

AN OPEN LETTER

TO

THE RIGHT HONORABLE

EDWIN SAMUEL MONTAGUE

His Britannic Majesty's Secretary of State for India.

Whitehall, London.

BY

LALA LAJPAT RAI

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TO  
THE RIGHT HONORABLE  
MR. EDWIN SAMUEL MONTAGUE  
His Britannic Majesty's Secretary of State for India.  
Whitehall, London.

Dear Sir:

Permit me to congratulate you most heartily on your appointment to the high office you now hold which makes you virtually the Supreme ruler of the teeming millions of India. The Secretary of State for India, under the law as it stands, wields in both theory and practice, greater powers, over a greater area, covering a larger population, than the Grand Moghul of India ever did, even in his halcyon days, or than any other single monarch or ruler does in these days except the President of the United States or the President of China. India has been aptly said to be the "*brightest*" and I may add, the biggest jewel in the Crown of Great Britain and Ireland. It is in fact the only *possession*, which constitutes the British Empire, as the rest of the Empire, excluding the self governing Dominions, has either arisen out of it or is held for the purpose of safeguarding British supremacy there. It is the only part of the Empire which pays and has in the past paid well. It is the only part, outside Great Britain itself, which has a history and a past, great and glorious-whose people were once not only free and rich, but highly civilized, the originators and founders of a civilization which still shines with a splendour and richness of its own. Any one may consequently be proud of holding the

office, to which you, Sir, have recently been appointed by the Prime Minister of Great Britain. There is hardly any other office in the British Empire which can compare favorably, either in possibilities or in potentialities, in the extent of the power which it confers on its holder or in its importance in relation to the rest of the Empire, with the one you are filling at the present moment. There is no other office, the holder of which exercises his power without any responsibility to the people whose destiny for good or for evil he controls. Even the Prime Minister is subjected to a greater amount of direct criticism than falls to the lot of the Secretary of State for India. The only occasion on which the Secretary of State for India feels the burden of his office arises when some untoward event happens which directly affects the British elector, or touches British lives and British prestige abroad.

Such an occasion was furnished in this war by the Mesopotamia incident. The fall of Kut, the loss of prestige caused thereby, the importance of the disaster in the present emergency, the loss of *valuable* lives which it is said could be prevented by more prudent management of the campaign, have moved the British public in such manner as few other incidents in connection with the administration of India, have done since the mutiny of 1857, if at all. If my memory does not deceive me this is perhaps the only occasion in the history of British rule in India, at least after the crown assumed the direct management of Indian affairs, when British public opinion asserted itself so strongly and so effectively as to force the Secretary of State for India to resign his office. But

the history of the British administration of India is full of incidents which resulted in greater losses of human lives in India and outside than on this occasion, but these lives were mostly those of the natives and they apparently did not *matter much*. The millions who died by preventable famines, by inefficient and inadequate handling of the bubonic plague, the millions who die by preventable unsanitary conditions and by diseases brought about by insufficient feeding and horrible housing, have never seemingly moved the British public so deeply and intensely as the Mesopotamia affair has done.

From the Indian point of view it is something to have had a Mesopotamia disaster. It has opened the eyes of the British public to the real nature of what is the Government of India. Even the Jingoese have discovered that it is wrong to entrust such vast powers to one or two men. A writer in the *Evening News* (11th July) is forced to admit that "to all intents and purposes India, with its population of 300,000,000, and its vast area and resources, is under the autocratic rule of two men — the Secretary of State and the Viceroy. It is true that both of these high personages have Councils to assist them, but in all matters affecting the internal and most of the external affairs of India, their word goes, and is unchallenged and uncriticised. They can make and unmake, cut down or expand, issue inexorable decrees which may alter the lives of millions of the King's subjects, and, in fact, play with this great Empire almost as they will." So far the Imperialist had insisted on trusting the "man on the spot." It was repeated *ad nauseum*, in season and out of

season, that the Indian Services, Civil and Military, were the acme of perfection and that they should be absolutely trusted in Indian affairs. Any criticism by Parliament or by Members was considered officious and impertinent. The few members who called the attention of the British public to the condition of affairs in India and to the grievances of the natives, were called names and branded as "little Englanders," "mischief makers," "meddlers" and so on. After over a century of misrule, it has been discovered that it was wrong to leave the actual Rulers of India so little controlled by Parliament or public opinion as they have been. Adds the writer in the Evening News:—

“What really influential voice has this country or Parliament in the Government of India? The Secretary of State, although nominally responsible to the Prime Minister, is really uncontrolled. Old, encrusted custom has resulted in the practical abolition of supervision, either by the Premier personally or by the Cabinet. It is true that the Secretary of State may consult his colleagues, but none of them would dispute any of his findings or those of the *Viceroy-the man on the spot*.

“And the Indian debates in the House of Commons have always been perfunctory and ‘uninteresting.’ The great majority of the members did not listen or take part in them; India was so far away, and, besides, they knew nothing of the complex machinery which was used in its administration. So all comment on Ministers’ statements was left to the small body of “Indian” members, who had a few questions to ask as to military or commercial matters in which they might be personally concerned.



