives that defied their party and voted against the Government as well as the twenty that abstained. The paper concluded that the “*Conservative revolt against the disastrous and ill-timed India measure is most remarkable.*”⁷⁵

The diehards hoped to scuttle the reforms process by convincing the Indian princes to pull out of the scheme for federation, the cornerstone of the Indian reforms. Gwynne of the *Morning Post* used contacts in India to accomplish this goal directly.⁷⁶ The *Daily Mail* claimed that the Princes disliked the reforms scheme so much that “they have to be bribed or threatened into a show of acceptance of its blessings...They are not deceived by the *credulous optimism of our British sentimentalists and defeatists.*”⁷⁷ The Princes opposed the report, the *Morning Post* declared, despite claims to the contrary by Hoare.⁷⁸ The *Daily Telegraph* chastised the diehards for encouraging the Princes to reject the plan for Federation. The effort failed and added that “an attempt to bring pressure upon the British Government by stirring up opposition in India is a new feature in political manoeuvre, and none could be less desirable.”⁷⁹ The *Economist* applauded Baldwin for thwarting the diehard attempt to pry the Princes out of Federation.⁸⁰ The *Manchester Guardian* chastised the efforts of “some Conservatives and their newspaper supporters” to stir up the Princes to oppose the reforms; they deserved the scathing rebukes they received in Parliament.⁸¹ The *Sunday Times* questioned why the diehards were “ready to break up the unity of a great party” over a difference of opinion over

⁷⁵ “The India Revolt.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 15 Dec. 1934: 10b. *Mail’s* emphasis.

⁷⁶ See Gwynne papers, Bodleian library, Cambridge.

⁷⁷ “The Indian Gamble.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 19 Dec. 1934: 10b.

⁷⁸ “The Unwanted Gift.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 13 Dec. 1934: 12b.

⁷⁹ “Emphatic Approval in the Lords.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 19 Dec. 1934: 12b.

⁸⁰ “India in the Commons,” *Economist*, 15 Dec. 1934, 1134.

⁸¹ “Stature of Manhood.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 12 Feb. 1935: 8b.

India. If the diehards persisted in their opposition they would ensure “the return of a Labour Government and bring real danger not only to India but at home.”⁸²

In August 1935 the Government of India Act became law and the pro-reform press congratulated the government. The *Times* praised the act as the greatest constructive measure undertaken by the British Government this century. It continued to criticize the Conservative opposition for contesting the bill without offering an alternative program but the paper also claimed to understand the diehard anxiety regarding possible consequences of the impending changes. In the end, the *Times* supported the India Act by arguing that it is better “that risks must be faced now if for more serious risks are not to be faced in years to come.”⁸³ The India Act was not an example of rash or hasty legislation, the *Economist* declared, as it was the result of eight years of continuous argument and consultation.⁸⁴ *Truth* gave a backhanded compliment to the coalition government by describing the measure as a great achievement of the National Government but only in the strictly Imperial sphere.⁸⁵ The *Sunday Times* evidently could not go too far in gushing over the act: the paper depicted it as a great task, “the greatest and most historic to which any British Government and Parliament have set their hands” and the act itself as “one of the great constitutional documents of the British Commonwealth of Nations.”⁸⁶

True to form, the diehards fought the Indian reforms tooth and nail to the bitter end. The *Daily Mail* called the Act Britain’s “goodbye to India” and the “betrayal of

⁸² Scrutator, “Realities About India,” *Sunday Times*, 10 Feb. 1935, 16d.

⁸³ “Le Roy Le Veult.” Editorial. *Times*, 3 Aug. 1935: 11b.

⁸⁴ “Le Roy Le Veult,” *Economist*, 3 Aug. 1935, 219.

⁸⁵ “India’s New Constitution,” *Truth*, 7 Aug. 1935, 206.

⁸⁶ “An Historic Act.” Editorial. *Sunday Times*, 4 Aug. 1935: 10c.

India's peoples" and claimed that it was just another illustration of the empire slipping away, pointing to the examples of Ireland and Egypt.⁸⁷ The act brought to an untimely end "150 years of British achievement which gave our Indian Empire security, justice and progress such as were unknown in long years past." The centrifugal forces on the subcontinent would gain in power "and in the last resort the strong arm of the fighting man will count for more than the voice of the politician or the vote of the ballot box...We should see again the India of the eighteenth century – anarchy within and probably invasion from without."⁸⁸

The majority of the English press supported greater self-government for India as envisioned in the 1935 Act. Both reformers and diehards envisaged self-government within the empire as cementing the relationship between Britain and the subcontinent along cooperative lines, much like the White Dominions. The dispute was simply over degree. The diehards argued that Indians had yet to demonstrate enough responsibility to merit an extension of power and called for strict measures to channel the native extremists into responsibility. The diehards' time frame for India achieving Dominion Status measured in centuries. The reformers essentially argued that Indians would be forced to act responsibly with more power in their hands. Even the pro-reformers viewed this transfer of limited power as a risk, hence the need for safeguards to protect British interests, but as a risk worth taking. India achieving full self-government to the reformers would most likely be measured in decades. Neither side could conceive of Britain without India, and vice versa.

⁸⁷ "Frittering Away the Empire." Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 2 Aug. 1935: 8b.

⁸⁸ Sir Michael O'Dwyer, "India Under Swaraj," *Saturday Review*, 10 Aug. 1935, 16.

Chapter 7

Struggle for the Soul of the Conservative Party: British Domestic Politics, the Press and India, 1927-35

It has been painfully apparent throughout this controversy that the fear of Socialism and the safety of the Government are considerations of more influence on the minds of many of our legislators than the merits of the question at issue.

■ “Can They Afford It?” Editorial. *Morning Post*, 19 Dec. 1934: 10b.

Doubtless many who in their hearts may have sympathised with the Diehard thesis that the rejection of the reforms would ‘save’ India for the Empire were still more impressed by the fear that an adverse vote would lose Britain for the Conservative Party.

■ “Diehards’ Defeat,” *Economist*, 8 Dec. 1934, 1085.

Tied inextricably to the India reforms process was British domestic politics, especially the internal struggle within Conservative ranks for the soul of the party. The Conservative Party was continuing the process of redefinition already in progress before the war: from the party of the aristocracy and landed estates it was becoming the party of the middle class and business. The Tories had traditionally been the party of empire, but what that meant in the party after the Great War was up for debate. The soul of the party would be largely determined by the press and India. The reformers were personified by the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, and Conservative Party leader Stanley Baldwin. Both men championed Indian constitutional reform with the conviction that it would ensure that India remained peaceably in the empire. The diehards, embodied by Winston Churchill and *Daily Mail* proprietor Lord Rothermere, viewed the reforms as a repeat of the catastrophic policy that led to the loss of most of Ireland. Rothermere and his fellow press lord, Beaverbrook, sought to use their papers to incite a popular revolt among Conservatives to oust Baldwin from his perch of party leader and replace him with someone more in line with their views of empire and their opposition to the Indian reforms process.

