

means insignificant, consideration of the spirit of the place must also not be overlooked. Once you enter the Office-room, and take charge of the powers (?) and responsibilities attached thereto, the mind of every ordinary person would unconsciously try to work the position constructively rather than destructively, legally rather than illegally. Ministers would, therefore, unconsciously become hypnotised by their office, even when they are not flattered into forgetfulness of their pledges by their official subordinates. And if, as is likely, Governors develop an astute political sense, and yield on all small matters to their Ministers, they can easily harness to their Imperialist engine all the influence of their Ministers, no matter what their election professions, or ultimate objectives.

The Ministry collectively is appointed and summoned by the Governor in his discretion, and liable to be dismissed, singly or collectively, by the same authority. This, however, may be so used by an astute Governor as to neutralise the opposition, or obstruction from within of Congress Ministers. Many of the Congress members of the Legislature, again, may find the temptation of the salary attached to the Ministers' posts to be so considerable as to make their opposition to the Governor, even within the permissible field, but perfunctory, and only in appearance.

Influence of the Permanent Services

Even if all the members of the Ministry are equally strong-minded and well-informed; even if the Congress follows a definite, determined, constructive policy in the actual governance of the Province, the presence of an unshakably entrenched Civil Service, with definitely anti-Congress sympathies in the main, and

inspired by traditions of a non-responsible, non-removeable Bureaucracy, will militate seriously against any practical success being attained by the Congress Party as Ministers, even if other factors do not operate against them.

There is, moreover, the reserve power vested in the Governor to override the Legislature in matters of legislation; to pass Ordinances and Acts apart from or without consultation with the Legislature,* which would rather tend to end or suspend the Constitution, the moment it becomes unacceptable to the vested interests,—both Indian and non-Indian,—than to make concessions and yield in essential particulars of general policy.

Financial Handicap of Congress Ministers

Finally, there is the consideration of finance. As will be shown more fully hereafter, there is very little authority open to the Ministers to initiate reforms in the administration which may add to the expenditure, or which may involve drastic retrenchment.†

It seems, therefore, on a consideration of all the relevant factors, that the Congress Party in the several Provinces, accepting Ministerial responsibility, even when it commands an absolute and substantial majority in the Legislature, will, under the Constitution as it stands, invite more embarrassment, disappointment, and failure for itself, its ideals and programmes, than accomplish any real good in the government of the Province, or the welfare of its people. It may, indeed, find a good and relatively safe platform to preach its

*Cp. Sections 88, 89, 90 and 93 of the Act. ante pp. 83-86.

†Cp. below Chapter VII.

gospel of National Emancipation, and prepare the people for the next stage of the struggle. By occupying this platform, it may keep out undesirable elements from strategic positions, which may be of immense importance on the day of crisis. But when all this is said in favour of accepting Ministerial Responsibility under the new constitution, one must also remember: (1) the incongruity of a Party, officially pledged to render the new Constitution abortive, becoming the chief midwife and nurse at the birth of the monster; (2) the handicap created by the discretionary and other extraordinary powers of the Governor; (3) the statutory privileges of the Services; and (4) the ignorance and inexperience, in many cases, of parliamentary democracy and administrative technique in the Congress Ministers themselves,—which would, individually and collectively, render such Ministers no great success from any point of view.

Handicaps of Popular Ministers under the New Constitution*

Ministers, under the new Constitution, may plume themselves on the theoretical position of being popular mandatories in their Province. But however completely they may possess the confidence of their compatriots, they would not be able to make the popular view prevail, in any case in which it goes counter to the settled principles of government adopted by the British rulers of the country. Apart from the restrictions, however, which, as we have seen, the innumerable discretionary powers given to the Governor may cause; apart also from the mortifying feature of the

*This section applies, it need hardly be stated, to the average politician now most prominent in the leading Parties.

