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PROCEEDINGS OF THE EAST
INDIA ASSOCIATION

THE NEWSPAPER PRESS OF INDIA.

By EVERARD COTES

THIS paper is an attempt to dissect out the newspapers from the other contributing causes which, combined with one another, make up the political situation in India of the present day. It is a factor, I shall endeavour to show, of much larger significance than is at all generally realized.

What, then, are the newspapers of India? This question is not as easily answered as it may seem. I was myself a good many years in journalism in that country before I began to find out at all completely. My own work brought me chiefly into contact with the larger journals. I shall refer to them presently, but must begin very much lower down with the vernacular sheets of which there are hundreds. I have not had very much to do with these vernacular sheets myself, and the weird characters in which they are printed, be they Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Guzerati, Tamil, Burmese, or any others of the many languages spoken in India, are mostly beyond my comprehension, though the news agency I managed supplied a number of them directly, and practically all of them indirectly, with a large portion of their news.

How, then, do these vernacular sheets affect the life of the people of India? To understand this, we must begin with the village which, as all know, is the unit of the social fabric in the country. It is here that the vernacular sheet exercises most of its influence. The schoolmaster, the honorary magistrate, or the local pleader may be the only actual subscribers, but the contents are read aloud and discussed in the long evenings to an extent that makes the effective circulation very much larger than the smallness of the sales would seem to indicate. At one time of my career

I could have guided the visitor into offices in odoriferous gullies in Indian provincial towns where the vernacular sheet takes shape. Here could one see the reed pen of antiquity still industriously at work on the lithograph stone. Here inking was done by hand, and wooden presses creaked to the straining muscles of brown-skinned coolies, and imperfectly clad editors, managers, and printers toiled cheerfully through the hours for remuneration that the poorest European would have refused, for great amongst his own people is the *Chappakhana Malik*, and much is the influence he wields. In some of the bigger centres, and especially in Bombay, the vernacular paper is to be met with in a further condition of development, housed in spacious editorial offices, and provided with modern machinery, and highly trained managers and staffs. To this class belong such important and widely read Guzerati newspapers as the *Jami-Jamshed*, or *Samachar*, the *Sanvartaman* and *Parsi*.

The stage next to the vernacular newspapers in the Indian press world is filled by Indian-run English journals. These are newspapers printed in English, turned out by European methods, and often conducted with ability, though entirely in Indian hands. An excellent account was given some years ago in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, one of the liveliest of these journals, of how it had changed its language from the vernacular to English in a single night, nearly half a century ago, in order to escape the official supervision imposed by Lord Lytton's Press Act, which applied to newspapers appearing in languages other than English. The reason for this famous piece of legislative discrimination against vernacular journals appears to have been that certain papers published in Indian dialects had been found by the officials of the day to be disseminating sedition, whereas those at that time appearing in English were all in British hands and, therefore, not suspected of subversive tendencies. In the generation which has since elapsed,

the example set by the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* has been followed by other newspapers of similar class, and the number published in English is now considerable. I have yet to learn, however, that the use of the English language has had any modifying effect upon the views they express which may be in favour of, as well as against, the Government. Some of these Indian-run English newspapers are big and powerful. The *Bengalee* of Calcutta, long edited by Surendra Nath Bannerjee, now a leading member of the Bengal Government, may be taken as an example. Sir Surendra Nath Bannerjee, as he now is, will not mind my saying that thirty years ago the *Bengalee* was printed upon an old-fashioned press and reckoned its circulation in hundreds. When I last saw it, it possessed rotary presses of modern pattern, and had become a power from one end of India to the other.

A number of other daily newspapers are included in the same class. I refer to such journals as the *Hindu*, the *New India* and the *Indian Patriot* of Madras, the *Tribune* of Lahore, the *Leader* of Allahabad, and the *Indian Mirror* of Calcutta.

There are several newspapers in which, while the ownership is Indian, the directing staffs are largely European. These take their politics from their owners and express all shades of opinion. Amongst them I may name the *Indian Daily Telegraph* of Lucknow, the *Chronicle* of Bombay, and the *Empire* of Calcutta. They are a class of journal at present represented only in the bigger cities, but one that shows signs of developing.

As was to be expected, so essentially a Western institution as the press, when grafted upon an ancient Oriental civilization, has taken on picturesque characteristics from its new environment. It retains, nevertheless, a surprising amount of its Western flavour. The leading article may be written by a gentleman in a *dhoti* sitting crosslegged on an Oriental carpet, just as well as by a frock-coated editor in surroundings that would not be out of place in London.

The advertisements may be largely devoted to the sale of patent medicines of familiar European and American brands. Amongst them, however, one can find such purely Oriental notices as those devoted to the purchase of promising University students to become the husbands of still unsophisticated daughters of prosperous Indian parents. But the manner of the editorials is European down to the use of the pompous Fleet Street "We."

The papers I have so far mentioned are all owned by Indians. Behind them and forming the backbone of the press of India is a class of journal of a very different kind. I refer to a whole battery of powerful European newspapers. These are owned, edited, and managed by Europeans, and are often most ably conducted. Most of them appeal primarily to the British commercial and official classes. They are also read by educated Indians, and are much quoted in vernacular and other Indian papers. They represent the aristocracy of the newspaper press of India, and, like all other classes of journalistic enterprise in India have been growing vigorously of late years.

When I first went to India, the late Mr. Robert Knight was eloquently preaching in the *Calcutta Statesman* a liberalism, which in those far-off days was regarded as dangerous by conservative Anglo-Indians. It created an enormous impression at the time, and was the first effectual stirring I became acquainted with of principles now accepted officially in far more daring form than their first advocate suggested. The *Calcutta Englishman*, another leading Anglo-Indian paper, reflected Tory politics under the genial personality of the late Mr. J. O'B. Saunders. The *Allahabad Pioneer* had not then developed the caustic genius of Mr. George Chesney, who subsequently served it so brilliantly, but it had already become under its founder, the late Sir George Allen, a power in the official world. The *Times of India* was laying the foundations of the great influence it has subsequently won under such editors as

Sir Thomas Bennett, Mr. Lovat Fraser, and Sir Stanley Reed. The names of Mr. Rudyard Kipling and Mr. Kay Robinson had become familiar to Anglo-Indians in connection with the *Civil and Military Gazette*. It was only later on that I became acquainted with the achievements of Mr. Lawson and Sir Frank McCarthy who have since made their respective papers, the *Madras Mail* and the *Rangoon Gazette*, each the leading Anglo-Indian organ in the province concerned.