In the election of May 1929 the Conservatives suffered defeat; Baldwin resigned and Labour formed a minority government. The Tory rank and file attempted to ascertain who or what was responsible for the shock defeat at the polls. Many blamed their leader and what they

saw as his bland leadership style exemplified by his choice for party electioneering slogan: “Safety First.” Local Conservative Associations in the Tory stronghold of the south of England propounded protection and the development of the empire as the key to regaining office. Baldwin, however, in late 1929, kept the shadow cabinet in line and maintained the party’s support for free trade because he feared that adopting the mantle of protection would alienate as many voters as it would attract.

In opposition to the free trade status quo preached by Baldwin, Lord Beaverbrook, a Conservative peer, championed his vision of an imperial customs union of the Dominions, Crown Colonies and Britain which he termed his Empire Free Trade (EFT) crusade.¹ Beaverbrook, a Canadian by birth, had been in Andrew Bonar Law’s inner circle (though more as an observer than participant). He had lost his influence in the party leadership circles with the accession of Baldwin as party leader in 1923 and therefore bore Baldwin no small amount of ill will; this animus increased with the Tory defeat of 1929. Through EFT, which would establish an imperial free trade zone while erecting a barrier to outside competition, Beaverbrook hoped to encourage imperial solidarity, revive British industry, and protect the British farmer. The last goal aroused the most resistance in Britain as it would result in a tax on foreign food and roused the fear of “dear bread.” The fact that the dominions did not want EFT, as they had nascent industries they wanted to protect from British competition, did not deter Beaverbrook in the least.²

Complicating an already complex situation, Beaverbrook was also a press lord, the proprietor of the *Daily Express*. His friend and fellow press lord, Lord Rothermere of the *Daily*

¹ The EFT crusader became a fixture on the *Daily Express* masthead and remains there to this day though few now remember what it originally stood for.

² In the end the Conservative dominated National Government adopted protection with tariffs enacted in January 1932. Empire Free Trade became an effectively dead issue after the Ottawa Conference in the summer of 1932.

Mail, also wanted to oust Baldwin and redefine the Conservative Party, but saw India, not EFT, as the issue to accomplish these goals. Rothermere envisioned a Conservative Party and government that cracked down on Indian nationalists (and presumably nationalists elsewhere in the empire) and slowed the reforms process to a glacial pace. Not only did these two press lords use their newspapers to promote their agendas they started their own political movement, combining Beaverbrook's EFT and Rothermere's United Empire Party: the Empire Crusade. Rothermere was the dominant persona in the movement; hence, India trumped EFT as the most important issue in the Empire Crusade. Empire Crusade was never an independent political party nor was it a movement within the Conservative Party; the press lords attempted to co-opt the party by attracting the support of Tory backbenchers and voters via running Empire Crusade candidates at any and all by-elections.

There was also the peculiar position of the *Times*. In spite of its relatively small circulation, the *Times* was widely acknowledged as the unofficial official paper of the Conservative Party, or at least the most respected of the Tory papers. Moreover, the editor of the *Times*, Geoffrey Dawson, was in a unique position as a close friend of Viceroy Lord Irwin. In a voluminous correspondence during his five years in India, Irwin utilized Dawson as his unofficial advisor, sounding board, and emissary to Westminster.³ Dawson also established a close working relationship with the Labour Government's Secretary of State for India, Wedgwood Benn, and had a close friendship with Conservative leader Baldwin. The *Times* editor used the leader columns in his paper counter rumors and bad press about the Viceroy and his policies. He also met privately with the editors of other papers in efforts to persuade them to adopt views on India in line with his and Irwin's.

The struggle within the Conservative ranks was important to the press because the vast

³ See the Dawson correspondences with Irwin and Benn at the India Office Library and the *Times* archives.

majority of leading papers were press was overwhelmingly Conservative.⁴ Therefore, in the press Tory issues were equated with national ones; since the Conservative press saw India as a defining issue it became a nationally defining issue as well. Fundamentally, the press diehards wanted to turn India into a domestic party issue while the remainder of the Tory press, as well as their Liberal and Labour counterparts, wanted to keep the issue out of the domestic political arena.

The pro-reformers and the diehards looked to the precedent of Ireland: pro-reformers believed that the British Government withheld reform from Ireland far too long which resulted in a bloody civil war and the loss of Southern Ireland, while for the diehards saw reform, not the lack thereof, as the root cause of Ireland's troubles. It is unsurprising that both sides used Ireland example as the Troubles there were still painfully close both temporally and geographically, just across the Irish Sea, to Britons. In the balance, the diehards used the Ireland precedent much more than the pro-reformers, perhaps because many India diehards were also fervent unionists.

The *Manchester Guardian* best expressed the Irish argument for the pro-reformers:

The real blot on English dealings with Ireland was not that we gave Ireland 'strong' or 'weak' Governments, but that for many generations we consistently refused to give her any Government at all which Irishmen would consent to back. It is the efforts of Lord Carson and all his friends of the past that we have to thank for the existence of Mr. De Valera to-day. Are we to repeat the same hoary error in our dealings with India?⁵

The *Morning Post* encapsulated the diehard stance: "We remember the ignominious failure of the attempt to coerce Ulster, and we venture to predict that any such attempt in India would fail even more disastrously."⁶ Gandhi was the "Eastern de Valera," a rebel masquerading as a saint:

⁴ There were eleven Conservative or Conservative leaning papers versus only two for Labour and the Liberals, respectively.

⁵ "A Decisive Vote." Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 5 Dec. 1934: 10b. Also see G.T. Garratt, "India and the Conference," *New Statesman & Nation*, 31 Dec. 1932, 850, "India in the Commons," *Economist*, 15 Dec. 1934, 1134 and "The Irwin-Gandhi Agreement," *Spectator*, 14 Mar. 1931, 392.

⁶ "Squaring the Round Table." Editorial. *Morning Post*. 20 Jan. 1931: 10b.

His formula of 'civil disobedience' is well-calculated to give him all the prestige of a rebel leader, with none of its disabilities; when his followers so far misapprehend his meaning as to shoot or be shot he is genuinely grieved that they should have misinterpreted his spiritual message.⁷

The diehards used the Irish case on two points: to draw a parallel between the religious divisions of Ireland and those of India and to argue against the effectiveness of the proposed safeguards of the India reforms.⁸

Only five months after the Tory electoral defeat, the Irwin Declaration set off a domestic political firestorm. The *Daily Mail* seized the Irwin Declaration as an opportunity to pry Baldwin from his position as Conservative Party leader. The *Mail*, supported by the *Daily Express* sought to rally Conservatives against their leader. The other Conservative or Conservative leaning papers, the *Times*, *Sunday Times*, *Morning Post*, and *Daily Telegraph* leapt to Baldwin's defense and sought to refute the *Mail's* accusations. The remainder of the press argued over the culpability, or lack thereof, of the Labour Government in the declaration.

The *Daily Mail* accused Baldwin of making "an extraordinary blunder" and plunging "the country into a political crisis of the first magnitude on the vital question of the British administration of India." Baldwin had deliberately committed "to support the Socialist Government's policy of granting full Home Rule and Dominion status to the natives of India" without consulting the shadow cabinet. The paper considered the ex-Premier in a deeply grave predicament and claimed that

In highly influential Conservative circles...the feeling was strongly expressed that his inexplicable vacillation in a matter of such gravity has placed the leadership of

⁷ "Dear Mr. Gandhi." Editorial. *Morning Post*. 10 Mar. 1930: 10b.

