

CHAPTER LVII.

Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV.

The Second and Third Round Table Conferences.

The second Round Table Conference which took place after the formation of the National Government in Great Britain assembled in London on 7th September 1931 and remained in session till 1st December of the same year. A feature of this conference was that Mr. Gandhi attended it as the sole accredited representative of the Indian National Congress. Sir Mirza Ismail also was one of those who attended this conference.

In October 1931 Sir Mirza Ismail presented a note which contained some suggestions regarding the proposed reformed legislature for India. According to him, the two principal organs of Federated India were to be a popular House known as the Federal Assembly and an other House known as the Federal Council. The Federal Assembly was to consist of representatives chosen by direct and indirect election, preferably by both methods, the representation being more or less on a population basis, the proportion of members from the Native States being one-third of the total strength. The Federal Council was to be that organ of the Federal Government which was to uphold the federal character of the constitution and was to be composed of the delegates appointed by the Governments of the States and Provinces at their own discretion and exclusively with reference to their expert knowledge, and these representatives were to vote and act according to the instructions they received from their respective Governments. The Central Government was also to be represented in the Federal Council in order to safeguard the co-operation of the supreme federal authorities and to prevent the various elements in the Council from working on parallel lines or against one another. The Federal Council was to have a suspensory veto on laws passed by the Federal Assembly with which it did not agree, but such veto was to be exercised within a period fixed by the constitution in which case the Federal Assembly was to show a qualified majority of two-thirds or three-quarters as

may be specified. Besides the right of first considering Bills when introduced by the Federal Executive, the Federal Council was to share with the Assembly the right of introducing Bills, the members of both the bodies having the same right. The Federal Council was also to be in possession of certain powers of an advisory nature, such as the right of demanding information regarding current administrative matters or legislative measures to be introduced, matters relating to External Relations or nominations to higher posts. The merits claimed for his scheme by Sir Mirza Ismail in the main were the moderate size of the Council allowing it to transact business more quickly and economically than a larger body could, freedom on the part of the members from party influences to a large extent, and avoidance as far as possible of conflicts between the Governments of the units and the Central Executive. This scheme, in Sir Mirza's opinion, had also the merit of allowing such States as had no individual representation of sending delegates to address the Council on matters in which they were specially interested, without however any power to vote.

At the meeting of the Federal Structure Committee held on the 2nd November 1931, Sir Mirza Ismail at the desire of Lord Sankey the chairman added certain explanations in elucidation of the views he had expressed. The draft report of the Federal Structure Committee recognised, he said, the principle that the Upper Chamber in the main was to represent the federal units as such and spoke of its members as being in a special sense the representatives of the federal units. But it was obvious that it was only to the members from the Indian States that such a description could be correctly applied. The members from British India could not in the nature of things be regarded as the representatives of their provincial governments which might have changed or of their provincial legislatures which might have been dissolved after their election as members of the Upper Chamber. It was in that view, Sir Mirza said, that he urged the need for a second chamber composed exclusively of delegates selected by and representative of the governments of the Federation and of the units. One of the advantages of the scheme put forward by him was that it would, he

claimed, obviate the dissimilarity of methods between British India and the Indian States in regard to the selection of members for at least one of the Houses of the Federal Legislature. The experience of Australia went to show the vital importance of close co-operation and concerted action on the part of the Governments of the federated units in all matters in which the country as a whole was interested.

At the conclusion of the discussions of the second Round Table Conference, the Prime Minister assured the members that the declaration he made of the policy of His Majesty's Government at the end of the first Round Table Conference was endorsed by the National Government which had succeeded the Labour Government. The great idea of an All-India Federation, he said, still held the field and the principle of a responsible federal government subject to certain reservations and safeguards through a transition period remained unchanged. It was agreed that the Governors' Provinces of the future were to be responsibly governed units enjoying the greatest possible measure of freedom from outside interference and dictation in carrying out their own policies in their own sphere. Three committees were then appointed to investigate in India questions of franchise and constituencies, problems of federal finance, and specific problems arising in connection with the finances of certain individual States, which committees subsequently came to be commonly known as the Lothian, Percy and Davidson Committees after the names of their chairmen. Later, the Indian policy of the National Government was approved by an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons in a debate held on 3rd December 1931 and similarly by the House of Lords on the 10th of the same month.

When the second Round Table Conference dispersed, it was believed that no further discussion was needed, but at the meeting of the Indian Legislative Assembly held on 5th September 1932 the Viceroy announced that it had been decided to hold a further conference in London consisting of a small body of representatives of British India as well as of the Indian States about the middle of November following. This conference accordingly assembled in

London on the 17th November 1932 and lasted till the 24th December following. The conference consisted of 34 delegates from India and 12 members of the British House of Parliament. Among the Indian delegates 12 represented the Indian States.

With the information furnished by the three constitutional committees, the third conference was able to approach much more closely to details and thereby the Government in England were enabled to present their plans to the Parliament in a White Paper in a clearer manner than would have been otherwise possible. This White Paper was placed before Parliament on the 18th March 1933 and it was referred by the Parliament to the scrutiny and investigation of a Joint Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament consisting of 16 members of the House of Lords and 16 members of the House of Commons and was authorised to call into consultation representatives of the Indian States and of British India. Accordingly, 21 delegates from British India and 7 from the Indian States attended the deliberations of this committee. Sir Mirza Ismail was among this number and attended on behalf of the South Indian States.