Constitution, which empowers the Governor, in several cases, to seek his Ministers' advice, without any obligation to be bound by that advice; the Ministers have their own particular handicaps, which would, in practice, materially diminish the effective power and influence they can wield in the governance of the country. (a) Their own ignorance of the routine of government,—as also the lack of experience in handling subordinates,—is a handicap that may be expected to disappear in course of time. This ignorance or inexperience is not their fault, but rather their misfortune. For, until now, Indians have never had any opportunity to rule their country in the last 80 years; and it is only real power which teaches the proper exercise of that power; real responsibility which teaches a sense of true responsibility. Even in the days of Dyarchy, either true strongwilled Nationalists, possessing the full confidence of the people, did not go to the Legislatures, and so could not take office; or, if any of these did go, they felt themselves traitors, and so were never more than half-hearted in the Ministerial posts. Hence lack of familiarity with the mechanism of politics in many of the leading figures in the political world of India; and their consequent inability to grasp the real issues of modern world politics, must be regarded as responsible for that ignorance and inexperience which will make the greatest handicap of these persons, if and when they become Ministers.

This would, of course, be the case in regard to such Ministers as are composed of Congressmen who had, since 1919, boycotted the traditional constitutional methods of political work; and so deprived the leaders of that Party from that insight and experience of administrative needs in a large modern province, with-

out which the most powerful Ministry, in the popular sense, would be unable to accomplish any real good. In those Provinces, however, in which the Congress Party does not command a majority in the Legislature, Ministries may be formed by coalitions with Minority Parties, which, however, will have handicaps of their own.* In no Province is the Congress Party likely to be an insignificant Minority. Its vote will, therefore, be a force to be reckoned with. Its discipline and the resolve to make the new Constitution unworkable, will always make it the focus of all the malcontents in the Parties forming Coalition Ministries. Those Ministries will, therefore, never be stable,—if the Congress Party remains true to its resolve to wreck this Constitution by undermining it from within the Legislature. Unable to feel a sense of stability, and always anxious to placate the several discordant elements which make up the Coalition, such Ministries will, necessarily, be unable to have a definite programme to which they could consistently devote themselves; and so, in their charge, there can be no hope of any real benefit being done to the Province by such Ministries.

Inferiority Complex

(b) Apart from the strategical difficulties of non-Congress Ministries, there is a further consideration,—somewhat intangible, it is true, but nonetheless real. Psychologically, politicians in India, who have hitherto seen the salvation of the country in co-operation with British Imperialism, and who, in their inmost hearts, have dreaded or disbelieved in the fitness of the Indian people to rule themselves, are unconsciously so defer-

*This has happened in the Punjab, Bengal, Assam, Sindh, and the N.W.F. Province.

ential towards their British masters or monitors; so lacking in self-confidence; so distrustful of the democratic possibilities of this country, that they would go a long way to make their policies,—such as they are,—harmonise with the fundamental interests of the dominant partner in the Empire. Further, they would mostly be people, or parties, representing vested interests, who are necessarily in a minority in a country so hopelessly poor as India, and where all avenues of profitable work are monopolised, for all practical purposes, by the foreigner within the gates. The preservation of their vested interests cannot be achieved, except with the support of the foreign power. Hence, they must needs be committed, unconsciously, perhaps, to a policy of subordinate co-operation with the British element in India,—whether in the Services, in Industry, or in Commerce. The price of British co-operation is, naturally, opposition to the legitimate ambitions of the Indian proletariat and the Indian peasantry,—if the phrase can be used for the non-land-owning agriculturists of this country. Ministries made of such elements can, therefore, hardly expect that complete popular sympathy and support, which the Nationalist elements proper are most likely to command, even when their policy appears to be negative,—obstructionist, or destructive. For in that destruction lies the promise of a new reconstruction, which may afford a greater social justice, larger life, and better opportunities, than the present social system, supported in effect by British bayonets, can provide.