⁸ See "Vague Talk in Cloudland." Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 20 Jan. 1931: 8b, "Steering into Danger." Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 17 Aug. 1932: 8b, "A Perilous Experiment." Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 18 Mar. 1933: 10b, "The Indian Gamble." Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 19 Dec. 1934: 10b, "Squaring the Round Table." Editorial. *Morning Post*. 20 Jan. 1931: 10b, "Without Their Host." Editorial. *Morning Post*. 27 Dec. 1932: 8b, and "The Spirit of Partners." Editorial. *Morning Post*. 18 Mar. 1933: 10b. Some British moderate papers also used the Irish model: See "The Riddle of India," *Time & Tide*, 8 Nov. 1929, 1828 and 14 June 1930, Harold Cox, "Realities in India," *Sunday Times*, 21 Aug. 1932, 8, and "Re-enter Mr. Gandhi." Editorial. *Observer*. 25 Jan. 1931: 14b.

the party in urgent question.⁹

Criticizing the Viceroy served as another means of attacking the Conservative leader. The *Mail* first highlighted the pair's long connection -- describing Irwin as "an intimate political friend of Mr. Baldwin" and reminded readers that Baldwin had named Irwin Viceroy – and then attempted to sully Irwin and his declaration by suggesting he was tainted with the contagion of socialism:

Lord Irwin has always belonged to a section of the Conservative Party which manifested dangerous leanings towards platonic flirtation with Socialism. Since the general election this tendency has apparently developed for the Viceroy has met his new political chiefs more than half-way by urging on them the extremely risky course of pledging themselves to give complete self-government to [India].¹⁰

The *Mail* blamed Irwin for being the prime mover of the declaration; however, Churchill (writing in the same paper) blamed the "Socialist Government," not the Viceroy, for the declaration.¹¹ The paper also described the declaration as part of a "Socialist policy" which it stated could lead to the dismemberment of the entire British Empire.¹² The *Daily Express* accused Baldwin of reverting "to what might be called his pro-Irwin attitude" in dragging the Conservative Party into approving the Viceroy's declaration.¹³

Other Conservative papers leapt to the defense of Baldwin. The *Sunday Times* criticized the *Daily Mail* for diverting so much attention to its "red herring," accusations against Baldwin, in the controversy that arose over Indian policy. The paper essentially accused the *Mail* of shoddy journalism when it stated that:

It was reasonable to suppose that a newspaper of any standing and respectability

⁹ "Mr. Baldwin's Crowning Blunder." Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 1 Nov. 1929: 13a.

¹⁰ Ibid. *Truth* echoed the *Mail*'s personal criticism of Irwin and Baldwin: "Lord Irwin... is the best type of statesman, high minded, disinterested, and courageous. But beneath the surface he is, like his friend Mr. Baldwin, inclined to be sentimental and a bit of a Socialist... he is just a little afraid of the legal mind of Sir John Simon, and of the common sense of Lord Burnham and the other Commissioners. By idealists like Lord Irwin lawyers and common-sense men are always suspected, if not disliked." "Lord Irwin and Mr. Benn," *Truth*, 13 Nov. 1929, 829.

¹¹ Winston Churchill, "The Peril in India," *Daily Mail*, 16 Nov. 1929, 10c.

¹² "Great Political Mystery." Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 2 Nov. 1929: 11a.

¹³ "No Conservative Revolt Against the Government," *Daily Express*, 4 Nov. 1929, 1d.

would not have committed itself to a statement of this gravity on a matter of Imperial concern without the fullest inquiry and confirmation, checked and counter-checked.¹⁴

The *Yorkshire Post* announced that it did not know where the *Daily Mail* obtained the alleged information concerning Baldwin, “nor do we know what steps may have been taken to seek verification.” The *Post* charged:

Attacks on Mr. Baldwin have been too consistent to be accidental, and they have come widely to be regarded as constituting a veritable vendetta against the person of the Conservative leader. Some of Lord Rothermere’s papers have not hesitated openly to suggest Lord Beaverbrook as his successor.¹⁵

Yet the *Post* was not a fan of Baldwin:

we should be prepared to welcome such changes in party organization as might appear, upon due and calm reflection, to appear desirable and in the true interests of the party. But these personal attacks do not conduce to such due and calm reflection, nor do they advance the cause of Conservatism in the country.¹⁶

The sensational rumors and assertions regarding Baldwin’s responsibility for the declaration would only “confuse the main issues in the eyes of the public, and possibly also to produce even more dangerous results.”¹⁷ The *Morning Post* claimed it was searching for “the origin of the vendetta against Mr. Baldwin” and declared there was a remarkable strengthening of opinion in support of the Conservative leader.¹⁸ The *Daily Telegraph* described the *Mail*’s attack as “a calculated attempt to discredit and hold up to contempt the leader of the Conservative party.”¹⁹

Papers also praised Baldwin for his unyielding refutation of the *Mail*’s accusations in Parliament. Compelled by questions rumors about the *Daily Mail* article swirling around the House of Commons, Baldwin made a brief, concise statement that effectively ended the controversy:

¹⁴ “Red Herrings and Realities: The Indian Crisis.” Editorial. *Sunday Times*. 3 Nov. 1929: 16b.

¹⁵ “India’s Future.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 2 Nov. 1929: 10b.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ “An Ominous Rumble from India.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 4 Nov. 1929: 11a.

¹⁹ “Mr. Baldwin and His Attackers.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 8 Nov. 1929: 12c.

I rise for a moment to ask the indulgence of the House to make an observation with regard to an article which has been brought to my notice as having appeared in to-day's issue of the "Daily Mail." It is sufficient for me at the moment to say that every statement of fact and every implication of fact contained in that article is untrue, and in my opinion gravely injurious to the public interest, not only in this country, but throughout the Empire. I shall have occasion, I hope, at an early date, to examine and make clear the whole position.²⁰

The *Daily Telegraph* depicted Baldwin's denial as direct and comprehensive and predicted it would "be generally warmly supported."²¹ The *Times* praised Baldwin for his powerful Commons speech in defense of his actions which, the paper claimed, "raised the whole controversy to a level of high statesmanship."²² The *Morning Post* described Baldwin's refutation of the *Daily Mail's* allegations as "a complete and crushing denial" enthusiastically cheered by MP's on all sides.²³ The *Yorkshire Post* described Baldwin's denial as "one of those speeches with which he occasionally delights the House and country." The paper considered Baldwin fully vindicated from the *Daily Mail's* personal attacks and declared that the Conservative leader "will have still further enhanced the affection and esteem wherein he is held by the country."²⁴

Other papers either ignored or sidestepped the *Daily Mail* versus Baldwin clash and instead used the declaration controversy to make partisan attacks. Some preferred to attack both Baldwin and the Labour Government. The main issue for these papers was the culpability of the Labour Government for the Irwin Declaration. This was the Labour Party's first effective

²⁰ Hansards *HC Deb 01 November 1929 vol 231 cc475*.

²¹ "An Unwise Statement of Policy." Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 2 Nov. 1929: 10c.

²² "The Indian Reaction." Editorial. *Times*. 8 Nov. 1929: 15b.