## “ COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL.

“ The India Office has stood aloof and somewhat mysterious to the ordinary run of Englishman. Very little is known outside as to the composition of its council or the manner in which it is elected. As a matter of fact the Council consists of a dozen members, mostly Anglo-Indian officials, one military member, and two members of the Indian community. It meets weekly or fortnightly, and takes the advice of the permanent officials on most matters.

“ Permanent officials have not been a great success in the English Civil Service, and the India Office provides no exception. These men, autocrats in their own spheres, have an admirable knowledge and experience of routine, and faithfully adhere to the system of their predecessors, but the two most essential qualities in a successful head of a department, common sense and imagination, are not conspicuous in their efforts. And it must be remembered in this connection that the Secretary of State and his Council take their action largely on the advice of the permanent officials.

“ In India the Viceroy can over-rule a decision of his Council, and is, in fact, an absolute monarch; a despot, though a benevolent one...”

Later on the writer draws the following picture of the Indian officials.

“ When he (Lord Curzon) was in India, Lord Kitchener, always intolerant of superior authority, objected to the military member of the Viceroy’s Council being an officer junior (sic) to him. He had his way, but the result

is that, under the present arrangement, the Commander-in-Chief is the one who directs the Viceroy's military policy, and no independent voice can be raised against him.

“ It is easy to imagine what a breeding ground for sycophancy and intrigue is afforded by such a system, outside the control of public or parliament, and in which full power is in the hands of one or two men. We have seen something during this war of the way in which women can bring influence to bear in high military quarters at home. But in the Indian services the amount of intrigue is appalling.

“ Those who know anything about the way appointments are made, both in Civil Service and the Army of India, were not surprised at the failures disclosed in the Mesopotamia report, although they were staggered at the amount of incompetence and misjudgment attained. Mesopotamia is not the only field where high Indian officials blundered.

“ In too few cases are efficiency and merit the stepping stones to promotion and influential position. Seniority, although it carries along with it stupidity, and favour gain the ‘Plums.’ Many civil servants and Army officers in India, burning with desire to leave things better than they found them, have been snubbed for their zeal, and ‘black listed’ by the mandarins owing to the evidence of ability and ideas they possessed....”

I have given this lengthy quotation in support of my statement as to the unique nature of the position held by the Secretary of State for India and the Indian Services

under him. It is, thus, the greatest and most responsible office under the crown. Sir, to which you have been raised, on a historic occasion like this. Your appointment has met with a mixed reception. The Liberals of England are satisfied, the Natives of India are pleased, the Tories are shocked and the Anglo-Indian Jingoës terrified. The very fact that the Tories have been shocked by your appointment and the Anglo-Indian jingoës terrified; the reasons adduced by them in their chorus of disapproval and dissatisfaction (one of them, Lord Beresford, had the meanness to say that you were disqualified for the post because you were not fully of British blood) are *a fortiori*, good grounds for the exultation of the Indians over your appointment. But they have something more than this to rely upon. Your work as Under Secretary of State for India under Lord Morley, and your subsequent, particularly more recent utterances relating to India, have filled them with hope. They feel as if they have found a Messiah in you. It is here that I have my misgivings. While I can join with them in sincerely congratulating you on your well deserved elevation, my studies of the English political system and past experience of English dealings with India, give me no reason to be over-optimistic about your ability to effect such radical changes in the system of administration in India as alone will satisfy the most moderate of Indian nationalists. However, your selection was perhaps the best that could be made by the Premier and for that we may well be grateful to him.

What, however, damps our spirit and mars enthusiasm is the sad disillusionment we have had in the past,

particularly in the case of Lord Morley. In 1906 when the late Sir Henry Campbell Banneman came to power, the Indian political organizations throughout India cabled their congratulations to him, at the same time praying that John Morley be appointed Secretary of State for India. As fate would have it, one of these cablegrams was drafted by me on behalf of the Indian Association of Lahore. When our request was actually granted and the appointment of Mr. John Morley as Secretary of State for India was announced, all India rejoiced and felt as if their moment of delivery had come. But to their sorrow and disappointment John Morley was not in office for 12 months before they found out that even he could not do anything worth doing. They had hoped that he would undo the mischief done by Lord Curzon in the partition of Bengal, that he would give them some kind of self-government, that he would make education free and compulsory and that he would lay the foundations of an Industrial India; but before long they discovered that the bureaucracy in India and the Jingoists in England had succeeded in spreading their spell over the soul of John Morley. John Morley not only refused to undo the partition of Bengal but went several steps further in discarding the great principles of his life as regards the sacredness of human liberties. He sanctioned deportations without trial and inaugurated a general regime of coercion and repression. The writer of this letter, one of those who had prayed for his appointment, was the first victim of John Morley's changed soul. The disillusionment that followed was terrible and gave birth to the Indian Rev-

olutionary party, which has now become a permanent feature of Indian life. We do not know what were the inner influences that brought about the change in Morley; nor whether his convictions were reversed or whether he found his environment too strong for him. The fact remains that when in actual office, John Morley failed to act up to his principles and that it was the constant worry of being reminded of this fact by his colleagues of the ministerial benches in the House of Commons which reconciled him to let "honest John" be metamorphosed into Viscount Morley. The birth of the noble Viscount was the death of the great Commoner. What I am afraid of, is that the same fate might be awaiting you in the near future. Those who know what a great personality John Morley was in British politics in 1906, find it rather difficult to believe, much against their wishes, that you would succeed where John Morley had failed.

