

[7TH MARCH 1921.]

issued to us as to the discussion on the general demands. By these rules certain days have to be fixed, and section 132 says: 'Notice of a motion to omit or reduce any grant shall be given two days before the day appointed for the discussion of such grant'. The notice issued to us provides for all the grants to be discussed on all the days, and it is impossible for us to give two days' notice required under section 132—if such notice is to be regarded as due notice. I suggest that separate days should be fixed for the discussion of separate heads.

**The Honourable the President:** This is a matter which concerns the combined convenience of the Finance Department and the Assembly. I think we should hear the Finance Member's views on the subject.

**The Honourable Mr. W. M. Hailey:** We recognise that perhaps it would have been much more convenient for the House if we had been able to ask the Governor General to allot definite days for the discussion of those various demands for grants; but we were unaware how long the House would like to take over each question and of the comparative importance they would attach to different grants. For this reason we were unable to suggest a definite allotment of time. If in future years it appears that we could suitably do so, we shall certainly propose the allotment of a definite time and date for each demand for grants. As it is, I recognise that it is difficult to give the necessary notice under section 132; I am not sure whether I am in order in putting a suggestion to you, but if I do so, it would be this: That the rules should be interpreted in the most liberal sense, i.e., that it is quite clear that the first grant standing on the list must come on on the first day, and for that two days' notice will be required—and equally in regard to the last grant. But as regards the others, I would ask that in any case in which you consider that reasonable notice has been given, the motion shall be accepted by you.

**The Honourable the President:** I understand that the Honourable Member puts the point in order to protect the rights of Members under Standing Order No. 72. The suggestion made by the Honourable the Finance Member is eminently reasonable, and, provided the notice actually given is not unreasonably short, the Chair will not be too stiff in interpreting the Rule.

### RESOLUTION *RE* SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESHER COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

**Chaudhuri Shahab-ud-Din:** Sir, the Resolution which, with the leave of the House, I wish to move is as follows:

'That this Assembly recommends to the Governor General in Council that a Committee, consisting of the following Members of the Assembly, namely, Mr. Samarth, Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer, Mr. T. Rangachariar, Rai Jadu Nath Majumdar Bahadur, Sir Jamsotjee Jeejeebhoy, Dr. Gour, Mr. S. Sinha, Bhai Man Singh, Mr. N. M. Joshi, Mr. J. N. Mukherjee, Mr. Ginwala, Lieutenant-Colonel Herbert, Lieutenant-Colonel Gidney, and the Mover, under the chairmanship of the Honourable the Law Member, be appointed to consider the Report of the Esher Committee and to report their recommendations to the Assembly on or before March 21st.'

Sir, the Resolution which I originally intended to move is slightly differently worded. I gave notice of that Resolution on the 21st of January, but as

the result of the ballot it was put on the 24th of February for discussion and was not reached. Therefore, it was not taken up. In the meantime, Sir, Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer had given notice of almost all the important topics covered by the Esher Committee's Report to be discussed in separate Resolutions to be moved by him. I think his Resolutions covered almost the whole ground, excepting perhaps that of the medical services, dealt with by the Esher Committee. His first Resolution, which related only to Parts 1 and 2 of the Esher Committee's Report, was taken up on the 17th and accepted by Government with a slight modification. He asked Government not to take any action on Parts 1 and 2 of the Report, and not to subordinate the Indian military staff to the British War Office. This principle was accepted by the Government and the Resolution was passed by this House. But the other Resolutions, of which notice had been given by him, were not taken up. One of them was fixed for the 5th, but it was not reached. Similarly, other Resolutions of his are yet on the notice board, but there is no chance, I think, of their being taken up this Session. If my Resolution is accepted by the House, I hope all those Resolutions will become unnecessary because a Select Committee, in which this House will place its confidence, will go into the whole Report carefully and then submit a considered Report for the consideration and discussion of this House.

I have proposed the period of a fortnight because the Government is anxious, and very rightly, to ascertain the opinion of this House as well as of the other House to communicate it to the Secretary of State in time. Indeed, the Report, as some of the Honourable Members might have observed, was signed some day in June last, though it was published in India in November and has already been almost a dead letter for so many months. It is very desirable that now the Report should be considered and some action, if possible, taken on it.