²³ "Mr. Baldwin Nails the *Daily Mail*." Editorial. *Morning Post*. 8 Nov. 1929: 11a.

²⁴ "Mr. Baldwin's Vindication." Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 8 Nov. 1929: 10b. In response to the Conservative leader's refutation of the paper's allegations the *Daily Mail* asserted it was bound to accept Baldwin's denial. But in the same breath it claimed that the information published "reached us from a very high authority. We conceived it to be our duty to publish it in the public interest, because it involves the most important question of the safety of the Empire." ("Great Political Mystery." Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 2 Nov. 1929: 11a.) The *Morning Post* stated that in spite of accepting Baldwin's denial the *Daily Mail* "persisted by insinuation and innuendo in its allegations against the Conservative ex-Premier on the subject of Lord Irwin's declaration." ("Mr. Baldwin and the *Daily Mail*." Editorial. *Morning Post*. 5 Nov. 1929: 11d.)

government and its political opponents used the crisis to attempt to discredit it. The *Manchester Guardian* stated that the Labour Government had the best of intentions regarding the Irwin Declaration, namely sparing India another campaign of civil disobedience, but claimed that the statement was unfair to the Simon Commission, Parliament, and, ultimately, to India. The *Guardian* reasoned that the Government gambled “on a mere hope without waiting to study the evidence which has been laboriously collected.” The paper described the incident in dramatic terms, also taking a swipe at the diehards personified by Lord Birkenhead:

The Labour Government wished to see Great Britain and India pledge each other in a cup of reconciliation. There was a flaw in the cup. It was broken before it has reached our lips, and Lord Birkenhead has derived considerable amusement from kicking the pieces about the floor.²⁵

The *Daily Telegraph* claimed that the Government, the Secretary of State for India in particular, mishandled the situation. The *Telegraph* contended that the Government did not inform Baldwin that the Statutory Commission disapproved of the declaration for a month after the fact.²⁶

Some papers used the opportunity to contrast the Conservative imperial policy with that of Labour. The *Saturday Review* continued to make domestic political hay by praising the Conservatives and deriding Labour. The *Review* contrasted the parties’ India policies as “the patient building with facts which is the distinctively Conservative contribution to politics” versus the Labour “stark abstract theory” and the “imposition of political formulae.”²⁷ The *Daily Express* claimed that MacDonald created “a crisis of the first magnitude” as both the Liberals and Baldwin withdrew whatever assent they may or may not have given to the declaration. The *Express* considered the greatest danger to the Labour Government was within its own party.²⁸ The *Yorkshire Post* criticized the Labour Government for picking and choosing when and where

²⁵ “Lord Reading and the Indian Debate.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 6 Nov. 1929: 10b.

²⁶ “Mr. Baldwin and His Attackers.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 8 Nov. 1929: 12c.

²⁷ “The Government’s Prospects,” *Saturday Review*, 9 Nov. 1929, 532.

²⁸ “The Political Situation Boils Over,” *Daily Express*, 2 Nov. 1929, 1a.

to defer to the “man on the spot.” The *Post* claimed that the “Socialist Government” only supported men on the spot who shared their views, i.e. Irwin, and ignored or recalled those who did not, namely Lord Lloyd from Egypt.²⁹ While condemning both the Government and the Viceroy for the crisis surrounding the declaration; though *Truth* ultimately blamed Irwin for suggesting the proclamation to the Government. The paper claimed that both parties knew that the Simon Commission and the leaders of the Conservative and Liberal parties opposed the proclamation but they went ahead with the declaration anyway.³⁰

Partisan politics also played a role in the debate over the Irwin Declaration. The conservative *Times* defended the Labour Government, represented by Benn, during the India crisis. The paper blamed the Liberal leaders, along with “their would-be Conservative recruits” for the uproar and stated that neither party would “come with any great credit out of their ‘India crisis.’”³¹ Thanks to Dawson’s close relationship with Irwin, the *Times* editor cultivated a working relationship with Benn in preparing for and dealing with the aftermath of the Viceroy’s declaration.³² The *Daily Herald* initially reserved its venom for Lord Reading and the House of Lords in its entirety as the most malicious attacks against the declaration emanated from the Lords. The paper described the body as “the reactionary Upper House” and the former Viceroy’s criticism of the declaration as a “mischievous attack.”³³ At the end of the crisis the *Herald* attacked the Conservative Party as a whole. The paper suggested that Lords Birkenhead and Rothermere failed in their efforts to discredit Benn and only succeeded in “stirring up new domestic troubles for the harassed and unhappy party of which they are distinguished, if

²⁹ “The India Debate.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 6 Nov. 1929: 10b. Labour Foreign Secretary Arthur Henderson removed Lord Lloyd as High Commissioner to Egypt in 1920 due to his opposition to a treaty in which Britain gave up its control of Egypt’s internal affairs and withdrew its troops to the canal zone.

³⁰ “Lord Irwin and Mr. Benn,” *Truth*, 13 Nov. 1929, 829.

³¹ “The Indian Reaction.” Editorial. *Times*. 8 Nov. 1929: 15b.

³² See the Dawson correspondences with Irwin and Benn at the India Office Library and the *Times* archives.

³³ “India.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 5 Nov. 1929: 6a.

turbulent, members...The Opposition may be left to deal with its own dirty linen.” In the end, the *Herald* claimed that the roguish machinations of a handful of “reactionary politicians” could not spoil the “Benn-Irwin policy” as they were no longer responsible for government.³⁴

Pro-reform papers wanted to keep the issue of Indian constitutional reform outside the realm of domestic politics. The *Economist* stated that the method of the Simon Commission was successful in keeping India out of British politics but despaired that the Irwin declaration brought India back into the political arena.³⁵ The *Spectator* expressed disbelief that rational men would want to substitute an all-party India policy for “factious strife...when they must know that the price will be the wrecking of any settlement in India.” The paper asserted that the result would be the Government unnecessarily forced from office and contended that the India issue “has been distorted either for the sake...of injuring the Government or for the sake of injuring Mr. Baldwin.”³⁶

The *Daily Mail* used the Congress declaration of independence in January 1930 to intensify diehard efforts to dislodge Baldwin and change the shape of British party politics. The *Daily Mail* connected the Viceroy’s conciliatory policies, which it blamed for inciting Congress to act, with Baldwin’s leadership. The paper still aimed to pry Baldwin from his post as Conservative Party leader and make India a party issue:

Conservatives throughout the country should keep this chapter of events steadily in mind. They will then realise how large a share of responsibility attaches to Mr. Baldwin for the present critical state of affairs in India...At any moment in the next few months a general election may be sprung upon Parliament by the Socialists. If such an election is precipitated, is the Conservative Party to go to the country with as its head, a leader who has so grave a share in shaking the British position in India to its foundations?³⁷

³⁴ “India.” Editorial. *Daily Herald*. 8 Nov. 1929: 6a.

³⁵ “The Indian Problem in Parliament,” *Economist*, 9 Nov. 1929, 856.

³⁶ “The Indian ‘Crisis,’” *Spectator*, 9 Nov. 1929, 652.

³⁷ “Mr. Baldwin and India.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 2 Jan. 1930: 8b.