Ministries and Parliamentary Majorities

The influence of Party sentiment would, of course, be progressively increasing, if not in the actual gover-

nance of the country, at least upon the fortunes of the Ministers. The Governor, it is true, is empowered, in his discretion, to summon the Provincial Legislature, and even to dissolve it,—not to mention the ultimate weapon of the wholesale suspension of the Constitution.* But,—apart from a total abrogation or suspension of the Constitution, which, when it takes place, will more effectively accomplish the aims of the so-called obstructionist elements in Indian politics than anything they can themselves do,—every dissolution, whether ordered by the Governor or advised by his non-Nationalist Ministers, will result in a new additional wave of Nationalism, which would leave no pretence for constitutional existence to such unrepresentative Ministries. The one clearly defined political issue in India is: whether there shall be the continued domination and exploitation of this country by British capitalism; or whether the Indian peoples' right to self-expression in the political fields shall be permitted full scope. Other issues there may and will be. But until the complete transfer of real power in the governance of the country is achieved, and Indian Nationalist consciousness satisfied, these other issues, even of social reform or economic reconstruction, will recede into a shadowy background and fail to capture popular imagination.

Party majorities in the Provincial Legislatures backing the Ministers for the time being in office will, therefore, be fluctuating in all those Provinces where the Congress Party does not command an absolute majority, but yet is sufficiently disciplined and cohesive to offer the most efficient opposition. For some time, the presence of a foreign element, coupled with the

*Cp. Section 93. Post p. 226-7.

Communal distrust, may render party lines unnatural and unreal. But the first taste of real power, however limited that power in practice may be, will emphasise those abiding issues dividing the political minded citizens which will soon shape themselves into new Parties. India may not follow entirely the Anglo-Saxon analogy of having in the State only two Parties,—the third Party, if and when it emerges, gradually merging into or absorbing one of the two historic Parties in the State. But even if the French model of varying groups combining from time to time, in the life-time of one and the same Legislature, is adopted, the lines of demarcation between the groups will have to be essentially different from those which now distinguish the Independents and Liberals, the Nationalist Congressmen and the Congressmen *pucca*,—not to mention Congress Socialists. It is possible there may be Agrarian and Industrial groups. In so far, however, as the common respect for property, and the right to appropriate for private gain the surplus value created by human effort is concerned, there will be little to demarcate between the Agrarians,—representing the Landlords,—and the Industrialist representing the big Capitalist elements. The Communal Line, and even the Brahmin *vs.* Non-Brahmin distinction, will, whatever its strength to-day in particular Provinces, weaken in course of time, when the real cleavage between those who have and those who have not is thrown into bold relief.

Political Consciousness of the Masses

To develop, however, keen and clear political consciousness in the mass of the Indian people, it is not

enough to stress the inevitable antagonism between a foreign Imperialist and exploitive element, keeping a stranglehold on the political machine and economic resources; nor is it necessary to emphasise the purely Communal line, even when it seems to coincide, at places, with economic divisions. The Hindu may, generally speaking, be a shop-keeper and money-lender; and the Muslim may, as roughly speaking, be an artisan or an agriculturist. But there are as many debtors among Hindus, even proportionately speaking, as among Muslims; and modern Industry is no absolute monopoly of either. The Hindu is, relatively speaking, perhaps richer in the aggregate, being more adaptable and more numerous. But the very fact of the larger numbers, as also of the greater adaptability to new ideas and new ways of living and working, make poverty none-the-less conspicuous or severe in the Hindu community. The real strength of Political Party sentiment will be developed only when the consciousness of India's grinding poverty deepens, and gets to be unmistakable even by the commonest intelligence. Side by side realisation must also come to the masses of the infinite possibility for betterment,—even immediate betterment,—by the use of political power, and the operation of a carefully planned National Economy, eliminating the private appropriation of Surplus Value, organising work scientifically, and distributing its product equitably, if not equally.

Ministries and the People at Large

Under these circumstances, the first Ministries in the Provinces, under the new regime, are likely to be of the same economic class, whether they wear the Congress label, or sport some other colours. Their

ability, even if they were minded to undertake economic reconstruction of a radical kind, is extremely circumscribed under the new Constitution, by the powers of the Governor, financial considerations, and the public services safeguards.