Yet it is because of that hope that the Indians of all classes and shades of opinion have hailed your appointment as the head of the Government of India with joy, with hope and with enthusiasm.

Much water has flowed down the Indus since Lord Morley retired from the office of the Secretary of State for India. Events have happened on the Thames, the Danube, the Elbe, the Rhine, the Volga, the Tigris and the Nile, that foretell momentous changes in the world. After this bloody war in which millions have died and millions have been maimed for life, which has devastated the whole of Europe and laid waste large tracts of Asia and Africa, which has brought to dust the proudest heads

and the sharpest intellects of Europe, it is inconceivable that the world will revert to pre-war conditions of life.

India of 1917 is also quite different from India of 1907. Hindus and Mohammedans have sunk their differences and are making a united stand in their demand for political liberties. The Anglo-Indian plans of creating an Indian Ulster have miscarried and never before during the British domination *was India so united in its political and economic ideals as to-day*. In 1907, we were yet babies "crying for the moon." *We had not yet grasped the fundamentals of the situation*. Our horizon was clouded by sectarian boundaries and we were fighting for crumbs. In 1917 we are a united people no longer praying for *concessions*, but demanding rights. Our earnestness has stood the tests which are usually applied in such cases. The records of criminal courts, the prisons in India and outside, the large list of patriots who have willingly given away their lives for the cause of freedom, the battlefields of France, Flanders and Mesopotamia, the international centres of the world are all evidences of our determination to *win* our rights, be the cost what it may. Yes, all this is true but it is equally true that while the world has advanced and is advancing, has changed and is changing; while India of to-day is so radically different from India of 1907, the Curzons and Sydenhams of British politics are, as regards India, still standing where they were ten years ago. Who knows but that in spite of a clear brain and a willing heart, you also may eventually succumb to sinister influences? It may be that these apprehensions are unfounded and that your appointment as Secretary

of State for India is an earnest of the united mind of the Cabinet about the future Government of India, and that Mr. David Lloyd George has after all persuaded his colleagues to take a broad view of things *and save India for the Empire*, by conceding to her what is after all her due. This is however in the womb of future. In the meantime we may well consider what the situation demands. I propose to examine the situation from the point of view of the moderates.

## II

Let us first see what the fundamental grievances of India are. Our first grievance is that the Government of India is an absentee landlordism, in no way responsible to the people of India, the latter having no voice in its constitution or in its renewal. Our second grievance is that the Government of India is principally carried on in the interest of the British capitalists and that British interests take precedence in the determination of Indian fiscal policy. The fact that India is governed by a bureaucracy foreign in race, religion and nationality, that the Indians are treated as Helots, unworthy of carrying arms and keeping and manufacturing them, that they are denied the benefits of free education, free speech and free press, and that they die in millions from famine and epidemics and unsanitary conditions for want of adequate measures to protect them from the causes thereof, all follow from the two fundamental causes mentioned above.

Great Britain and her allies in the war have been *objecting* to Prussian *autocracy*, Prussian *bureaucracy*,

Prussian *militarism* and Prussian *junkerism*. Yet in India all *these monstrosities exist in an extraordinary degree and every effort to dethrone them is vehemently opposed by persons who want the world to believe that they are fighting to establish democracy* and to enforce the principles of democratic Governments all the world over. What the Indians are asking for, is nothing but the application of these principles to the Government of India and it is obvious that no reform could be satisfactory which is not in accord with these principles. It may be, that the vested interests of the Empire do not permit of a bold and decisive step being taken at once in democratising the personnel of the Government of India, but surely no reform of the Indian Administration can be even a step toward the goal which does not secure fiscal autonomy to the people of India. India cannot and ought not, in the words of Mr. Austen Chamberlain, to continue to be the hewer of wood and the drawer of water for the rest of the Empire *as she has been in the past*.