Then in March 1930 Rothermere entered politics directly with the creation of his United Empire Party (UEP). Rothermere blamed blunders by both Labour and Conservative Governments that not only brought “the break-up of India...within the bounds of possibility” but even raised the specter of the “break-up of the whole British Empire.” The goal of the UEP was best summed up as “no more surrenders to Indian agitators.”³⁸ The UEP would run candidates in by-elections in the Conservative heartland of London and its suburbs from 1930 through 1935, most famously at St. George’s, Westminster in March 1931.

Domestic politics became an issue again at the conclusion of the first round table conference. The basic question was whether or not the Conservative Party accepted the reforms process at the conclusion of the first round of talks. The *British Weekly* and *New Statesman* claimed that the Conservative Party, because of the statements by its conference spokesman, Lord Peel, came into line with the reforms process at the conference. The *Statesman* added emphatically that the Conservatives “have moved to a position from which they cannot in honour, or in common decency, recede!”³⁹ However, the *Morning Post* interpreted Lord Peel to mean that the Conservative Party committed to nothing at the conference but would await the “finished picture” before pronouncing judgment on the reforms process. The *Post* stated that “It would be fatal to commit ourselves to crude projects which are rejected and feared by a great part of the population.”⁴⁰ The *Sunday Times* also seemed to opt the Conservative Party out of accepting the results of the conference. It stated that when the Labour Government formulated its India policy it would be speaking only for itself, not necessarily Great Britain as a whole. Liberal and Conservative statesmen, according to the *Sunday Times*, may or may not adhere to

³⁸ Lord Rothermere, “The United Empire Party and India,” *Daily Mail*, 4 Mar. 1930, 10c.

³⁹ “New Hope for India.” Editorial. *British Weekly*. 22 Jan. 1931: 343d and “The Round Table Adjourns,” *New Statesman*, 24 Jan. 1931, 456.

⁴⁰ “Squaring the Round Table.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 20 Jan. 1931: 10b.

the general principles or details of that policy either now or in the future.⁴¹

In the wake of the first roundtable conference, pro-reform papers ridiculed the diehards for their ill-fated attempt to split the Conservative Party. They noted with relief that despite diehard efforts, the Conservative Party “has shown very little sign that it shares the fear and indignation of these eminent fanatics.”⁴² Churchill and Lord Lloyd were only “two voices crying in the wilderness” who should not be allowed to overshadow the resolutions approved by delegates of all three British parties at the conference.⁴³ Hence *Time & Tide* attacked Rothermere for his interventions in Indian affairs but reasoned “there is little danger that such articles...will have any more serious effect on opinion in this country than his previous abortive political stunts.”⁴⁴

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact coincided with the St. George’s by-election in which Beaverbrook and Rothermere supported the anti-Baldwin candidate Sir Ernest Petter. St. George’s became a national issue when the Conservative candidate dropped out of the race because of his lack of confidence in the Tory leader. The party scrambled to find a replacement candidate and Baldwin briefly considered contesting the seat himself as a test of confidence in his leadership. In the end, Duff Cooper stepped forward as the official Conservative candidate and won the seat easily. Tensions, therefore, were high, as the press rhetoric illustrates.

The *Daily Mail* questioned how Baldwin would react to the Gandhi-Irwin Pact:

Will it be the policy of confirming every surrender by the Viceroy and handing over India to the tender mercies of a bitterly hostile Congress party...? Or will it be the policy of Mr. Churchill which is the manly course of putting the foot down, and refusing the scuttle in shameful manner from our duties and responsibilities in the East?⁴⁵

⁴¹ Lord Peel, “The Indian Conference – and After,” *Sunday Times*, 18 Jan. 1931, 12.

⁴² “The Round Table Adjourns,” *New Statesman*, 24 Jan. 1931, 456.

⁴³ “India and the Future,” *Truth*, 28 Jan. 1931, 126.

⁴⁴ “After the Round Table Conference,” *Time & Tide*, 24 Jan. 1931, 85.

⁴⁵ “What Will Baldwin Do?” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 5 Mar. 1931: 8b.

The *British Weekly* accused the diehards, both in Parliament and the press, of striving to ‘keep the flames of hatred alight in India.’⁴⁶ The *Economist* criticized both Churchill and Rothermere’s opposition to the pact and the reforms process in general. It described Churchill’s advice to “put back the clock” in India as impractical and Rothermere’s advocacy of the firm hand in dealing with India as ill-informed. If realized, Churchill’s and Rothermere’s suggestions would lead to nothing less than the loss of India.⁴⁷ The *New Statesman & Nation* stated that it did not attach much importance to the “vulgar abuse of Gandhi and the Viceroy in which Lord Rothermere’s newspapers are indulging themselves.” The paper expressed hope that the Conservative Party would accept the pact and recognize “that a courageous and generous policy is the only possible policy in India to-day.”⁴⁸

Sections of the conservative, and even the Labour, press continued to defend Baldwin against diehard attacks. The *Statesman* claimed that the Conservative diehards were badgering Baldwin to disavow the Viceroy “and in effect to abdicate in favour of Mr. Churchill.” The paper concluded that if the Conservative leader were driven from office on the issue of India, “it will be the most creditable incident of his career, but a bad day for England and the Empire.”⁴⁹ *Truth* argued that Baldwin’s defeat in the St. George’s by-election by the diehards would have disastrous effects in India. The paper contended that the election was being used as a “dirty instrument” by the Tory diehards.⁵⁰ The *Yorkshire Post* claimed that Irwin had justified the country’s confidence in his statesmanship as well as refuted

⁴⁶ “Great News from India.” Editorial. *British Weekly*, 5 Mar. 1931: 468d.

⁴⁷ “The India Truce,” *Economist*, 7 Mar. 1931, 490.

⁴⁸ “Untitled,” *New Statesman & Nation*, 7 Mar. 1931, 50.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ “Mr. Baldwin and the Diehards,” *Truth*, 18 Mar. 1931, 432.

the violent personal attacks made on him less...on account of any knowledge of his own characteristics than because it was hoped that popular distrust of him might reflect directly upon Mr. Baldwin, who appointed him.⁵¹

The *Times* accused Churchill of being the epicenter of the press attacks against Baldwin in his efforts “to ‘marshal British opinion’ in support of a policy of repression” in India. The paper claimed that no one could deny his sincerity, but stated that in Churchill’s “attitude there is a certain suspicion of ‘anti-Baldwinism,’ and it is quite clear that the anti-Baldwin *claque* in the Press is merely following his lead in the furtherance of their personal vendetta.”⁵²

The specter of a Conservative Party split rose up again with the publication of the Joint Select Report in November 1934. The basic issue remained the same: the diehards attempted to make India a party issue while the reformers sought to keep it out. The *Manchester Guardian* claimed that the diehards had gained little in the debates over the report as the stiffening of the safeguards was only a matter of form, not substance.⁵³ Attlee, writing in the *New Statesman & Nation* expressed disbelief that the diehards would feel alarmed by the report as the Labour leader considered the safeguards “very ample.” Attlee asserted that the Labour opposition would oppose the report for this reason.⁵⁴ The *Observer* criticized the Labour opposition for treating the report as a capitulation to the diehards; the paper also disparaged the diehards and their contention that the document was “an abject surrender to sentimentalism.”⁵⁵ On the diehard side, the *Daily Mail* contended that the safeguards were worthless and would “do the Government great harm and alienate Conservative votes wholesale.” The *Mail* also cheered Churchill in his fight to defeat the reforms “and thus save the Empire from such a catastrophe as the loss of

⁵¹ “‘Armistice’ in India.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 5 Mar. 1931: 8b.