But, apart from this question of the reality of power available under the new Constitution to the chosen representatives of the people of India; apart from the ability of the Cabinet personnel in the several provinces; apart, finally, from the inherent fissures in some of the leading Provinces, like Bombay or Madras, which combine in one unit two or more distinct nationalities, between which there is smouldering a horrid flame of jealousy,—apart from all these handicaps, the new Ministries must labour under the most invisible but none-the-less potent drawback of an untutored mass, still unaware of its human rights, still unmindful of the economic possibilities of the country, and the social environment needed for their full exploitation.

The governing class, or Bourgeois Ministries,—even of Congress complexion,—would receive only that measure of popular support which is derived from the idols of the marketplace. They would dominate,—at least for the purpose of maintaining their position and power,—the educational and other machinery for publicity, so as to perpetuate respect for the existing order, and all that it stands for in regard to social justice. The Press, for example, which has been gagged in a number of ways by the existing regime of British imperialist exploitation,—and against which all Indian parties have protested, in one shape or another, at one time or another,—will hold its position in the future, only on condition that it continues to be subservient to the new

governing class, and promotes its interests, on pain of being visited with perhaps worse gags than have been used under the alien British regime. The British, violating such Civil Liberties, could at least be branded as unsympathetic outsiders. But when their example is followed by the Indian Ministers under the new Constitution, the chances of a true and full popular education through the Press into a correct perception of the rights and possibilities, open to the people in a truly democratic regime, would be progressively jeopardised.

Mission and Purpose of Political Parties

Political Parties in India have hitherto conceived their mission and purpose in a very restricted sphere. Their contact with the people is elementary; and their influence with the masses somewhat legendary. The mass in any country,—and particularly one situated as India—is necessarily below the level needed for social progress. But its weight and momentum cannot be overlooked in a democratic community by its leaders. Political leadership in India, especially that brand which is to provide effective ministerial timber for the future, needs improvement in two respects. Its own vision, its stock of knowledge, must be widened, not only as regards the world of ideas, but also in the more mundane concerns of daily administration of a great nation. Secondly, its perception of the dynamic energy, necessary to be supplied by the Leader, also requires to be deepened. The true leader is not merely a facile writer, a fluent speaker, an attractive figurehead. He may be all these, but must be more. He must be the prophet and the guide,—the master who informs, the

general who leads, the commander who executes the plans prepared by himself and his General Staff.

Contact with the masses must be direct and personal, no doubt. But that does not mean the complete identification with the average rut, if the country is at all to be uplifted. To be unknown and inaccessible would spell for political leaders lack of sympathy and failure to understand the people. But to seek to identify one-self entirely with the mass,—in thought and speech, in food and dress, in manners and ideals,—is particularly dangerous in a country like India, where such self-abnegation may easily wear the garb of personal sanctity and spiritual superiority that may only serve,—not to inspire or uplift, but to depress and repress the mass by a self-created complex of inferiority, a suicidal dose of facile resignation to Destiny. If the Leaders confine themselves ordinarily to contacts with the more intelligent and progressive elements,—commonly found in large aggregates of population in towns or industrial and commercial centres,—depending for actual contact with the masses on occasional tours, or the modern means of communicating the spoken word to the farthest corners of the land,—the task of leadership would be achieved much more effectively for the advancement of the country.

The main contacts of the leaders would necessarily be with the immediate colleagues, associates or followers. In Parliamentary institutions,—and the Indian National Congress is itself becoming more and more an enlarged edition of the National Council,—this would mean back-benchers, who may themselves be leaders in their own locality. So long as the exigencies of the Indian political struggle necessitated the Leaders and

Followers being in common political exile, the distinction was immaterial. But when Indian politicians sense themselves to be nearer the goal of a Bourgeois capture of political power, and the possibilities of exploiting that power for personal aggrandisement become more manifest to the followers as well as to the leaders, the conduct of relations with the backbenchers would increasingly become a fine art. Followers would expect rewards for political service, suffering or sacrifice; and Leaders would have to find means of such rewards to a number of followers out of all keeping with the opportunities open to the leaders for offering such rewards.