The Mesopotamia disaster has brought to light the fundamental weakness of the Government of India — its irresponsibility. What is the Government of India? The civil and military servants recruited in England constitute the Government of India. They govern India in the name of the British people. They make no secret of the fact that they are in no way responsible to the people of India. But are they responsible to the British nation? In theory, yes. In practise, no. The British nation and their representatives in Parliament exercise no control over the Government of India, have neither the wish



nor the time to do so. The Services are self-contained and self-controlled. They have in the course of the last sixty years evolved an ethical code of their own, which brooks no interference or control from without-which lays down the standards by which everything relating to the functions of Government in India is judged. The first test of everything is, how does it affect the Services-their status, their salaries, their prospects, last but not least their prestige. Nothing which cannot pass through these crucibles can be good for India or for the Empire. The civil and military servants that rule India are so many Gods, with their Goddesses by their sides, who form an oligarchy whose interests and comforts and prestige dominate all the activities of Government in India. They are there to safeguard and protect the interests of the Empire-viz., those of the British capitalist and the British manufacturer. The Government of India is a kind of closely organized trade guild or trade union, in which the non-unionist has no chance and the like of which the world has not known before. The difference between an ordinary Indian and an Indian Civil Service man may best be judged by the difference between their economic positions. The lowest salary of an Indian Civil Servant is R450 a month to which substantial additions are allowable in the shape of allowances, etc. The lowest salary of an Indian Government employe is R7 a month. So an ordinary Indian is worth only 7/450 as compared with an Englishman in the lowest grades of the Indian Civil Service. The human needs of the two, their personal and family needs *ought* to be the same but even making

allowances for the special needs of a ruler imported from a foreign climate, the difference between their economic positions is a standardising of human degradation sanctioned by “*Democratic*” England. Once you accept these standards as valid and legitimate, the rest follows as a matter of course. In my humble judgment the crux of the situation lies here. Are the rank and file of Indians human beings? Are the rank and file of the Anglo-Indians in India, or even the highest of them *Gods*, to be worshipped by the former? Are they *entitled to treat the former as if they existed for their use or for the uses of their masters*, the British capitalists? Has India any rights of her own or is she merely the drudge of the Empire? Must she continue to be the mere hewer of wood and the drawer of water for the rest of the Empire ?!!! What is the position of the Government in India ? Are they rulers imposed from without by force or are they servants, delegated to perform the functions of Government by the free choice and consent of the people? Does the Government exist for the people or the reverse of it? Must India be governed from the outside or is she to govern herself? Is she to continue to be the milch cow of the Empire, a mere possession to be exploited by the masters, or is she to occupy a position of equality and be an equal among equals? If the British statesmen honestly mean to confer a position of equality on India then they must cease to talk of India in the language of patronage. The question then is not, how far and how many Indians can be admitted into the Government of their country, but how far it is necessary, in the interests of India, to employ Britishers

of non-Indian origin. The question is not how England should govern India, but how India should govern herself.

Let there be no misunderstanding on this point, Mr. Montague. Moderate India is prepared to share the burdens of the Empire in proportion to the benefits she receives from the Empire, in a spirit of family co-operation, but no more. What we stand for, are our rights and liberties and not a few posts in the Services or a few seats in the Councils. We ask for no favors. We demand our rights.

The British element in the Indian Administration must disappear; whether it disappears now or in ten years or even in twenty is not material. Any scheme that ignores this point of view is doomed to failure. The extremists are for absolute independence because they do not believe that the British will ever concede that point. The moment that point is *conceded in genuine honesty of purpose*, the cult of extremism will lose the vast bulk of its adherents.

We are a part of the British Empire; we have largely contributed to make the Empire as it is today. But so far, we have shed our blood, given our substance in wealth and labor in making the Empire for the benefit of others. Henceforth we shall like to reap the benefits thereof, shouldering the burdens in proportion to our means. Henceforth the test to be applied in deciding all questions relating to the constitution of the Government of India should be how far a contemplated scheme accords with that principle. All such questions must in future be

submitted to the judgment of the Indians. No decision should be imposed on them in the arriving at which they have had no direct share.

Let us apply this test to the different schemes put forward for the future Government of India and then decide, in mutual consultation, which of them is likely to satisfy the Indians. So far we have three schemes before us:

(a) The one formulated by the joint Committee of the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, which is substantially the same as was submitted by the elected members of the Supreme Legislative Council of India.

(b) Mr. Gokhale's scheme recently made public in the columns of the Times.

(c) Lord Islington's scheme, outlined by him in a speech at Oxford, on August 8, 1917.

In weighing Mr. Gokhale's scheme, it should be remembered that it was drawn up (a) when he was very ill; (b) in the early days of the war, long before the developments of 1915, 1916 and 1917 had taken place. The world has since *then advanced much further than could have been imagined* by Mr. Gokhale. The scheme bears upon it the stamp of *over-cautiousness* and is more a kind of halting compromise than a record of his wishes. *I yield to none in my respect for Mr. Gokhale.* I do not think Indian public life, during British rule, has produced a man of greater depth of patriotism, more sincere love of country and finer sentiments of honor and self-respect than he. His disinterestedness and incorruptibility were above

suspicion. In his conceptions of possibilities, however, he was rather timid and over-cautious. He was afraid of being called a dreamer. The charge which he dreaded most was that of a visionary. Hence his mind always halted in making even just demands. He was rather a poor negotiator.<sup>1</sup>

But what makes his scheme impracticable and unacceptable is that it lacks in all safeguards against future economic exploitation of India by the rest of the British Empire. No scheme can be acceptable to India which does not protect us from that. India is poor, has grown poorer under British rule. But what is most deplorable is that its masses are the most illiterate and suffering lot on the face of the earth. No scheme of Government can be accepted which does not make sufficient provision under proper guarantees for the uplift of the Indian masses, both educationally and economically. In fact these two go together. The Indian ryot and the Indian working man