⁵² “India and Party Politics.” Editorial. *Times*. 5 Mar. 1931: 15b.

⁵³ “A Great State Paper.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 22 Nov. 1934: 10b.

⁵⁴ Clement Attlee, “The Indian Report,” *New Statesman & Nation*, 24 Nov. 1934, 745.

⁵⁵ J.L. Garvin, “India and the Issue,” *Observer*, 25 Nov. 1934, 18c.

India.”⁵⁶ The *Morning Post* declared that the White Paper policy aroused grave fears and threatened to divide the Conservative Party.⁵⁷

The India debate reached its crescendo in the domestic political sphere with the Conservative Party meeting at Queen’s Hall, London. Representatives of all the Conservative constituencies across Great Britain met in early December 1934 to settle the issue of the Conservative Party’s stance on India and the reforms process. The pro-reform papers praised Baldwin but most also expressed sympathy for the diehards in an effort to maintain a united party front. A split in the Conservative Party would have led to many Tories withdrawing from the National Government and a probable collapse of the Government.

Pro-reform papers hailed the meeting as a success and heaped praise on Baldwin for holding the party together. The *Times* described the support for Baldwin and the reforms policy as overwhelming at the Queen’s Hall meeting. The paper added that even an adverse vote would not have halted the Government’s Indian policy or would have been fatal to Baldwin’s position as party leader. The *Sunday Times* agreed that if the vote had gone the other way it would probably not have changed the Government’s India policy. However, an unfavorable decision “would certainly have affected the alignment of the political parties, and probably ruined the prospects of the National Government in the future”⁵⁸ The *Daily Telegraph* portrayed Britain’s Indian reforms policy as fostered by Conservative statesmanship. The *Manchester Guardian* described the Queen’s Hall vote as a veritable vote of confidence for Baldwin as the Conservative leader identified himself with the reform proposals; the paper claimed that the Tory rank and file recognized this and voted accordingly in support of their party leader.⁵⁹ The

⁵⁶ “More Sham Safeguards.” Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 22 Nov. 1934: 12b.

⁵⁷ “New Wine in Old Bottles.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 22 Nov. 1934: 10b.

⁵⁸ Scrutator, “Conservatives and India,” *Sunday Times*, 9 Dec. 1934, 16d.

⁵⁹ “A Decisive Vote.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 5 Dec. 1934: 10b.

Economist claimed that many Conservatives expressed sympathy for the diehard thesis but voted for the reforms for fear of splitting the Tory Party.⁶⁰

The pro-reform press, for the most part, also expressed sympathy for the defeated diehards. The *Yorkshire Post*, for example, warned against “any sort of ‘crowing’ over the defeated minority. They are good Conservatives and sincere men.”⁶¹ Somewhat less generously, the *Manchester Guardian* stated that no one doubted Churchill’s sincerity but expressed its wish “that on this occasion his sincerity could have been allied to a better judgment on the issues at stake and rather more insight into the minds of his countrymen.”⁶² The *Daily Telegraph* claimed to understand the diehard fears and anxieties but hoped that the diehards’ dissent would be marked by restraint as not to encourage Indian extremists.⁶³ A minority of papers condemned the diehards outright. The *Sunday Times* feared that a diehard victory at Queen’s Hall would have split the party or, worse still, identified the party with reaction⁶⁴ and the *Observer* insisted that if the diehards had succeeded in defeating the party’s India policy, the result would have been “to bring a Socialist Government into power.”⁶⁵

On the diehard side, the *Morning Post* rationalized the defeat at Queen’s Hall as Conservatives being blinded by the love of party to vote for proposals that “could hardly stand the cold light of reason.” The *Post* also cheered the diehard minority for their valiant struggle “to save India from a foolish and ruinous project” and declared that the fight had only just begun. The paper hoped that before the battle was over “the prudence and caution which we used to think characteristic of the British nation will again prevail.”⁶⁶ The *Saturday Review* was a bit

⁶⁰ “Diehards’ Defeat,” *Economist*, 8 Dec. 1934, 1085.

⁶¹ “The Conservative Decision.” Editorial. *Yorkshire Post*. 5 Dec. 1934: 12b.

⁶² “A Decisive Vote.” Editorial. *Manchester Guardian*. 5 Dec. 1934: 10b.

⁶³ “A Decisive Vote on India Policy.” Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 5 Dec. 1934: 14b.

⁶⁴ Scrutator, “Conservatives and India,” *Sunday Times*, 9 Dec. 1934, 16d.

⁶⁵ “Conservatives and India.” Editorial. *Observer*. 9 Dec. 1934: 14b.

⁶⁶ “At the Queen’s Hall.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 5 Dec. 1934: 10b.

more harsh and apocalyptic in its assessment of the Queen's Hall vote:

Mr. Baldwin does not know India. He is unacquainted with the East. He is always wrong...His leadership of the Conservative Party has been a succession of disasters, culminating in this.⁶⁷

The *Review* also described the India reforms as a "Socialist policy" and a "betrayal of the Party."

The *Daily Mail* claimed that the Government spokesmen "administered a large dose of soothing syrup" to the Conservative delegates about a policy which would "throw India into chaos."⁶⁸

The diehards were also not willing to give up their fight for the identity of the Conservative Party. The *Daily Express* surprisingly described the diehard effort in Parliament as a poor showing.⁶⁹ The diehards sought to prolong the India debate "unless there is a revolt in the Conservative Party itself against tactics that must play directly into the hands of the Socialists." Any diehard success would only encourage the Congress Party in its attempts to destroy the proposed constitution.⁷⁰ The Labour opposition voted with the diehards against the reforms process. The "Socialist attitude" could only add to the difficulties that needed to be overcome in India while the *Times* contended that the contrary vote only did the Labour Party harm. Though the general public was disinterested in India, the Labour vote would be condemned by "every good judge of political competence."⁷¹

The diehards, through Rothermere's United Empire Party, sought still to turn India into an electoral issue by running candidates at by-elections as late as February 1935. In the Wavertree by-election the UEP candidate, Randolph Churchill, son of Winston, split the Conservative vote and allowed Labour to take a previously safe Conservative seat. The *Times* asserted that an overwhelming majority in Britain favored the India Bill and thus there was no

⁶⁷ Saturday Review 8 Dec. 1934

⁶⁸ "The Stormclouds." Editorial. *Daily Mail*. 5 Dec. 1934: 12b.

⁶⁹ "Retreat from Delhi." Editorial. *Daily Express*. 19 Dec. 1934: 10b.

⁷⁰ "The Commons and India," *Truth*, 19 Dec. 1934, 936.