Other outstanding names that occur to me in connection with the Anglo-Indian press are those of the late Mr. Howard Hensman, and the late Sir Maitland Park, who at different periods represented the *Pioneer* at Simla. I must also not omit those of Mr. Paul Knight and his three gifted brothers Hugh, Robert, and Phil, the last named, I am sorry to say, recently deceased, who have continued the work of their distinguished father, and brought the *Statesman* to the position of influence and authority it now occupies.

It is Anglo-Indian journals in India like the *Statesman*, *The Englishman*, the *Times of India*, *The Pioneer*, the *Madras Mail*, the *Rangoon Gazette*, and the *Civil and Military Gazette*, that set the standard for journalism in the country at large and act as a moderating influence upon the whole. Their significance would in any case be large, and it is magnified many times over by the existence of the vernacular and other Indian papers, which—however extreme they may sometimes be in their views—draw much of their information from the more moderate British organs, and carry it in only partially transmuted shape to strata in the community, that would otherwise be at the mercy of sometimes inconceivably fantastic or even diabolically misleading and mischievous rumours.

The importance of the newspaper press of India is increased by the existence of a fine agency service of world news cabled to it daily by Reuter's organization. This was originated by the late Baron de Reuter, and has been much enlarged under his successor, Sir Roderick Jones. It is an

organization which has recently sustained a severe loss in the death of its much-respected Eastern manager, Mr. A. H. Kingston. I may also be permitted to mention another extensive Indian news organization, now also in Reuter's hands, with which I was myself for many years connected, and of which I am still exceedingly proud. I refer to the *Eastern News Agency*, with its branches the *Associated Press of India* and the *Indian News Agency*, which handle the internal news of India : much as is done in England by the *Press Association* and in the United States by the *Associated Press*.

I should here speak of a remarkable change which is gradually coming over Anglo-Indian journalism.

Twenty-seven years ago, when I was running the *Indian Daily News*, then one of the smaller of the Anglo-Indian newspapers, in Calcutta, thousands of young Indians were already, season after season, receiving elaborate English education in the Calcutta and other Indian Universities. Amongst my colleagues on the Calcutta Municipal Council, where I then had the honour to represent the Calcutta Trades Association, were highly cultivated Indians, who made long and eloquent speeches in high-flown English. Indians, nevertheless, occupied generally only subordinate posts in Anglo-Indian newspaper offices. Many a sweltering night I had in the course of my duties on the *Indian Daily News* to leave the quiet and comparatively airy offices of the European editorial staff and to descend into the noisy inferno of the composing, correcting, and printing rooms beneath. Here Hindus from Bengal and Muhammadans from the North-West Provinces, clad each in little more than a cotton sheet, toiled in a dense atmosphere of acrid *hubble-bubble* smoke, and fumes of ink, steam, and lubricating oil mingled with emanations from semi-naked humanity in tropical mass. Grimy punkahs fluttered actively overhead, and stirred, if they did not renovate, what we breathed. The work of preparing the issue of the night, nevertheless, went actively forward to a babel of

high-pitched Bengali and sharp Urdu tongues. Incredibly dirty type was picked by hand out of tiny compartments in wide wooden trays, where it had been put ready in advance by Indian distributors, and was clapped with extraordinary dexterity and skill, each letter into its place in the *stick* or little brass holder. Thence it was passed on in more solid blocks to *forms* on an ancient flat-bottomed press, which presently would clang wearily to the thrusting of a wheezy oil engine, as the thousand or more copies that formed our morning edition were slowly ground out. Eurasian correctors in shirt sleeves rolled to the elbow crowded one another round a dimly-lighted table in a stifling dungeon alongside.

It was the sound policy of the *Indian Daily News* to employ Europeans, who having to be imported, were necessarily expensive, only in such posts as could not be filled efficiently by local and, therefore, cheaper Indian journalists. As editor of this particular organ, I had, therefore, to study all possibilities of increasing the proportion of Indians employed. One of the sources I explored was that of the Calcutta University. I took on graduate after graduate and endeavoured to train them to the work required. My experience, however, was that, at that time—it was nearly thirty years ago—very little could be done in the direction aimed at. Indian talent and education of the requisite standard appeared to be far too scarce, and what there was of it far too highly priced to be at all economically used as a substitute for Europeans to any very considerable extent.

I have been much struck, therefore, by the rapidity of the increase that has since taken place in the supply of Indians capable of assuming a real share in the higher branches of European journalism in India. With the passing of the clanking flat-bottomed presses, the cranky oil engines, and the insanitary conditions I have described, and with the introduction, in their place, of modern methods and machinery, has come also what, to me, seems a very

significant movement in the direction of the substitution of Indians for Europeans in the higher posts. When I left India four years ago, Indians had found their way into a number of editorial rooms, long the exclusive sanctum of Europeans. Managerial posts, too, were held by them to an extent which, a generation previously, would have been thought entirely out of the question in well-run offices. In the correcting rooms and the reporting establishments, the change in the direction of the reinforcement of European by Indian talent has been even more pronounced. I have seen the shorthand work gradually change over in similar manner. I could even name a number of Indians who are doing excellent work as special correspondents, though this is a branch of Anglo-Indian journalism, where the difficulties to be overcome are extraordinarily great, owing to the writing having to be in a foreign language, and addressed to readers with a very different outlook upon life from that of the writers. I should mention also another very important change that has taken place. Thirty years ago, the Anglo-Indian and the Indian press, with some honourable exceptions, were as the poles apart. Neither understood the other, nor were the two at all generally able to combine in any united movement. Now the same news agencies serve both alike. The line of cleavage has become political instead of racial. One observes sustained endeavour on the part of the members of the Anglo-Indian press to understand their Indian colleagues and to make personal friends with them. Amongst Indian journalists, too, one finds a real desire to reciprocate in kind, and to put aside age-long burdens of Oriental suspicion and mistrust. Relations of mutual respect and cordiality are growing up which, as I shall presently show, are having far-reaching results.