1 Since the above was in type, we have read the following paragraph which appeared in "India," London, of August 31, 1917:

"A Bombay telegram of August 22, brings particulars of an important statement on the subject of Mr. Gokhale's 'political testament' which has been made by Mr. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, member of the Imperial Legislative Council, and successor of Mr. Gokhale as senior member of the Servants of India Society. The memorandum, says Mr. Sastri, was only a rough draft prepared with a view to consultation with Sir Pheroze-shah Mehta and the Aga Khan. It does not represent Mr. Gokhale's final conclusions, or what, in his opinion, the people of India were fit for; but only what might, if spontaneously announced by the Government, avert agitation during the war and assure the fullest co-operation of the people of India. Mr. Sastri expresses the belief that, if Mr. Gokhale were alive to-day, he would voice the most progressive and enlightened phase of public thought compatible with the safety of the Empire and with ordered progress in India."

must be lifted up from the lowest depths of the economic slough in which they at present are. That is not possible unless India gets fiscal autonomy. Mr. Gokhale seems to provide for it by suggesting that "in financial matters the Government of India," constituted as proposed by him, "should be freed from the control of the Secretary of State." Unhappily, however, he ignores that under his scheme the Government of India shall always have a standing majority of non-Indians, on both the Executive and the Legislative side. So long as the final taxing power is in the hands of non-Indians, it is futile to expect that the financial interests of India can be sufficiently protected. It does no good to ignore human nature. The Britishers in India, official or non-official, cannot be expected to put the interests of India and of the Indian masses above those of Great Britain and the Empire. All the misfortunes of India in the past have proceeded from that assumption. Individual Britishers have here and there risen above that human weakness styled the love of one's own country and one's own people, but generally they have failed. To formulate any scheme for the future Government of India which is based on the above assumption and which does not secure economic independence to India is to give the shadow while denying the substance.

Mr. Gokhale's scheme does not make adequate provision for this. He seems to have thought that making the Government of India independent of the Secretary of State's control "in financial matters" insures that. It would, if the Government of India were made responsi-

ble to a Legislative Council, having a majority of elected Indian members. But not otherwise. An official majority in the Viceroy's Council is in practise a negation of India's right to lay down its own fiscal policy.

Lord Islington's scheme, which everybody who has any political sense can understand, probably lays down the general lines on which the British statesmen in the Cabinet are thinking, adopts the "harmless" provisions of Mr. Gokhale's scheme, but rejects the only safeguard that he provides against the future economic exploitation of India. Lord Islington tells us that the Secretary of State's Council cannot be abolished nor will the Secretary of State's control and veto be done away with. In the light of past experience, let us see what this means. Suppose the Legislative Council of India passes a financial measure which, though obviously beneficial to India like the cotton duties, is supposed to be harmful to British commercial interests, what will the Secretary of State for India, who is always a party man, do ? In nine cases out of ten he will do what Lord Salisbury did in 1876, i.e., overrule and veto the measure passed by the Legislative Council of India; perhaps he will nip the idea in the bud and will not allow or sanction legislation at all. In 1876 Lord Salisbury disapproved of the tariff on cotton goods imposed by Lord Northbrook, with the concurrence of the majority of his Council. When informed of it, Lord Salisbury, as Secretary of State, not only objected to the legislation, but also expressed his resentment at the Government of India having undertaken the legislation without his sanction. Lord Northbrook resigned, and

since then the Government of India has been the willing slave of the Secretary of State.

This state of things is bound to continue if the Secretary of State's veto is retained and also if the Viceroy's Council is so constituted as to give a majority veto to officials. Now this must not be. The Indian Legislature, having a majority of non-official Indians, must have the supreme power of saying what taxes they will raise and how they will spend them. The most that can be conceded in the matter is that India's contribution towards Imperial purposes may be fixed by Parliament and any reduction of that may be put outside the jurisdiction of the Indian Legislature.

A retrospective review of the Government of India's military policy would show that India has so far been spending a greater proportion of her revenues on the Army, than has ever been done by any other part of the Empire. Mr. Yusaf Ali, late of the I.C.S., quoted the figures in the *Nineteenth Century* for February, 1917.

#### Military Budgets of the British Empire for 1913-1914

	Millions of Pounds	Percentage of Total Budget of Revenue
Great Britain	28.2	14.5
India	18.	22.
Australia	2.5	10.
Canada	1.5	5.
South Africa	1.15	7.7



Yet we observe that the Mesopotamia Commission has ruthlessly criticised the conduct of the Indian finance minister who is said to have refused to sanction greater outlay on the army in India at a time when no war was in sight.