⁷¹ "Parliament's Voice on India." Editorial. *Daily Telegraph*. 13 Dec. 1934: 14b and "Their Lordships Concur." Editorial. *Times*. 19 Dec. 1934: 15b.

reason that the legislation should be withdrawn in order to placate “the prodigals of the Conservative Party.” The Wavertree by-election demonstrated that “every conceivable effort to rouse the electorate on the India question proved an utter failure on the most favourable ground.”⁷² The *Observer* criticized Randolph Churchill, who caused the loss of the Wavertree seat to a Socialist, and Lord Rothermere, who the paper accused of “chiefly kindled and fuelled the anti-Ministerial agitation.” The paper considered their work as sabotage “attempted by a furious faction against the fabric of the Empire itself.”⁷³ In sharp contrast, the *Daily Express* described the Wavertree election as a severe blow against the National Government and its India policy, one that would “fortify the right wing opposition in the Conservative party to the India Bill.”⁷⁴ For the *Morning Post*, Randolph Churchill’s 10,500 votes at Wavertree constituted a victory and a portent of things to come:

With youthful impetuosity he expressed what so many English people must feel about the surrender of India. And this feeling, it is obvious, will not diminish, but is bound to increase if the surrender proceeds as the calamitous results are brought home to the British public.⁷⁵

Baldwin and the pro-reformers won the war versus the diehards culminating in 1935 with a new India Act that expanded powers for Indians at the provincial level and in the central government, though the act did not provide for dominion status. The reformers also kept India out of the arena of domestic politics and maintained a Conservative Party identity that embraced constitutional reform in order to strengthen ties with India and the empire. The diehards could neither bring the party leadership nor rank and file Tories into line with their line of thinking. In the struggle for the soul of the Conservative Party Baldwin and the reformers emerged victorious and the diehards relegated to the fringe; Churchill floundered in the political wilderness.

⁷² “On With the Bill.” Editorial. *Times*. 12 Feb. 1935: 15b.

⁷³ J.L. Garvin, “Out of Hand,” *Observer*, 10 Feb. 1935, 16c.

⁷⁴ “A Blow to the Government.” Editorial. *Daily Express*. 7 Feb. 1935: 10b.

⁷⁵ “Before it’s Too Late.” Editorial. *Morning Post*. 8 Feb. 1935: 12b.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

A curious article appeared in the 9 December 1931 issue of *Truth*. The item, with no identified author, entitled “The Diehard v. Great Soul” depicts a man listening dance music on his wireless after reading the report of the House of Commons India debate. As he drifts off to sleep he dreams that a BBC announcer interrupts the music to introduce an imaginary radio debate between “two of the most eminent protagonists in the Indian controversy,” Winston Churchill and Gandhi. The debate began with the two adversaries exchanging pleasantries: Gandhi making sure his spinning during the debate would not disturb his opponent while Churchill lit a cigar. The meat of the discussion consisted of each side laying out their position: Churchill argued that Britain could not renege on its promises to India, but granting India dominion status would inevitably result in anarchy on the subcontinent. He added that though he only had forty-three MP’s vote with him that did not mean “that old John Bull isn’t of my way of thinking.”¹ Churchill also accuses the Prime Minister, MacDonald (and by extension the entire National Government) of being dishonest to both his own country and India regarding the reforms. Churchill states MacDonald “wants it both ways – soft soap for India and a reassuring wink for his Tory back-benchers.” Gandhi wanted the British government to make up its mind concerning Indian self-government: “Are your repeated pledges of Dominion status all humbug or are you delivering the goods?” Cooperation and hypocrisy could not co-exist, Gandhi stated, “Deliver the goods and I’ll co-operate all right.” The two proceeded to bicker about the pace of reform, status of minorities, and, significantly, democracy itself. According to imaginary Churchill:

We are sick of democracy in the West just at the time when you Indians are displaying a morbid craving for an overdose of it. Believe me, counting noses is a

¹ “The Diehard v. Great Soul,” *Truth*, 9 Dec. 1931,.

childish method of government. It has nearly ruined us. Unfortunately, people in a democracy won't let their noses be counted except at a price – doles and other legislative bribes.

Pretend Churchill also had an interesting vision of a democratic India. He claimed that the Hindus would be a “poor look-out for the British Empire,” meaning that they would not adequately defend British interests in India, hence the need for the ample safeguards. The article and the debate concluded with the author startled awake.

The odd little article raises a number of central issues discussed in this dissertation: the paradoxical relationship between the diehards and democracy both in Britain and India, the essential lack of debate in the press concerning the future of India, the unspoken issue of race, and the limits of Britain's imperial culture. This dissertation shows that India was the major issue of interwar Britain as the press recognized its importance through its voluminous coverage of events on the subcontinent and reforms processes.

Imaginary Churchill's outburst demonstrates his, and the other diehards, distrust of democracy. Universal manhood suffrage did not go into effect in Britain until 1918 and many Conservatives, especially the diehards, had a hard time acquiescing to the new reality. The diehards slowly shifted to accept democratic Britain and they attempted to use the issue of Indian constitutional reform as a means of co-opting the newly enfranchised masses. The days of the ruling elites monopolizing political power were long gone; the diehards needed to bring the masses over to their way of thinking in order to remain in power. “Old John Bull,” fantasy Churchill's view of the English everyman, must have included working class voters, and diehards believed that empire was an important issue to them. The ultimate aim of the diehards was to make India a political issue, use it to dislodge Baldwin from the party leadership, place one of their own in that position, and make the empire a keystone of the Conservative platform in

the next general election and in the new Tory identity. And Churchill, the incurable imperial romantic, saw the Indian constitutional reform issue as his personal path to power. He was confident enough in the India issue as his that he gave up his seat in the shadow cabinet in January 1931 in order to be free to speak against his party's India platform. The diehards believed that the British public shared their traditional conceptions of empire and were only ignorant of the reformists' plans for India. Once the public realized what was going on, the diehards believed, it would demand a change in government policy and in Conservative party leadership. The press diehards, Rothermere especially, with papers seeking out and catering to a mass readership, sought to be the medium to publicize the diehard message to the newly enfranchised masses. Clearly the proprietors of the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express* thought India a subject of interest to attract and keep readers as both papers wrote on the topic amply. The United Empire Party was not intended to become a rival to the Conservative Party but as a vehicle for voters to express dissatisfaction with Tory imperial policies and so prod the party to alter its stance on Indian reform. So committed to the cause was Rothermere that he continued to run UEP candidates well into 1935, long after the India issue had effectively been decided. Evidently "Old John Bull" was not of their way of thinking after all.

It was ironic that the *Truth* article imagined a debate between two men with widely divergent views on Indian constitutional reform because no English paper allowed any divergent opinions in their pages.² When I started this project I expected a lively press debate: a wide variety of opinions and views of British imperialism, Indians, the Raj, and the future of British India. Instead, I found unanimity across the political spectrum, across Britain, and throughout the seventeen years under investigation. Papers, diehard and reformist alike, agreed that British

² One of the view dissenting voices heard sparingly in the English press was the English Anglican minister Charles Freer Andrews. He was a notable friend and close associate of Gandhi.

imperialism brought peace, justice, and prosperity to the subcontinent, the Raj maintained order and served as an impartial arbiter, India was made up of myriad races and religions perpetually at odds with one another, and the Indian nationalists were irrational, incorrigible, and retarding India's progress towards dominion status. Diehard papers, like pretend Churchill, agreed that Britain could not go back on its promises to India. The dispute with the reformists was simply over timing and extent of reform. The press debate in the end boiled down to the reformists viewing reform as the way to guarantee Indian cooperation and engender responsibility while the diehards wanted proof of cooperation and responsibility as the *sine qua non* of constitutional reform.

