CABINET.

THE INDIA ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE.

DRAFT STATEMENT BY HIS MAJESTY’S GOVERNMENT.
(Circulated by direction of the Prime Minister).

The view of His Majesty's Government is that responsibility for the government of India should be placed upon legislatures, Central and Provincial, with such immediate provisions as may be necessary to guarantee, during a period of transition, the observance of certain obligations and to meet other special circumstances as may be agreed upon. In such statutory provision as may be made for meeting the needs of the transitional period, it will be a primary concern of His Majesty's Government to see that the reserved powers are so framed and exercised as not to prejudice the advance of India through the new Constitution to full responsibility for her own government.

2. His Majesty's Government have taken note of the fact that the deliberations of the Conference have proceeded on the basis, accepted by all parties, that the Central Government should be a Federation of all-India, embracing both the Indian States and British India and composed of two Houses and an executive. The precise form and structure of the new Federal Government must be determined after further discussion with the Princes and the representatives of British India. The range of subjects to be committed to it will also require further discussion, because the Federal Government will
have authority only in such matters concerning the States as will be ceded by their rulers in agreements made by them on entering into federation. With a Legislature so constituted, His Majesty’s Government will be prepared to recognize the principle of the united responsibility of the Executive to the Legislature, and apply the principle in accordance with the arrangement for the distribution of Federal powers.

During the transitional period, the subjects of Defence and External Affairs will be reserved to the Governor General, and arrangements will be made to enable him to exercise those powers. In all other matters, the ministry will be responsible. Moreover, as the Governor-General must as a last resort be able in an emergency to maintain the tranquillity of the State, and must similarly be responsible for the observation of the constitutional rights of minorities, he must be granted the necessary powers to do so. His Majesty’s Government also contemplate that during the period when the Constitution is settling into working order, Indian finance will require special care so that credit and confidence are maintained and whilst not undoing the financial responsibility of the Indian Government, it will propose an agreement on these matters, ensuring that the Government will meet its contracted obligations and enabling it by its financial policy to enjoy as before a favourable access to the money markets of the world.

This will mean that as regards the Central Legislature and Executive there will be some features of dualism during the transition period, and this will have to be fitted into the constitutional structure. It may also be necessary, to help the Executive to carry
out responsibilities imposed upon it as a jointly
responsible body and prevent it from falling back
upon the reserved powers of the Governor General
and thus defeat the development of responsible
government by bringing into use powers meant to lie
in reserve in the background, to give it stability
by making its removal subject, say, to some propor-
tion of the votes of both Houses. Though the pro-
vision of these reserve powers is necessary and is
inherent in all free constitutions, every care must
be taken to prevent conditions arising which will
necessitate their use.

3. The Governor's provinces will be constituted
on a basis of full responsibility. Their Ministries
will be taken from the Legislature and will be
jointly responsible to it. The range of Provincial
subjects will be so defined as to give them the fullest
possible measure of self-government, and the authority
of the Federal Government will be limited to provisions
required to safeguard its administration of Federal
subjects, and to discharge its responsibility for cer-
tain matters not falling within the Federal sphere,
but defined in the constitution as of all-India concern.

There will be reserved to the Governor in
addition to the normal powers implied in the structure
above outlined, and subject to the intentions referred
to in the case of the Governor General, only that minimum
of special powers which is required in order to secure,
in exceptional circumstances, the preservation of tran-
quillity, and to guarantee the maintenance of rights
provided by Statute for the Public Services.
4. Finally, His Majesty's Government consider that the institution in the provinces of a system of responsible and therefore more popular government requires both that the Legislatures should be enlarged, and that they should be based on a more liberal franchise.

5. In granting this Constitution, His Majesty's Government considers it to be its duty to insert provisions guaranteeing that the various minorities shall not be penalised on the ground of religious, racial, sect, or caste differences.

6. The various Sub-Committees which have been studying the more important principles of a Constitution which would meet Indian conditions, have surveyed a considerable part of the structure in detail and the still unsettled points have been advanced a good way to an agreement. His Majesty's Government, however, in view of the character of the Conference and of the shortness of time at its disposal in London, have deemed it advisable to suspend its work at this point, so that Indian opinion may be consulted upon this declaration of intention on its part, and that the necessary opportunity both here and in India may be given for the parties concerned to consider how they can co-operate to draft the contemplated constitution and prepare for its working. It is therefore proposed that the Viceroy shall without delay take such steps as he may deem advisable to continue these negotiations and keep this Conference in being. Its members might in the meantime become the authorised spokesmen of the various sections to which they belong, and if others wish to co-operate on the general lines of this declaration, steps might be taken to secure their inclusion. On their part His Majesty's Government will, in the light of the opinions expressed at this Conference, study the details of the problem and devise, in co-operation with the Viceroy and the deliberations which he will conduct, means for giving effect to this declaration. It is
probable that when this work has been done, a final Conference will have to be held to secure such an amount of agreement as will enable the new Constitution to be passed through the British Parliament with the virtual consent of all parties, and to be put into operation in India with the active and co-operating goodwill of its people.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1.
January 13th, 1931.