In India money has been spent like water on frontier defences, frontier wars, and frontier railways. Outside India, we have paid for wars which were waged in British interests and for Imperial purposes. A reference to the evidence given before the Royal Commission on Indian expenditure in 1896, will show how India in the past was saddled with the expenses of foreign wars. Now we do not object to sharing the burdens of the Empire in proportion to our means and in proportion to the benefits we get for our connection with the Empire, but we strongly object to being bled in the interest of the other parts of the Empire. The extent to which revenues raised from the starving ryots have hitherto been spent on the Army, has resulted in starving those departments of civil life without which civil progress of any kind is impossible, for example, education, sanitation and industries. This state of things cannot continue. The future organization of the Army should be placed on such lines as to secure the greatest amount of protection at the least expense. A national militia may be organized by which a large number of trained Indians may be kept in reserve without being paid full salaries. The number of British soldiers may be reduced. An Indian Navy manned by Indians may be organised and the cost charged to Indian revenues. Anyway, India's contributions to the military

strength of the Empire may be fixed by Parliament and thus placed outside the power of the Indian Legislature. The quota thus fixed should be furnished by both British India and the Native States. The Native States ought to bear their proportional share of the burden. I am confident that the moment military careers are opened to the Indians on terms of honor and self-respect a large number of Indian volunteers would be forthcoming for the defence of the country and for the maintenance of internal order.

So far, India has been the “goat” of the Empire. In future she refuses to be so. The heads of Federal revenues mentioned by Lord Islington, ócustoms, post-office, railways, telegraphs, forests, salt, mint, tributes, are such as to make it impossible for any improper discriminations to be made by the Indians among themselves, so no fear need be entertained on that score. The memorandum left by Mr. Gokhale was his personal opinion prepared at a time when his health was failing. He never discussed the matter with his friends and colleagues. His opinions do not in any way bind the rest of India and any attempt to take shelter behind the authority of his great name in denying substantial fiscal autonomy to India will be deeply resented. Young India cannot be bound by the opinion of one man, however illustrious that man may have been.<sup>2</sup>

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2 That Nationalist-India is taking this view of Mr. Gokhale’s scheme is apparent from Keuter’s telegrams to the “Times.” Two Mohammedan gentlemen resident in England have said the same thing in a signed letter to the “Manchester Guardian.”

Taking the other items of the two schemes, both Mr. Gokhale and Lord Islington, seem to be agreed that the Governors should be appointed from England. So far good, but we fail to see why Governorships cannot be thrown open to Indians. Indians are administering Native states. Why cannot they govern British provinces? Why must the governors be always Englishmen? Do you really think, Sir, that men like Lord Pentland, Sir Michael O. Dwyer, Lord Sydenham, Sir James LaTouche, Sir Charles Rivalz, Sir Louis Dane, are such superior beings that no Indians of that calibre could be found in the length and breadth of India? Let our past history and the records of Native states answer this question.

As to the Executive Councils of the provinces, Mr. Gokhale's memorandum fixes the number at six, Lord Islington proposes only four. Mr. Gokhale's memorandum is silent as to the method of selection of Indian members, while Lord Islington says that election in their case is out of the question. Lord Islington is discreetly silent about the strength and composition of the Provisional Legislative Councils, while Mr. Gokhale's memorandum makes definite recommendations on these points, and adds that on the Provincial Legislative Councils "there should be no nominated non-official members except as experts." He fixes the proportion of elected non-official members a four-fifths. But the fact that he makes the tenure of office of the members of the Provincial Councils independent of the Legislative Councils reduces considerably the value of his scheme as a measure of self-government.

Coming to the other points, we find that both Mr.

Gokhale and Lord Islington have said nothing about the future recruitment of the Services. There are many people who know what Mr. Gokhale's opinions in the matter were. Mr. Justice Abdul Rahim has expressed them in his minute of dissent. Even in this memorandum Gokhale has said that in provinces the services should be "provincial." Now the term "provincial" has come to possess a technical meaning and if Mr. Gokhale has used it in that sense then it means that he did not want the provincial services to be manned by the I.C.S. men. If so, the I.C.S. men would, under his scheme, be employed only in the departments under the Government of India and their number would necessarily be limited. The recommendations of the Royal Commission in the matter of the future recruitment of the services have been so widely and thoroughly criticised in India and in England that I need not say anything on that score.

But it should be distinctly understood that no reform of the Indian Administration would be fruitful unless the bureaucratic character of the Services is changed. There is a great deal of sense in the following observations of the writer in the Evening News, London:

"The whole system has been described as 'rotten to the core.' Without going so far as that, it may be said that Parliament should exercise more control over Indian affairs, that the appointments to the Councils should be open to criticism, that a systematic clearance of all incompetents should be made in both civil and military services, and a chance given to broad-minded, intelligent men who can be found to serve India. 'Permanent' is a

word that should be wiped out of existence in the matter of officialdom, and a man should be retained in his office only by reason of his fitness for and his success in it.

“ It is good news to hear that Mr. Austen Chamberlain is developing a scheme to give India more control over her own affairs, but he will meet with failure at the outset if he allows the ordinary type of Indian official too much voice in his new system. If he is able to get the farmers, and the business men, as well as the ruling classes, to take an intelligent and helpful share in the management of the Empire, there will be no more ‘Mespots’ and India will be able to look forward with some hope to that progress which is now suffocated by apathy and red-tapeism.”