The dreamer in the *Truth* article was obviously a representative from the middle class as who else would read a report of the India debate in the House of Commons, especially while listening to the radio? No consensus exists among British imperial historians over the breadth and depth of an "imperial culture." John MacKenzie and the so-called "Manchester school" contend that the empire was ubiquitous in British society and that a strong imperial culture embraced the working class. He points to a veritable flood of imperial flavored popular literature, especially juvenile literature, school texts, empire exhibitions, music hall ballads, advertisements, and product packaging as evidence that the empire pervaded everyday British life. Surely MacKenzie would most likely also point to the great interest by the press in India during the interwar era, as evidenced by this project, as further proof of a culture soaked to the gills with imperialism. Bernard Porter and the other imperial skeptics, however, argue that the empire was only of interest to the upper and upper middle classes; the working class was both ignorant of, and disinterested in, imperial issues. Porter disputes the idea of an imperial culture as the majority of the population was concerned with other things rather than empire. The fact

that there was a lot of children's and young adult literature with imperial settings, world maps in schoolrooms with British possessions colored red, or imperially themed songs did not indicate, let alone prove, that the working classes cared about imperial matters. A crucial point of dispute between the two sides is the issue of consumption. Porter and the imperial skeptics argue that a person who bought a tin of biscuits with an imperial scene of India on the lid did not necessarily mean that person was necessarily buying into the imperial ethos as well.³

Porter's argument falters on a basic point: one does not need to care or be concerned about empire to live in an imperial culture: it influenced and shaped culture and ideas whether people were aware of it or not. The press is a perfect example of this. A Briton could hardly pick up a domestic newspaper in the interwar period without being confronted with empire. As this dissertation shows editors talked about constitutional reform on the subcontinent *a lot*. In addition to the leaders examined here, regular news articles, letters to the editor, and special interest stories frequently focused on events in India. It was an unavoidable topic. No matter which paper a Briton chose to read, he or she received the same vision of the empire and British rule: an imperial culture that agreed on the basic conceptions of India and the Raj. The press was open to all, and even the popular press saw India and empire as an important topic.

This dissertation, however, lends support to a key aspect of Porter's argument: only the upper and middle classes cared about empire; the general public did not. Evidence for this view is best illustrated by the diehards. The diehards believed that Britons across the social spectrum were concerned with empire. They were convinced once the public understood Labour and Conservative plans to dismantle the Raj there would be an outraged response leading to a change in Tory leadership and a recasting of Conservative party identity in the diehard mold. The

³ John MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire* (Manchester, 1984) and Bernard Porter, *Absent Minded Imperialists* (Oxford, 2006).

diehard plan failed repeatedly in the face of an overwhelming wall of public apathy. The middle class, represented by newspaper and journal editors, did care about empire and particularly India. The majority of editors supported the government's view that reform would engender cooperation and responsibility over the diehard contention that Indian cooperation and responsibility were preconditions of any reform attempt. The reformers wanted a more progressive view of empire to be a background issue in the new Conservative party, and they especially did not want empire to be a prominent party issue.

The issue of India, and the press, molded the new Conservative Party. India was a deciding issue over what the interwar Tory party would look like: Churchill and the diehard view of a traditional empire forefront in party identity versus the Baldwin and the reformer view of an empire based on cooperation kept out of the political arena. It was in the press that this decision was largely decided as newspapers and journals were the medium that reached the voters of Britain. Through the press readers learned of the divergent conceptions of the Conservative party and, based on that information, made their choice. The evolution of the debate can be seen in the English moderates between 1929 and 1931. The English moderates overlapped both the reformers and the diehards by supporting the reforms process but also calling for a more strict enforcement of law and order in India, particularly against Congress. The gradual movement of the English moderates to the reform side by late 1931 indicates the steady triumph of the reformist view of the empire and party. The fact that a Labour journal, the *New Statesman*, was part of the English moderates and also gravitated to the pro-reformists may indicate that this debate was not restricted just to the ranks of the Conservative party. Evidently the emigration to the moderate position of reform for India transcended party boundaries. But the reformist press clearly saw the diehard challenge as a threat. This is evident in the myriad leaders disputing the

diehard thesis well into 1935.

One curious aspect of the English press and India during this time is that certain assumptions were explained at great length, such as the beneficial aspects of the Raj for Indians and the irresponsibility of Congress, while others were left implicit, such as race and the benefits of the empire for Britain. Evidently editors believed some suppositions needed to be explained or at least their readers reminded of them, while others were so basic as to be understood by all. The issue of race is the proverbial elephant in the room; editors seem to dance around the subject but never explicitly state that Indians were racially ill-equipped for self-rule. This is best exemplified by the debate over dominion status; papers agreed that India was in essence unlike the White Dominions. They did not need to justify how or why the White Dominions earned or deserved dominion status as this was too straightforward to merit explanation. Australians and Canadians are “just like us” and can be trusted implicitly with self-government. Indians are inherently different: racially, religiously, and culturally; they cannot be trusted with preserving and protecting British interests on the subcontinent; hence phantasm Churchill’s charge that Hindus would be a “poor look-out for the British Empire.”

Also left unexplored were the benefits of the Raj to Britain. The English press rarely, if ever, mentioned the advantages Britain accrued from its control of India. India’s role as an important trading partner, a source of gold to stabilize Britain’s balance of trade, and a major pillar of British military might and prestige remained undiscussed. There are three possible explanations for this. One, the press believed in a completely one-sided picture of British altruism with India reaping all the benefits of the Raj with Britain receiving nothing in return. Two, the press assumed implicitly that the newspaper-reading public knew and understood what Britain gained from controlling the subcontinent. Third, the press glossed over the exploitative

aspects of the Raj in order to persuade its readers to support their side of the reform argument; editors did not want their readers to doubt the veracity of Britain's imperial mission in India. I reason a combination of the second two, as the newspaper editors were far too knowledgeable of India and the empire to believe such a simplistic and self-serving portrait of the Raj.

The *Truth* article illustrates the importance of Indian constitutional reform to the English press and to the British political class; it was *the* issue of interwar Britain, as opposed to appeasement. However, it was only of interest to the chattering classes; the general British public did not concern itself with the intricacies of India and the reforms debate. But the great interest that the press showed in the India question demonstrates the strength of British imperial culture; the ubiquitousness of English press coverage indicates the omnipresence of empire in Britain. In this British culture the press unanimity of beliefs of the Raj, the nature of British rule, and of India shows that the British imperial culture was united when it came to empire. All the papers shared the same assumptions and left the identical topics implicit. The India issue also helped mould the identity of the interwar Conservative party and the newspaper debate took that discussion to the British public. The fact that the subject of Indian constitutional reform inspired a fictional article in a periodical about an imagined debate between the two most prominent antagonists on the issue shows that the matter was of prominent importance to the chattering classes of Britain.

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