It will be seen from all this that the newspaper press of India differs from the newspaper press of England chiefly in matters of adaptation to local conditions. It is compiled in similar manner. It depends upon systems of news-

gathering, reporting, and commenting, which, though much less elaborated, are essentially similar to those of Fleet Street. The men who direct the principal newspapers in India have almost all been trained, either directly or indirectly, in British journalistic methods. That the organs of the Indian press appear in a number of different scripts and languages to correspond with those of their readers; that the lithograph stone and the indigenous reed pen may, in some cases, even still do duty for the rotary printing machine and the linotype setter; that some of the compositors may be ignorant of the meaning of the words they set up; and that to a few of them the very letters they employ may be symbols only without significance even in sound, do not remove, though they definitely modify, the essential features of resemblance that underlie the whole.

THE PRESS IN INDIAN POLITICS

We may now proceed to consider how this press, itself so essentially an offshot of Europe, acts and re-acts on Oriental politics and thought.

The voter in India, such as he is, to whom the political fate of that great country is now being gradually transferred, is not inert. He does certainly in some vague way think out for himself certain political problems—especially such as are connected with the hunger (*bukha*) and the pence (*paisa*)—that so intimately affect the well-being of himself and his friends. Ignorance, credulity, and emotion may be his age-long heritage, but this only makes it the more essential that his education should not be unsound. The Brahmin and the Mullah, who are his prophet and his priest, do something to direct his basic human impulses of acquisitiveness and philoprogenitiveness, and to develop them in the direction of the more complex sentiments of altruism and love of country. The Pundit, too, may help to awaken corporate consciousness out of the maxims from *Khoran* and *Shastras*, which his pupils cypher in crabbed

Hindi or flowing *Urdu* on the *dhoti* smudged slate of the village school. It becomes important, therefore, to recognize that Brahmin, Mullah, and Pundit are all diligent readers of the newspaper press. Education in the ordinary sense ceases in India, as elsewhere, when a boy leaves school. The newspaper then steps in, and I may say in most cases is almost all that the ordinary adult Indian reads. Many reasons combine to bring about this state of things. The Oriental is little distracted by side issues. Games and sport, for example, which fill so large a place in the life of the ordinary European, leave him cold in the great majority of cases. The poverty of other subjects of public interest in India, and the decay of religion which the late Sir William Meyer has pointed out in his encyclopædic gazetteer was once the main subject of discussion in the Indian press, have been other reasons why newspapers take a place in the life of the politically conscious classes of India relatively much larger than in the corresponding community in any other country in the world.

The Indian has a very special mentality of his own, due possibly to the heat of the climate of the land he inhabits, the mixture of Aryan, Dravidian, and other races from which he springs, the kaleidoscopic history through which his ancestors have passed, or all of these combined. It disposes him to be argumentative, and to achieve in words rather than in deeds. Journalism thus makes a special appeal to him as a career, and he is taking it up in increasing numbers. The intellectual Bengali, the contemplative Tamil, the swift-witted Mahratta, and the outspoken Sikh, may differ fundamentally from one another alike in physical attributes and in material outlook, but they have in common the fact that they are all swayed by phrases and emotional ideals to an extent the more phlegmatic Westerner often finds difficult to understand. This common temperamental characteristic may be increased or diminished by education, but it is always there, and enormously enhances the influence of the

written word. It also magnifies grievances and makes their expression essential.

These general considerations all require to be taken into account in appraising the nature of the part played by the press in India, as the principal organization which affords the orator, be he impassioned, fanatic, or platitudinous beaurocrat, that wider audience which the spoken word cannot reach without its help.

I suppose we must take it as arising from Indian official recognition of these basic facts, that a long series of repressive Press Acts have been placed at different times in the past half-century upon the Indian Statute Book. Most of these Press Acts have now rightly been repealed or mitigated, in deference to popular Indian opinion. Bitterness produced by them, however, remains, and helps to bring about an attitude of mind which finds it easier to echo loudly-expressed platform oratory, than to incur the odium of ranging itself with the harassed forces of a Government now apparently become uncertain even of its title to protect itself and its friends. With Government weak and Opposition strong such restrictions as are still nominally unrepealed leave the press practically unfettered and with political influence that grows stronger every day.

One of the results of this state of things is that the Indian editor of yesterday is becoming the leading politician of to-day.

Sir Surendra Nath Banerji, Mr. Sastri, and Mr. K. C. Roy, also the late Mr. Tilak, the late Mr. Gokhale, and many another artificer of the present democratic constitution of India, have owed much of their influence to having been, at one time or other, engaged in Indian newspaper work. Another fact to be noted is the attention which even the extremist Indian patriot pays to the press for inspiration in advance for his deeds, and for justification for them after they have been done.

As an example of this, I may mention that the police succeeded in learning the date of manufacture of one of the

bombs, thrown ten years ago at a criminal intelligence officer in Calcutta, by politically minded Indian students, from the fact that the contents included shreds of paper torn from the dated pages of a recently published Indian newspaper, noted for its violent doctrines, which had been used to wrap up the picric acid forming the kernel of the political argument intended to be used on this occasion.

I have also heard of cuttings from the columns of what is, perhaps, the most sedate and conservative Anglo-Indian journal in India being carried at the head of an Indian Home Rule procession through the streets of Calcutta, so much importance was attached by the leaders of the popular movement concerned to their having found in this journal—usually so antagonistic to their political faith—arguments which they thought told upon their side.

It is the press, more than any other agency, which for many years past has kept public attention from one end of India to the other concentrated upon political as opposed to other issues. It is the press to-day, better-informed and continually growing in circulation and authority, which enables the Indian voter to hear in his village more or less accurate versions of the speeches of the member who represents him at Delhi, and which makes it possible for him also gradually to form some kind of a dim idea of the questions that are agitated there. It is the hope of the newly-introduced scheme of democratic government in India that sooner or later a voter will be evolved who will be capable of casting a reasonably independent and intelligent suffrage. No one who knows India can doubt that this vital, if still largely hypothetical, but not on that account at all ultimately impossible pivot in the governmental machine, needs all that can be done to help him. Such help can be given most effectually, I maintain, through the medium of the press, which for all its liveliness, and despite the excesses of its extremist wing, is a permanent force of almost unlimited capabilities which are growing and expanding on every side.