Sir, the Report is of special and exceptional importance to India not only from the military point of view, but also from the political and financial points of view. It has been adversely criticised not only in India, but also in England. Papers, of the standing and reputation of *London Times*, have criticised it adversely. Here, in India, people, whether they have read it or not, have become so suspicious about it that they consider it altogether a dangerous measure. Those who read it might perhaps change their opinion after reading it, but those who have not read it and are acting only on hearsay or on the opinion of others, their opinion, of course, is very much prejudiced against it. Yet, the fact, that the entire Indian Press has condemned the Report unanimously, I think, is one which the Government should take into consideration, take the House into its confidence, invite a considered report of the Select Committee, and then submit it to the House for discussion.

There are only two or three points which are usually raised by hostile critics of the Report. The first is that it subordinates the Military Department in India to the War Office in England. Of course, this position has been repudiated by the Government. The second objection is that it is a measure of a very reactionary character and that, if accepted, it might in practice be found inconsistent with the Reforms. This point, I think, is not free from doubt. The authors of the Report say :

'We desire also to mention that we have been requested, in considering our recommendations, to avoid, if possible, framing them in such a manner as may hereafter prove inconsistent with the gradual approach of India towards a Dominion status.'

[Chaudhuri Shahab-ud-din.]

Well, despite this declaration of the authors of the Report, people think, rightly or wrongly, that it is a reactionary measure, that in practice it will possibly work inconsistently with the Reforms. Even the Government have admitted that there are phrases and sentences in the Report which are misleading. Sir Godfrey Fell on the 17th February, as the report of the Proceedings of this Assembly shows, spoke as follows :

'The point of view of the Government of India is this. They hold that certain phrases, certain sentences, certain paragraphs in the Esher Committee's Report are misleading and might give rise to the impression that War Office influence could be exerted on the Army in India. They hold, however, that no such intention was in the minds of the Members of the Esher Committee, nor would the Government of India acquiesce for one moment in any such interference.'

Thus we have the assurance of one of the signatories to the Esher Committee's Report. Yet it is admitted that there are sentences and phrases which are liable to be construed in such a way that people's suspicions are perhaps justified. Then there is this fact, that the Report is not unanimous. There are slight differences here and there on some points of detail. Again, at the conclusion of the Report, Sir Krishna Gupta has added a separate Minute of his own. He does not call it a Minute of Dissent, but only supplementary observations, simply intended to supplement the Report, yet the points raised by him in paragraph 8 of the Report are so important that they do require special consideration at the hands of the Select Committee as well as of this House. He proposes that the number of King's commissions to be given to Indians should be materially increased, that enlistment for the regular army should not be restricted to what are called martial races, that the area of recruitment should be extended to all parts of India. Then he goes on to say that the Territorial Force should be made a success and a real adjunct to the regular army, and that steps should be taken to establish in India training and educational institutions for all branches of the army. He concludes by saying :

'Our proposals must add largely to the army expenditure, which is already high, and the only way of introducing economy without impairing efficiency is gradually to increase the Indian element in the ranks as well as in superior positions.'

So, when the signatories to the Report are not unanimous and phrases and sentences do exist which are misleading, and there is also not unanimity on all points among the Members of the Committee, it is desirable that the Report should be very carefully scrutinised. A report of such supreme importance and far-reaching consequences should be dealt with carefully, so it requires careful consideration.

These are briefly the reasons why I wish that the Report should be placed before a Select Committee to be considered. I want to say one or two words before I sit down : Why have I put in 14 non-officials and only one official Member ? I think it is the wish of every Member present in this House not to embarrass Government, but, as far as possible, to co-operate and work harmoniously with Government, consistently, of course, with the interests of India. I do not think the fact that there is only one official Member will in any way affect the soundness of the conclusions at which the Select Committee

may arrive, and I hope Government will not mind this. The reason why I have fixed only a fortnight is this. Sir, everybody is aware that this Session is to come to an end in a few weeks, and the Report has already remained undiscussed for so many months. I wish that it may be finally discussed before this Session ends, and that some action may be taken upon it, it is necessary that the opinion of this House should be communicated to the Secretary of State. I must thank the Government before sitting down for having given me a few minutes of their official day. I would request the Honourable Members of this House not to enter into any discussion now, and to accept my Resolution unanimously because, when the Select Committee's Report is placed before the House for discussion, every Member will have ample opportunity of expressing his views upon it.

With these words, Sir, I move the Resolution.