What is needed is that for ordinary purposes the Services be recruited by competitive examinations held in India. But all appointments requiring expert knowledge like the heads of the Finance, Engineering, Medical, Education departments, should be made only for a number of years, thus providing for the infusion of new blood with up to date ideas on these subjects. The heads of great departments should not be appointed by seniority, but by selection on merit, such selection including men not in the permanent services. Why should Indian taxes be spent in paying big salaries to men who received their education and succeeded in passing examinations when the world was still backward in scientific development? Knowledge is advancing with rapid strides. Men who are not up to date in such subjects as sociology, criminology, psychology, social psychology, crowd psychology, psy-

cho-analysis, etc., ought not to be allowed to preside over Courts of Justice or lay down principles of administration. I have known Judges presiding in the highest criminal courts of the country, who were promoted to these offices from lower grades, who had as much knowledge of criminology and psychology as we have about the man in the moon. Men have been appointed to High Court Judgeships who had had no judicial training, who had never practiced law, simply because their seniority in the service entitled them to promotion. Civil servants have often been pitch-forked even into departments requiring technical knowledge. All this must cease if India is to receive the value of her money.

The Mesopotamia Commission report shows how men of anti-diluvian views bungled the administration of such departments as the medical and transport, etc. What happened in these departments is happening in other departments. The transport and the commissariat services, the public works and the medical departments are corrupt "to the core" because the service codes of honor protect them from exposure. Every Indian knows how native commissariat agents and contractors profit from wars and huge public works with their English colleagues and patrons in the services. Men of no consequence get rich quick. The money does not fall from the skies. It is made possible for them to make huge profits by incompetent and corrupt heads of departments. The contractors and the agents share with the engineer and the transport officer and thus public revenues are squandered. This is by no means peculiar to India. It has hap-

pened in the past, even in democratic England, republican France and in the United States. The difference is that in these countries these things are easily detected and cannot be perpetuated. The heads of departments are not appointed from permanent services. They are constantly changed and so are not protected by the traditional caste codes about prestige. All these abuses will disappear if the people of the country through their representatives get a voice in the management of their affairs. It will be to their interest to bring to task all corrupt officials. They will feel personal interest in the public purse. Every penny saved will count. At present they think that the moment a tax is collected it becomes the property of a foreign bureaucracy in which they have no further interest. If the native contractor or the native commissariat agent does not profit, they argue, some European would. Besides, all complaints of corruption and bribery against European officers are systematically discouraged by the authorities. It is felt that the exposure of a European official affects the Government prestige. So the fiction of the purity and the incorruptibility of the Services is maintained. It may be said to the honor of the Indian Civil Service that the vast majority of them are free from financial corruption; but can the same be said of the army departments, or public works and railways, etc., the great spending departments ?

To sum up, fiscal autonomy must be the cornerstone of any reform of Indian Administration if it is to satisfy Indian Nationalists. The other cornerstone is the democratised control of the public services. Any scheme which

does not provide this will be still-born and will fail.

### III

I observe that some British statesmen are making a fetish of the principle that the edifice of self-government should be built from below and that experience in the management of local affairs must be a necessary qualification for shouldering provincial and Imperial responsibilities. Now this is a principle which does not admit of universal application. In fact the verdict of history is at least as much against it as in its favor. "We have the case of Japan before us which disproves the universality of the theory. Yet no Indian of any sense opposes the development of local self-government. In fact, obstruction to the development of local self-government, the destruction of indigenous institutions, by which village, town and city governments were conducted in India before British rule, is one of the principal charges which we bring against the present bureaucratic system of centralized government in India. Before the advent of the British, the country was mainly self-governed, except in Imperial matters. The British have destroyed those institutions by taking all the strings of government in their hands. It is now proposed to re-establish the Panchayet system in villages. Anyone who has closely studied village life in India, what it is now under the British, and what it was in pre-British days, will unhesitatingly say that it is almost impossible to revive the village Panchayets (Councils). The conditions of life which had originally brought the Panchayets into existence and which made them the efficient instruments of administration in pre-British



days have ceased to exist. The old Panchayets were the outcome of the old conditions of life. The villages were mostly self-contained, with not much communication with the outside world. The Panchayets generally ruled by moral forces which have been immensely weakened, if not destroyed now. Village communities are no longer the compact, closely related, inter-dependent bodies which they once were. Under the old system the communal ties were so strong as to make it impossible for anyone to disobey or disregard the communal decisions. Freedom of movement into and from communities was restricted within the castes, all the reins of power were in the hands of caste councils. All inter-caste affairs were managed by caste organizations; all community interests looked after by the village councils. The village Panchayets had the power of taxation, which brought them sufficient revenue for communal purposes; they provided for education, sanitation, watch and justice. The villages did not pay any taxes for these purposes except to the Panchayets. All this has now been changed. The district authorities realize the road cess, the school cess, the *Chaukidara* and all other local cesses. In former days there was a small tax paid by all professions and trades not connected with land. This revenue was used for common purposes. Thus the old village councils had power and responsibilities. All this is now changed. The village industries have been ruined, never to be revived again. The days of cottage industries are gone, most probably forever. The lands in villages are freely bought and sold, subject only to a precarious law of pre-emption, which is

doomed to disappear sooner or later. The village servants are no longer subordinate to the village community. It will be a calamity if education is localized and isolated in the sense it was in olden times. The administration of justice can not be placed in old conditions. With the changed conditions of life, with greater freedom of movement, extended connection with and dependence on outside life, it is impossible to restore the village councils to their old position. All that can be done is to have small village councils that will look after the village sanitation and represent the village in its relations with outside life.