How far press activity will conduce to stable administration in the future must depend largely upon the extent to which it is able to continue to enlist the co-operation of Indians and Europeans of character and ability in its service. If there be one conviction more than any other which the old European newspaper man takes away with him from India, it is, I think, of how essential is whole-hearted co-operation between these two sets of men in the interests, not only of Indian journalism itself, but also in those of the country as a whole. It is a co-operation I have found that is capable of being evolved and maintained wherever mutual relations are based upon a foundation of equality, and wherever they are cemented by personal intercourse and good-feeling. In this connection I would specially speak of journalists from Bengal in general, and from Eastern Bengal in particular, as this much-libelled region supplies so preponderating a proportion of the rising generation of Indian newspaper men, but I also include Madrassis, Parsis, Pubjabis, Mahrattas, and men of Hindustan. All of them no doubt have weaknesses and disabilities—who amongst us can say that this is not also the case with himself? They also, I have found, possess gifts and virtues which in the past, I think, have not been recognized nearly as fully as they deserve. I should like to say, therefore, that I have known Indian journalists working in far-off Mofussil stations who could write the truth about crimes of sedition and other political happenings coming within their ken, only at the cost of risk to themselves, not merely of personal violence from one side or the other, but also of social ostracism from their own relations even harder to be borne. Yet I have known these men send to the news agency I was concerned with, not once or twice, but regularly—day by day and week by week for years together—reports and statements which have proved upon close subsequent investigation, for they have often raised storms of criticism, to be almost entirely devoid of conscious bias. I have had Indian colleagues

and friends whose loyalty to the organization we were mutually connected with has stood the test of foul weather as well as of fine—men who have maintained a high standard of integrity and devotion to duty through many years of often exceedingly poorly remunerated service. The number of such men in the ranks of Indian journalism is increasing, and I cannot too much emphasize the importance of encouraging them.

The European, of course, is also essential to the partnership I have indicated. Coming as he does from a more stable civilization, he brings into the combine traditions of Western efficiency without which journalistic advance in India can be neither sound nor enduring. In order that the European newspaper man in India may be a help and not a stumbling-block in the way of progress, it is absolutely necessary that he should be himself of good standing. I cannot too strongly deprecate what has occasionally happened in the way of engaging in England journalists for service in India who do not possess this vital qualification. To send out inferior white men to serve on Indian papers is, at best, to waste money, and, at worst, to introduce an element liable to ally itself with the very considerable forces which make for that race hatred that has long been the greatest danger that threatens India.

This brings me to the question of extremism in the Indian press and all that is therewith involved. Here I may perhaps be forgiven for repeating two very trite generalizations, for they seem to me to be both important and often overlooked. One is that upon the whole the men who run newspapers in India, like those concerned with most other enterprises in this imperfect world, are generally out for nothing more idealistic than to make a living for themselves and their families, and to see their undertakings flourish. The other fact is that every newspaper which fails to attract attention, and therefore readers, also fails to sell or to obtain advertisements, and sooner or later disappears. It is only human nature in these circumstances for an unpros-

perous journal—whether those responsible for it be Indians or Europeans—to take the cheapest, the quickest, and the easiest means of attracting attention. This ordinarily, of course, is to make violent attacks upon the best known and least popular organizations within reach. In practice the principal object selected for attack is usually the Government, since this most nearly fulfils the conditions indicated, while, unlike the private individual, it has the further qualification that it does not as a rule succeed in hitting back very effectually. Grounds for the onslaught are easy to find, as Governments tread heavily on many highly sensitized toes. Competition in attacking Government has thus arisen, from reasons quite apart from politics, amongst the less reputable journals, which in India are practically all in a more or less chronic condition of financial tightness. When upon this highly combustible material is poured the petrol of burning politics, in so fiery an intellectual atmosphere as that of India, it is not surprising that the resultant conflagration should be considerable. It is thus that has arisen much that would otherwise be inexplicable in the less prosperous and therefore less responsible section of the press of India of to-day. It is possible indeed to say that a press which, as a whole, has proved itself to be by far the greatest educational force in the country includes two quite distinct wings. One of these wings is composed of financially substantial and therefore responsible journals—vernacular, Anglo-Oriental, and English—which, though sometimes misled, and always critical and independent, are entitled to every bit of the consideration that appertains to the press in other parts of the world. The other wing, for reasons special to India, is made up of a class of organ which all sober thinkers, just as much in the press as in other branches of the community, would desire to see improved out of the way. Such improvement, I think, can come about only by the slow process of absorption into the ranks of responsible papers. Many attempts have been made officially, with the help on the one hand of the pains

and penalties of special press enactments, and on the other of official competition, to drive the less responsible of the extremist papers off the market. The first of these methods has roused so much suspicion and opposition in circles quite independent of the objects of discipline, that it has had to be very largely abandoned. The second, I may say without disparagement of the utility in certain limited cases of such organs as the *Fauj Akbar*, an official vernacular journal admirably run for Indian sepoys, has hitherto failed to affect the situation appreciably. A solution, I venture to think, will only be found eventually in the growth and expansion of financially independent and therefore responsible journals. This progress will be expedited or retarded, not only by such slow causes as the extent to which education grows, but also by the more direct action of such copyright and other facilities as are afforded to the press generally, and according to the extent to which political, commercial, and industrial developments in India enable legitimate newspaper enterprise to thrive. It cannot be brought about, however, by a wand of magic, and must in any case take time.

Because changes are gradual, however, they are not less liable to be far-reaching. The press of India has developed in the most wonderful manner in the period I have known it, and its growth upon the whole has been for the good of the country. Its advance in the future is certain to continue. The increasing share taken by Indians in the running of it in no way diminishes the field it offers for European talent. The responsibility of its work demands the best in the way of men that the West as well as the East can offer. Neither Indians nor Europeans by themselves can run it to the best advantage, but be the right men of these two communities cordially combined in its service, it can bring, I maintain, into the realm of solid achievement far more in the way of valuable results than is now even envisaged in the unsubstantial sphere of thought.

