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C A B I N E T.

REPORT BY THE CABINET COMMITTEE ON INDIA.

The accompanying statement, to be made by the Secretary of State for India in the course of his Second Reading speech on the Government of India Bill, has been approved by the India Committee of the Cabinet, and is now submitted to the Cabinet.

With the approval of the Committee, the Secretary of State is telegraphing the statement confidentially to the Viceroy for his comments, and, should the Secretary of State on receipt of the Viceroy's reply desire to make any material change, his proposals will be brought to the notice of the India Committee and, if necessary, to the Cabinet.

(Intlld.) J. R. M.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1.,

29th January, 1935.

The House will observe that the Bill, like most modern Bills, contains no Preamble. There have, it is true, been ~~many~~ important Acts in the past, amongst them the Government of India Act 1919, to which a statement of policy and intentions was prefixed by way of a Preamble. There is, however, no need for a Preamble in this case as no new pronouncement of policy or intention is required. The Preamble to the Act of 1919 was described by the Joint Committee in their Report as having "set out, finally and definitely, the ultimate aims of British rule in India". The Committee, after full consideration, further asserted that "subsequent statements of policy have added nothing to the substance of this declaration", which they then proceeded to quote in full in their Report as (in their own words) "settling once and for all the attitude of the British Parliament and people towards the political aspirations" of India. If the Committee were justified in these statements - and the Government consider that they were fully justified - there is surely nothing to be gained by reiterating words which have "settled once and for all" the attitude of Parliament to the Indian problem.

Moreover, in government, and above all in the government of the Indian Empire, continuity of policy is of the first importance. No Government and no Parliament can treat lightly any statement issued under the authority of their predecessors. But once the aim of a policy has been clearly determined and accepted significance attaches not to its reiteration, but to the concrete measures taken in pursuance of it.

The position of the Government, therefore, is this. They stand firmly by the pledge contained in the 1919 Preamble (which it is not part of their plan to repeal) and by the interpretation put by the Viceroy in 1929, on the authority of the Government of the day, on that Preamble, that "the natural issue of India's progress as there contemplated is the attainment of Dominion Status". The declaration of 1929 was made to remove doubts which had been felt as to the meaning of the Preamble of 1919. There is, therefore, no need to enshrine in an Act words and phrases which are not terms of art, but have had, and may still have, an indeterminate and shifting meaning, and which would add nothing new to the declaration of the Preamble. In saying that we stand by our pledges, I include, of course, not only pledges given to British India, and to Burma as part of British India, but also our engagements with the Indian States.

Rightly understood, the Preamble of 1919, which, I repeat, will stand unrepealed, is a clear statement of the ultimate purpose of the British people, and this Bill is a definite step - indeed a great stride - forward towards the achievement of that purpose. It is by acts and not by words that we claim to be judged. It is clear then that we can only reach the end we have plainly set before ourselves when India has succeeded in establishing the conditions upon which self-government rests, nor will its attainment be delayed by any reluctance on our part to recognise these conditions when they actually exist. There are difficulties which she has to surmount, but they are difficulties inherent in the Indian problem and not of our creation. If I

indicate, by way of example, two of them it is not, therefore, through any desire to magnify them, but because it is useless in matters of this kind to refuse to face facts or to assume that if facts are avoided they will dissolve. The first and most conspicuous problem which India has to solve is her cleavages of race, caste and religion: so long as there are sections of the people of India who resolutely refuse to be bound by the will of the majority, and demand - as they have demanded again within the last few years - safeguards against majority rule depending for their authority upon some sanction other than the mutual agreement of the communities themselves, so long will conditions of full self-government be absent. Again, until India has solved the problems which would enable her safely to assume in much larger degree the responsibility for her own effective defence, an Indian Government cannot be in the full sense of the word autonomous. These are examples of conditions which cannot be removed or altered by any provisions in any Act of Parliament, or by any action on our part alone. Our policy, as will be seen from this Bill and the Instructions as to the manner in which its provisions are to be applied which will accompany it, is to do all that we can by sympathetic help and co-operation to enable India to overcome these difficulties and ultimately to attain self-government within the Empire. It was in that spirit that we took upon ourselves the formidable burden and responsibility of removing one of the chief obstacles to further advance by providing a modus vivendi in regard to the removal of communal differences. Our desire is to lend our help in the spirit of partnership

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in a great enterprise which may enlist the best services which this country and India may have it in their power to give.