**The Honourable the President:** The following Resolution has been moved:

'That this Assembly recommends to the Governor General in Council that a Committee, consisting of the following Members of the Assembly, namely, Mr. Samarth, Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer, Mr. T. Rangachariar, Rai Jadu Nath Majumdar Bahadur, Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, Dr. Gour, Mr. S. Sinha, Bhai Man Singh, Mr. N. M. Joshi, Mr. J. N. Mukherjee, Mr. Ginwala, Lieutenant-Colonel Herbert, Lieutenant-Colonel Gidney, and the Mover, under the chairmanship of the Honourable the Law Member, be appointed to consider the Report of the Esher Committee and to report their recommendations to the Assembly on or before March 21st.'

**Sir Godfrey Fell:** Sir, I do not propose to detain this Assembly for more than a few moments, especially when I see that most of the Members are anxious to get to grips with the Budget. The Government of India very willingly accept the proposal put forward by the Honourable Mover of this Resolution. They do so solely in order to facilitate the examination of the Esher Committee's Report, and to enable them, at an early opportunity, to telegraph to the Secretary of State the considered views of this Assembly on all controversial points arising out of that Report. I think I have explained before that the Government of India are quite as anxious as any one in this Assembly can be to obtain the opinion of the Assembly on that Report, since there are many matters connected with the reorganisation of the Army, matters which closely affect the expenditure on the Army, which are at present hung up, owing to our having promised to take no further action until we have ascertained the views of this Assembly. I hope, therefore, that this Assembly will unanimously support this Resolution without further discussion.

**Rai Bahadur Bishambhar Nath:** Sir, I beg to support the Resolution that has been moved by my friend, the Honourable Chaudhuri Shahab-ud-Din. I need not say that public opinion has never been satisfied as to the mode adopted in constituting the 'Army in India Committee,' popularly known as the 'Esher Committee.' Nor have the people approved of the method of recording evidence adopted by the Committee. It necessarily follows, therefore, that the recommendations made by the 'Esher Committee' should be looked upon with suspicion. The expenditure on the Army of our country, already very high, is going to be increased enormously as the result of some of the recommendations of the Committee. The money will have to be got from the people's pockets. It is only fair, therefore, that the people's representatives should carefully examine the Report and express their views on the subject. I, therefore, strongly support the Resolution and commend it to your acceptance.

(At this stage several Honourable Members rose and moved that the question be now put.)

**The Honourable the President:** The question is, that the question be now put.

The motion was adopted.

**The Honourable the President:** The question is, that the Resolution, as read from the Chair, be accepted.

The motion was adopted.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION ON THE BUDGET.

### FIRST STAGE.

**Rai J. N. Majumdar Bahadur:** Sir, as one who sincerely believes in England's connection with India, not as a dominant and a subject country, but as two free partners under a common flag, and as one who also sincerely believes, that by tact, good will and firmness, we shall ere long be able to make the already half-willing Colonies acknowledge us as equals, I may at once assure those of our Honourable friends who still wield our destiny that I have not the least intention or desire in what I am going to say to fan the dying embers of non-co-operation.

Being a plain man of plain words and not a diplomat who says what he does not mean, I request the Honourable House to take me seriously when I say that my heart fell within myself when I looked at the sorrowful countenance of the Honourable the Finance Minister when he introduced the Budget the other day, and I said within myself:

'O, had I some occult power, had I known magic, black or white, I would have made the roof of this House pour down gold and silver and precious stones into the capacious pocket of my Honourable friend and at once make him 'smiling and comfortable' like his predecessors. But that gift is denied to us, mortals, in this iron age, and the trough of depression is to be filled in other ways.'

If my Honourable friend is sorry for the trough of depression, he is still more sorry that, unlike his predecessors, he has to approach this House with his begging bowl for filling it, but he consoles himself with the thought he can always count upon the certifying powers of the Governor General.

He seems to address us somewhat in this style: 'Well, Gentlemen, you are yet on your trial; if you do not vote my demands, we shall proclaim it from house tops that you are no good, for 'the most critical test of the capacity of a Representative Assembly' is to rise to 'the height of the responsibility' and to vote all my demands.'

When I saw the Honourable the Finance Minister rising to his full height and uttering this threat, my heart, old and weak as it is, shrank within myself, and I felt myself face to face with my old schoolmaster, who could never instil wisdom into our thick skulls without displaying his birch.

I hope it will not disturb the equanimity of this House and prevent it from doing its duty to the country or the Government.