DISCUSSION ON THE FOREGOING PAPER

A MEETING of the East India Association was held at Caxton Hall, Westminster, on Monday, April 9, 1923, when a paper was read by Everard Cotes, Esq., entitled "The Newspaper Press of India." J. A. Spender, Esq., was in the chair, and the following ladies and gentlemen, among others, were present: The Right Hon. Lord Lamington, G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., the Right Hon. Lord Pentland, G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., General Sir Edmund Barrow, G.C.B., G.C.S.I., Sir Michael O'Dwyer, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., Sir Lionel Davidson, K.C.S.I., and Lady Davidson, Sir John G. Cumming, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Sir Patrick Fagan, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Sir George Shaw, C.S.I., Sir Herbert Holmwood, Sir Valentine Chirol, Sir Thomas J. Bennett, C.I.E., M.P., Sir Duncan J. Macpherson, C.I.E., Mr. C. E. Buckland, C.I.E., Mr. A. Porteous, C.I.E., Mr. F. H. Brown, C.I.E., Mr. N. C. Sen, O.B.E., Mr. S. Lupton, O.B.E., Mr. John Kelsall, Mr. F. H. Skrine, Miss Cornelia Sorabji, K.-i.-H., Miss Scatcherd, Mr. F. J. P. Richter, Mr. G. M. Ryan, Mr. O. Lloyd Evans, Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Bedford, Colonel F. S. Terry, Major G. W. Gilbertson, Mr. Brownrigg, Miss Shaw, Mr. G. B. Colman, Mr. W. T. Coulton, Mr. F. C. Channing, Miss Collis, Mr. J. P. Collins, Mrs. Drury, Mr. and Mrs. H. R. H. Wilkinson, Mr. J. Sladen, Mr. J. E. Ferrard, Rev. O. Younghusband, Colonel A. S. Roberts, Mrs. Martley, Miss Partridge, Mrs. White, Mr. R. G. Armstrong, Mr. Moulvi A. R. Nayyar, Rev. H. Halliwell, Miss Delaforce, and Mr. Stanley P. Rice, Hon. Secretary.

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and Gentlemen,—It is my very pleasant duty to introduce to you Mr. Everard Cotes, who is going to read a paper on a subject which was never more important than at the present time. The Indian Press has always been an anxious problem, but now, when we have embarked upon more democratic institutions, to have knowledge and understanding of it becomes a matter of the greatest importance to the Indian Administrator and, indeed, to the English people. There can be nobody better qualified to speak on this subject than Mr. Everard Cotes. He has spent a life-time in India serving on Anglo-Indian papers and organizing news-services in India, and I suppose he has had opportunities of seeing all parts of India which have been open to very few officials. (Applause.)

The paper was then read.

Miss SCATCHERD read the following extract from a letter which she had received from Dr. John Pollen:

"I consider the East India Association owes a deep debt of gratitude to Mr. Everard Cotes for his able, thoughtful, and most encouraging paper on 'The Newspaper Press of India,' and I am delighted you have secured such a broad-minded, clear-headed man as my friend Mr. J. A. Spender as a chairman.

"It is comforting to be assured that the growth of the Indian Press has

on the whole been for the good of the country, and that the cordial co-operation of Indians and Europeans of the right sort will make it more of a success for the good of all than it has ever proved in the past.

"I knew Surendra Nath Bannerjee—now Sir Surendra Nath—of the *Bengalee*. He was a 'competition wallah' of my year, and I am one of the few who know from the Collector of his day, and from the late Sir Charles Elliott, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, how different was the treatment accorded to Surendra Nath from that which would have been accorded to a European civilian in his place! But those were the days of superstitious prejudice when—

'We looked, in course of time, to see
Muir, Lawrence, rank with Chatterjee,
And Plowdens alternate with Dutts,
And Ghoses elbow Elliots!'

But those days are happily now dead in the I.C.S.; and it is refreshing to learn from the lecturer that 'nowadays one observes sustained endeavour on the part of the Anglo-Indian Press to understand their Indian colleagues and make personal friends of them.' It is certainly most pleasant to hear that relations of mutual respect and cordiality are growing up which are having far-reaching results; and I may perhaps here mention that amongst those who have helped to foster good feelings and to do good in India there are few journalists more successful than my old friend Mr. F. H. Brown, C.I.E.

"I remember well Mr. Robert Knight and his gifted sons of the *Statesman*, and how effectually he and they stirred the principles (then anathema, but now accepted officially and in a far more daring form), and, of course, I know Sir Thomas Bennett, M.P., Mr. Lovat Fraser, and Sir Stanley Reed, all happily still with us. I rather wonder the lecturer has not mentioned Maclean and Gratton Geary, who were no mean leaders of thought in my day, both in old Bombay and throughout India.

"What the Press really needs is healthy action with due control by the cultivated judgment of society, and I agree with the lecturer in considering that this is a slow process, and mainly depends on the proper education of the people. The leading out and uplifting of the masses should, therefore, be our first care.

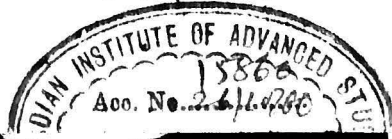
"J. POLLEN."

MR. SKRINE said that he might fairly claim to speak of the Anglo-Indian Press with inside knowledge, inasmuch as he had contributed many columns to the *Pioneer*, the *Englishman*, and to the *Indian Daily News*, under Mr. Cotes' able editorship. He thought that London pressmen hardly realized the difficulties under which their colleagues in India laboured. The first was climatic; to write leaders and correct proofs at a temperature of 100° was no easy task. While editors at home were surrounded by a staff of specialists who were sometimes a little jealous of outsiders, the relatively small circulation of Anglo-Indian dailies compelled their colleagues in India to welcome amateur contributions. One of these confessed to the speaker that he often filled yawning columns by inditing

letters to himself, and starting controversies in which he was the sole disputant. (Laughter.) Lastly, there was the difficulty of working with underlings who knew little or no English; the sixty odd compositors in the *Englishman's* office recognized the types only by their feel! It was not generally known that some of Lord Macaulay's famous Essays were set up at No. 9, Hare Street, Calcutta, and sent to the *Edinburgh Review* in galley-proofs. He congratulated Mr. Cotes on his able and illuminating address.