Mr. Gokhale proposed to assign them a part of the Excise revenue for village needs. It is difficult to say what exactly Mr. Gokhale meant by this suggestion. The moral and material interests of the community require that the sale of liquor and intoxicating drugs should be so restricted and controlled as to reduce the amount of revenue realized therefrom to a minimum. The present policy of raising a big revenue by the lease of licenses for the sale of liquor is extremely harmful as it naturally tends to increase the facilities for the sale of liquor and drugs. What other sources of income the village councils can have, has not been pointed out. Local self-government in villages and *Talukas*, cannot be made a reality unless the land laws are so changed as to reduce the burden of the ryot, restrict the share of the landlord and reduce the Government demand to such an extent as to leave a decent margin to the ryot for a life of comfort. The greatest problem for the Indian administrator is how

to raise the income of the ryot and the laborer and give him more to spend on himself and his family. This is not possible unless the land tax is reduced. Any reduction in the land tax is impossible unless the foreign agency which rules India is done away with. At present the average income per capita in India is two pounds; the average taxation, seven shillings. The problem before the country is to raise the income, per head of population, increase the revenues for public improvement and education, and reduce the incidence of taxation.

It thus will be seen that in the case of India, the theory that you must build self-government from below is untenable. This is a case where reform must come from above. The Government of India must be democratised in order to tackle the question of revenues and the cost of Administration. They will show the ways and means to local bodies and make it possible for them to inaugurate effective self-government. With the Government of India or the Provincial Government squeezing everything possible from the people in the shape of taxes and spending it on the Army and on a foreign administrative agency and in paying the interest on foreign investments, nothing is left for local bodies to do. The latter cannot extract any blood from where there is none. With a tax of 7% per cent *ad valorem* on Justice (which reaches the figure of 22.5 per cent by the time the case is decided by the final Court of Appeal and Revision), with the bulk of the revenues from the local cesses going into the Federal and Provincial treasuries in one form or another, hardly any sources of revenue are left for the local bodies.

What we demand is that sufficient power be conceded to local bodies (district, town and village), to make local self-government effective. This cannot be done unless the constitution of the Federal and Provincial Governments is so far democratised as to make it possible for the representatives of the people to lay down a fiscal policy which will enable them to shoulder the Imperial, the Federal and the Provincial liabilities, and yet leave sufficient margin for local bodies for local needs.

The real issues then are, how can India get fiscal autonomy, with power to reduce the cost of administration, by reducing the strength of the foreign agency, or doing away with it? At present the scale of salaries which we are paying to the foreign administrators is tremendous as compared with the other countries of the world. Compare these salaries with what is allowed in the United States, in Germany, in Great Britain, in France, in Japan, and see what a great difference there is.

Permit me respectfully to point out to you that the Indians are no longer children politically. They understand their affairs thoroughly. Any attempt to hoodwink them by confusing the real issues and raising clouds of dust, will react on those who attempt to do so. What we want is real political power. We are prepared to pay a reasonable price for our connection with the Empire, but the present position must change. As soon as we get fiscal autonomy, we shall set ourselves to the great task of securing such a just distribution of whatever wealth we earn as will secure decent lives to the masses of our people. After all, it is they who form the nation. With

the strings of power in the hands of British capitalists represented by the Secretary of State, and with a foreign bureaucracy controlling our lives day in and day out, we cannot help being sullen and discontented. The wonder is not that India is discontented, but that the people are so law abiding, docile and loyal. Any further strain on their loyalty might end in fatal results.

You have a great opportunity, Mr. Secretary, for winning the gratitude of an historic nation, comprising one-fifth of the human race. Remember that you will be making history in a way such as has not fallen to the lot of any of your predecessors. Your place in history will be determined by the amount of conscious courage and honesty of purpose you display in your great office. Remember, please, that India has been on this earth for thousands of years and will endure for all time to come unless some geologic cataclysm overtakes it, even after the Curzons and Sydenhams and the "Morning Post" have gone and been forgotten. India has had all kinds of good, bad, indifferent, benevolent and oppressive rulers.

They are gone. Their memory — the good, the bad and the indifferent — abides in their deeds. So will it be with the British administrators also. Let it not be said by posterity that British statesmen at a psychological moment in their history (in 1917) failed to read the signs of the times. The time is with the people and the hands of the clock cannot be set back even by a Canute.

LAJPAT RAI

New York, U. S. A.  
September 15, 1917.