Indirect Sources of Ministerial Influence

In this connection it should be noted, that the task of the British Government in India was easier compared to the task of the Indian leaders, when the latter acquire even the shadow of power open to them under the new Constitution. While the British Government, gathering to itself the richer, more powerful, more sophisticated elements, could satisfy them

been. The British, of course, did not fail to exploit, through political power. But, inasmuch as the British have acquired a greater mastery of modern Industry, a longer experience of large scale commerce, they could conceal their exploitation by bringing in the process a degree of efficiency which showed increasing surplus, or at least made a show of increasing wealth, better wages to those Indians immediately engaged in the British enterprise. This compensated, in a manner of speaking, for such exploitation as they achieved. The efficient manager of industry in the competitive capitalist world always manages to pay better wages than the relatively inefficient, unprogressive, unambitious. If the British exploiter of Indian economic resources managed, being more efficient, to add to the wealth of the country, even while enriching himself in a much greater measure, those who accept the foundations of Capitalist civilisation cannot complain,—except that the fruits of British exploitation were drained away from this country for ever.

The Indian politician, rewarding his political followers in his day of power,

Legislature as well as in the country, is to be found in such patronage for employment, which, under the law and the Rules made for the purpose, is in the power of the Ministers, singly or in Council; and in those trends of policy which might provide the bigger figures in the economic world with larger and more numerous opportunities for exploiting the country.

In this process, there may result deterioration, waste, inefficiency. There is even a risk of incipient Fascist tendencies gathering force. But we cannot, for that reason, deny the necessity of political power to correct our own backwardness as a people. Self-Government we must have, even if, for a time, it might spell some of the drawbacks outlined above. At the most we may have to resign ourselves to a stage of transition, which must be accepted as inevitable, like Purgatory in the Christian cosmology. But even this sense of resignation before an inevitable decree of fate is not absolutely needed. We can, and easily may, provide alternative means to counteract this possibility by removing the very basis of such temptation, and consequent deterioration. If the motive of private profit is eliminated, the process of exploitation will carry no exclusive personal benefit. The Surplus Value created in every instance of material production should be reserved for the community as a whole, instead of being allowed to be distributed under the stress of individual competition in such manner as the competing individuals may devise for their own benefit. The salvation of India,—the hope of any social advance and economic betterment of the masses through *Swaraj*,—political control of the government machinery in the country,—lies only in a radical reorientation in

our conception of human motives, in our ideas of social good and common needs. Party Discipline, which would otherwise often be mistaken for tyranny of the bosses, as in America; Party strategy, which would likewise be liable to be confounded with Tammany Hall methods; Party loyalties, which might be another name for sycophancy or opportunism,—to which Politics has always been particularly prone,—will all stand a chance of purity and an ennobling aspect, if we could discard altogether the root evil of private profit through political power, or politicians' favouritism. The modern engine of public education and information, of shaping popular opinion even while informing it,—the Press and all its accessories of the Radio and the Screen,—will be redeemed from the besetting sin of capitalist countries,—its venality, corruption, degradation. It could be the preserver and upholder of Civil Liberties, since it would itself best benefit from the fullest prevalence of Civil Liberties. But while its owners and managers are susceptible to personal considerations of exclusive advantage, the power the Press naturally wields, in communities where Parliamentary institutions are supposed to prevail, is apt to degenerate into political blackmail for party purposes at best, or become frankly a weapon of class, if not group or individual, exploitation.

The People and the new Constitution

Parliamentary Democracy, of the type we are supposed to commence from 1937, associates people in the choice of their rulers only indirectly. Ministers are representatives of the people in a very indirect sense. Though their ultimate responsibility is to the people, they are primarily, immediately, or in the theory of the

law, responsible only to the Legislature, elected by the people under certain conditions, and at more or less considerable intervals of time. In India, these elections themselves make it doubtful if they would reflect correctly the real popular opinion on a given question, or at a given General Election. Even if the Elections faithfully reflect popular sentiment on a given issue, the special responsibilities imposed by law upon the Governor would make it impossible always, and in every Province, to select a Ministry itself representing faithfully the dominant sentiment in the Legislature. Under these conditions, the ideal of popular sovereignty,—of an appeal to popular choice, is no more than a name. If Ministers,—or leaders of political opinion in the country,—really wish to represent the popular sentiment in the governance of the country, they would have to bear a double responsibility; the obvious, immediate, constitutional responsibility to the Legislature and to the Governor; and the real, ultimate, political responsibility to the people they represent and profess to lead.