Sir MICHAEL O'DWYER, dealing with the subject of the lecture from the point of view of an administrator, said it had been his good fortune or misfortune while Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab to have had a good deal to do with the Indian Press, especially the more shady section of it. It was of this he would chiefly speak. He gave it a good deal of attention, and received from it a good deal of attention in return—perhaps this was for their mutual benefit. He did not agree wholly with the lecturer as to the similarities between the English and the Indian Press; he thought they were rather superficial, at least in the provinces, and that on examination there would be found to be a great difference between them. In England to start a newspaper there was considerable capital necessary, large premises, responsible business and editorial management, and an efficient and highly trained staff. Hence there were few mushroom newspapers here. In the case of an Indian paper there was little or no capital, usually mean premises, very little sense of responsibility, little or no previous training among the staff; in fact, very often the men who had failed to pass the University examinations drifted into journalism as a *pis aller*, and the ranks of the journalists were also swollen by men who had either left or been driven out of the Government service. He could quote scores of instances. Under these conditions there were a large number of irresponsible journals started. These had to endeavour to make both ends meet, and he was afraid they often tried to do so by unworthy methods, by what the lecturer had called a system of blackmail. It had been authoritatively said both in Parliament here, and in the Assembly in India, that a large number of journals in India were started with a view to blackmailing the native princes of India; and he personally knew of many such cases. He remembered asking a wealthy gentleman in India who owned a paper and complained that he was losing money by it why he went on doing so, and he said it paid him, because if he did not have a paper of his own he would have to spend more in blackmail.

Another matter which had been brought prominently to his attention in the Punjab was the acrimony with which religious controversies were fomented and pursued in certain sections of the Press. The Punjab had three great religions, Muhammadan, Hindu, and Sikh, and some of the organs of those communities were and are engaged in a campaign of mutual abuse and vilification. The matter had become so acute as to threaten the peace of the province, and as Lieutenant-Governor he had dealt with it by putting the papers in question, whether Arya Samaj, Sikh, Muhammadan, or Indian Christian, under heavy security. By this means he had succeeded in bringing about comparative decency in



religious controversy. He believed that his action had the approval of the great mass of the people who wished to live in harmony with their neighbours, but naturally it drew on him the hostility of the Press.

Another serious abuse of a certain section of the Press was the prevalence of obscene and indecent advertisements. They must remember that in these matters the Indian standard was very different from the British, so that the latter could not be fully applied. But complaints had been made to him by Indians with regard to these indecent advertisements, which were not always confined to the less reputable papers. The method he had adopted had been to serve the papers with a warning that the obscene advertisements must disappear, and, if they did not take heed of the warning, then to prosecute them under the law. The authorities did not press for heavy sentences at first, but if the offences were repeated a heavier fine was imposed. By this means they had succeeded in cleansing the Press to a considerable extent. He had received a message from Indian ladies thanking him for the efforts which the Government had made in cleansing the Press, thus enabling them and their children to read the papers.

The lecturer had told them that one of the surest means of obtaining notoriety and increasing circulation was to attack the Government, and anyone who knew the history of seditious movements in India realized that they were very largely fostered by certain sections of the Press. Since 1897 the Bengal Revolutionary Movement was promoted in that way; also the similar movements in the Deccan and in the Punjab. In 1914 and 1915 there were in the Punjab serious rebellious outbreaks which were mainly promulgated by seditious vernacular newspapers. The infamous *Ghadr* newspaper, issued by Har Dyal in California, and published in four or five Indian vernaculars, was the most potent incentive to mutiny and rebellion at that period, but they had succeeded in excluding it from India during the war. Then after the Armistice there was Ghandi's so-called passive resistance movement, which was inaugurated in January, 1919, which swept over the country like a tornado, causing riot, murder, and rebellion, and which, like every other such movement, had been largely propagated by the Press. The *Bengalee* in Calcutta deserved credit for having pointed out whither the movement was leading, and for warning the public against it. Other papers disregarded the warning, and proceedings were taken against them. To prepare the ground for the seditious campaign of 1919 some twenty mushroom papers were started in the Punjab, Delhi, and the United Provinces between January and April with the direct object of fostering hostility to Government and defiance of authority. It would be interesting to trace who was at the back of these papers and how they were financed. All, or nearly all, came to an untimely end, but not till they had done their evil work. This showed what a powerful agency for evil the Press could be in the conditions that existed in India.

In 1919, as they knew, the Reforms were introduced, and as a consequence there was a demand for a repeal of the Press Laws. The question was examined by a Committee of the Legislative Assembly, who reported that as the revolutionary movement was now quiescent and the organiza-

tions that supported it had ceased to exist, the Press Laws might be safely repealed ! They were repealed accordingly. The prescience of the Committee, which included the Home and Law Members of the Government of India, may be judged by the fact that within a few weeks the Moplah rebellion broke out. That rebellion cost 10,000 lives and infinite suffering to 1½ millions of people, a high price to pay for a formula—the liberty of the Press. In dealing with the Press of India, he hoped it would be realized from what he had said that one had to adopt a different attitude, because the conditions were radically different from those to which they were accustomed in England. In England the people who read the newspapers were people who could reason for themselves, who were as a rule moderate in their views and the expression of their views, and people who would not be led into lawless outbreaks by exaggerated or malicious statements in the Press. In India more than nine-tenths of the people were wholly illiterate, and could only obtain their news by word of mouth ; they were inclined to swallow as true anything that appeared in print. The literate class was also very emotional and easily misled. Most people were wanting in the moral courage which would enable them to resist blackmail or libel, and therefore the ground was exactly suited for the unscrupulous journalist, and he was afraid in many cases the unscrupulous journalist had taken advantage of these conditions. If they were to protect the ignorant and credulous masses from these evils they must realize that they could not at present allow in India the unfettered liberty of the Press, which was the pride and privilege of this country. (Applause.)

Sir VALENTINE CHIROL said that the Press had played a very important part in India, and it was a misfortune and a grave mistake that the Government and the official class in India had not realized early enough its importance, and had failed to form and instruct public opinion. For many years it had been the habit in official circles either to ignore the Press or to underrate its influence, and very rarely had attempts been made to make the policy of the Government understood—i.e., to bring it within the field of knowledge of a politically immature people. Until relatively recent times, newspapers had to be content with official communiqués, often issued in a form which only the official mind could understand. As far as the Government gave any information to the Press it reserved it in those days for one particular paper, the *Pioneer*, which was a very able paper, but one which had come to be regarded as the sole recipient of the Government's confidence. This had a very bad effect upon the other Anglo-Indian papers, and also upon the Indian Press. When Mr. Hensman, one of the most upright and ablest journalists in India, who was the *Pioneer's* correspondent at Simla, ventured on one occasion to offer a mild criticism of the policy of the Viceroy, his name was eliminated from the visitors' list at Government House. This connoted a complete misconception of the functions of a newspaper. There had been considerable progress since then, but there was room for more. The Secretary of State for India had recently appointed another Royal Commission to consider the question of the public services of India.

He (the speaker) had had the honour of serving on a previous Commission on that subject, and he knew how difficult the task of such a Commission would be. The appointment of such a Commission was, however, regarded as absolutely necessary, and it was contended that in no other way could the changes be made which were necessary with regard to the organization of the public services in India under the new conditions of Indian Government. The Commission on which he had served had achieved quite remarkable unpopularity, and the same thing might be predicted for the new Commission, and unfortunately neither the Government of India nor the India Office had made any attempt to prepare Indian public opinion and to explain the character and purpose of the Commission. When the announcement was made he had written a letter to the Editor of *The Times*, in which he had explained what he understood to be the chief purpose of the Commission. As they knew, the Indian Legislative Assembly had rejected the vote for the expenses of the Commission. He had received letters from two Indian friends who were members of the Legislative Assembly, saying that it was very unfortunate that his letter in *The Times* had not appeared in India before the debate took place, because if the reasons he had put forward for the appointment of the Commission had been made public in India, especially with an official *imprimatur*, it would have made a considerable difference in the result. When attempting to train people for self-government the most important thing was to explain to them policies that were being initiated. They could not expect to have the support of public opinion unless they attempted to inform and to guide it. That was what every Government had learnt to do in this country. Why not in India? (Applause.)

Sir THOMAS BENNETT said that since he started his career in Indian journalism in the year 1884 there had been enormous progress made, mainly since he left the country twenty years ago. Formerly the personal note was more unpleasantly heard in the English Press in India than it was to-day, and Eatanswill provided little in comparison with some of the polemics between Anglo-Indian journalists which he remembered. Mr. Cotes had spoken about introducing Indians into the English newspaper offices. He agreed with Mr. Cotes, and while he (the speaker) would be the last to advocate in any large degree the Indianization of the English Press in India, he had always thought they had made a mistake in not availing themselves more largely than they had done of the collaboration of Indian writers. He had been one of the first to introduce an Indian among the staff of leader writers, twenty-five years ago, and he had never regretted it. There were many among the Indian community who wrote excellent English, particularly among the Madrasees, and newspapers could obtain direct knowledge of facts in regard to Indian life from them which probably an Englishman would be less able to give. The element of perspective and proportion should not be lost sight of in dealing with the question of the Indian Press. With regard to the remarks of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, anyone who did not know much about India, in listening to those otherwise apposite remarks would think that all the journalism of India was mischievous and dangerous, but that, of course,

was not so. They often saw in the Indian Press to-day very admirable sentiments. There were elements of good in Indian journalism, but it was still a long way short of arriving at a reasonably good idea of what journalism should be; it was not sufficiently informing; it was as a whole too exclusively given to political criticism and to intemperate attacks on the Government. The educative side of Indian journalism had yet to be brought out, and until that was done it would be very far short of what it ought to be. With regard to the relations between the Anglo-Indian Press and the Indian Press, the Anglo-Indian Press not only served the English and the European community but it could do enormous service in setting before Indian journalists examples of sober, reasonable, and informing criticism. To perform the true function of journalists Indian editors had to give much more information than they do, and to instruct as many as were within their reach of the 300,000,000 of the people of India. For this reason the relations with the Anglo-Indian Press and the native Press must be relations of mutual goodwill, and it was the duty of the Anglo-Indian Press to set an example of fairness and sympathy with the people around them, even though sometimes it might not be reciprocated. He believed that the Anglo-Indian Press had a mission of great importance before it under the new Constitutional conditions which prevailed in India. It was the mission of the Anglo-Indian Press to serve England and to serve India. There never had been greater opportunities for the Anglo-Indian Press than there were at the present time. So long as that Press could exercise a restraining and moderating and educative influence it would be doing enormous service to the Empire and to India. (Applause.)

Sir PATRICK FAGAN said that he found considerable difficulty in understanding the remark which had been made that the Indian Government had systematically neglected to communicate information regarding official matters to the Press. In his own experience, which extended over thirty years, large masses of official reports and statistics were published at frequent intervals, and they gave ample information regarding the policy and activities of Government and of its departments. True it was that such information was not expressed in words or in ideas of one syllable, but demanded study and consideration from those who desired to criticize Government. The Indian-owned newspapers, however, for the most part persistently neglected such material, because their main object was the vilification of Government, the distortion of its motives and the fomenting of racial animosity and of racial feeling. To take such a subject as agriculture, for instance. Scarcely ever did one see any rational reference to agricultural improvement or development; and there were very few even educated Indians who appreciated the extent to which by Government influence agricultural progress had been fostered in India. Very notably was this the case with the great system of co-operative credit. With regard to the recent appointment of a Royal Commission on the Indian Services, there could be very little doubt in the public mind as to the reasons which were considered to render it necessary, for the questions with which it was to deal had been publicly discussed in India during the last three or four years, and indeed longer. He was therefore unable

to understand how Government had failed in its duty, as had been suggested by one speaker, in not publishing an official explanation of the step.