Future Role of National Congress

The latter is vague, indefinite, unwritten. It depends for its very existence on the good faith of the individuals, their loyalty to their constituents, and their genuine love of and for the country. The good faith of politicians, beset with so many temptations, must needs be weak or faltering, in a country where the people collectively have yet to develop consciousness of their political power, where they have yet to evolve conventions, which would keep their mandates true to their mandate, where they have yet to devise a machinery for the popular trial, judgment, and punishment, of popular politicians. The Indian National Congress, if it

is maintained in its present role of fearless criticism of Government after the advent of full self-government in the country, may serve as a *forum populi* where the achievements of popular Ministries could be correctly evaluated, and the mandates of the popular will could if need be be arraigned as in a High Court of Popular Justice. But that body itself runs considerable risk of becoming a pocket borough of a clique, or the registry office of certain dominant personalities. Hence, if the pure flame of Parliamentary Democracy and free self-governing Commonwealth is to be lighted in this land, the forms and symbols of Constitutionalism, as provided in the Act of 1935, must be particularly guarded against, as they constitute so many pitfalls, traps, or snares for the unwary or the inexperienced, for the weak of faith and lacking in knowledge.

The real extent, then, of the power, authority, or influence of the popular Ministers in the new Constitution, cannot be even as much as their nominal, legal powers, as described in Section 49* which permits the executive authority of the Province to be exercised by the Governor on the advice of his Ministers, subject to the exceptions already noted.

It is clear that the embodiment of executive power and authority is the Governor, and not the Ministers. Nowhere are the Ministers mentioned as in any way conducting or sharing in the conduct of the executive governance of the country. Nowhere are they spoken of as being entitled, on behalf of the Popular Legislature, to superintend, direct, or control the administration of the country. Nowhere in the Constitution do

*See ante p. 78.

they even appear as formulating or guiding the national policy in administration. Their constitutional function is simply and solely to "aid and advise" the real fons and origo of the governmental power, executive authority, and political influence, viz., the Governor. They may have to shoulder the blame if anything goes wrong in the sphere of administration on which they are entitled to aid and advise the Governor; but it may be doubted if they would be able to claim any credit for any good they do to the country. The British Cabinet of Ministers is not even known to the Constitution: and yet it has complete authority in the governance of the country. The Indian Council of Ministers is very specifically mentioned in the Constitution Act;—only to have its power, authority, or influence most narrowly circumscribed, if not completely denied.

Generally speaking, the authority of the Ministers covers only two classes of subjects: (a) those on which the Provincial Legislature is entitled to legislate; and (b) such other matters as may be assigned to them, under Rules made for the transaction of Government business by the Governor, and under such conditions as may be laid down in those Rules. In neither group is any substance of real power, authority or influence left to them.

It is equally clear that even such powers as are, or may have been, left to the Ministers may be transferred, delegated, or otherwise made over to officers subordinate to the Governor. Once such transfer, delegation, or divestment has been made, the Ministers will find it extremely difficult to restore to themselves the powers they have thus denuded themselves of. The

real function of the Ministers, as conceived in Section 50, is "to aid and advise the Governor;" and that, too, in regard only to such functions as do not fall within the scope of his exclusive discretion, or which are not incompatible with the exercise of his individual judgment. They will be unable to withhold supplies; for, as we shall see more clearly hereafter, that contingency has been more than amply provided for. The Governor has sufficient powers to procure funds for those acts of his which come within his discretionary authority, or in which he claims to exercise his individual judgment. However fully the Ministers may be supported by the local Legislature, the Governor can override them, and suffer no fall in consequence, so long as the constitutional methods only, as provided by the Act of 1935, are in vogue.