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen,—I think we must thank Mr. Cotes most cordially for the very interesting paper which he has given us, and the other speakers for the extremely interesting debate which has followed. I do not feel that I am really qualified to offer any observations of my own, but I did happen ten years ago to spend four months in India, and some part of that time I devoted to attempting to inform myself about the Press of India, not so much the English Press, with which I had already some acquaintance, but the vernacular Press, which, owing to my ignorance of the languages, was more or less a closed book to me. I remember that I got myself into some little trouble with Anglo-Indian journalists for my rashness in handling a subject on which I was very likely to be misled, and I well know the difficulties. I am very glad to hear from Mr. Cotes that there is a great change in the Indian Press, particularly in the matter of blackmail, which undoubtedly was practised by some of the less reputable Indian newspapers, and which the Indian journalists agreed with me was an offence which affected not only the individual who committed it, but the whole newspaper world. The subject of good libel laws and good protection against the abuse of the Press is enormously important, not only to the Government, but to the Press itself. Most of us in this country dislike the laws of libel, but we are convinced in our own minds that a good and strong law of libel is one of the secrets of an honest and decent Press. (Applause.) I think the Indian Press could be greatly helped by friendly relations with their English colleagues, and I believe they are susceptible to influences wisely addressed to them from that quarter. In my own experience they did what was extremely useful to me: they arranged a series of conferences with various Indian writers, not merely journalists, but writers on a variety of subjects who were in the camp at the Delhi Durbar. We discussed a great variety of subjects, and I was greatly indebted to them for helping me to get as much knowledge as I could in a short time of what was in their minds on social and religious questions. I carried away with me a very vivid impression of their intelligence, and I cannot help thinking that more communications of this kind would be useful. We also discussed many questions concerning the Indian Press, and I took the liberty of speaking very frankly to them upon some of the topics which have been raised here to-day. As to the relations of the Government with the Indian Press, it seems to me to be immensely important that the Government should not get in the habit of regarding the Press as the enemy, because it dislikes the criticisms of some newspapers. If you regard the Press as an enemy and you do not take more pains to instruct and influence it than the mere publication of statistics and Blue books you will always be in trouble, and your trouble will increase as the Press gets more educated. The Press is inevitable; it is there, and if you are going to work on anything like democratic lines the Press is part of your governing system. Your Assembly and your elections are all nothing if there is not a Press of some

sort. Without newspapers you are without eyes or ears or means of gathering information about the ideas which are prevalent in the country. Without a Press you are worse off than with a very critical Press. Nobody can deny that in a country in which vast numbers of the people are in a comparatively primitive state the Government must have some control over the Press ; yet the Government will be wise to let the vernacular Press have the utmost liberty compatible with public order in criticism of itself. That seems to me to be extremely important, if only for the sake of keeping the Government informed of the views of the people. If you abolish the expression of criticism you do not abolish the criticism, and you may have it in a much more dangerous and underground form. I will not pursue these observations, which are only those of an observer from without, but I should like to tell Mr. Cotes how greatly we have appreciated his paper and what a valuable contribution it is to this extremely interesting subject.

Mr. COTES thanked the meeting for the manner in which they had received his paper.

On the motion of LORD LAMINGTON a hearty vote of thanks was by acclamation accorded to the Chairman and the Lecturer.

The CHAIRMAN having thanked the meeting on behalf of the Lecturer and himself, the proceedings terminated.

THE FUTURE OF THE INDIAN LAND REVENUE

BY SIR PATRICK J. FAGAN, K.C.I.E., C.S.I.

THE title of this paper is, perhaps, sufficiently suggestive of the speculative nature of the subject with which it attempts to deal. India in transition, political, economic, moral, social, is a trite commonplace of the thought of the day: and yet to those who have some little knowledge of portions of the vast illiterate and inarticulate masses forming more than 90 per cent. of the 320 millions who people the Indian continent, it is perhaps permissible to doubt whether material change in *their* outlook on life has really been so rapid and so far-reaching as is generally represented; whether their main concern is not still with the secure and continuous development of the more humble economic and social interests of their daily life and toil rather than with lofty political aspirations; whether they really appreciate disturbance, not to say upheaval of their "placid, pathetic contentment," to quote the words of a famous report. To the European political thinker, living in an environment of practically universal literacy, differentiation between a small educated minority and a vast surrounding illiterate mass is so strange as to be practically unrealizable; whereas in India such a differentiation stands out in naked reality, a factor of the utmost political importance. But it is at the same time undoubtedly true that strong currents of politico-racial and nascently nationalistic sentiment are flowing over the thin educated surface film of the Indian population, which, on the available figures for literacy, may be put at about six per cent. of the whole. How long will it be before such currents have permeated the still comparatively tranquil, underlying masses; and what developments, at present unforeseen,

will the process involve? That in the main is, I suggest, the problem which faces those who are responsible for the welfare of India to-day. Under such conditions speculation is an inevitable element in dealing with any question which touches the future of India and of Indian administration. That, then, is my chief excuse for the nature of this attempt to deal with one such question. Another is that though speculation is a hazardous undertaking, exposing the author to drastic criticism, it at the same time suggests and fosters discussion.

The present land revenue of India has behind it a long historic past, stretching back in its germinal stages long beyond the commencement of our era; while it is inextricably interwoven with the growth and development of landed property rights in the Indian continent. With its history I propose to deal only in briefest detail, and only so far as is necessary for the proper subject of this paper. It is often thought to be a unique phenomenon of its kind; but that is very far from being the case, at any rate as regards its origin. It is only an instance of a practice, nearly universal in the primitive stages of political and economic development, by which the political ruler or chief of the tribe or of the primitive State claimed and received, in accordance with a recognized seigniorial right, a share of the produce of land from the actual cultivator, a share which constituted, probably, the main item on the receipt side of the ruler's combined private and State budget. In many, though not perhaps in all Western countries, the recognition of such a claim has tended in greater or less degree to lapse out of existence as the result of a variety of economic and political causes. But not so in India: there, it is broadly true to say, throughout the devious course, or rather courses of its history, the claim has never been foregone and never repudiated, whatever the vicissitudes of form which it has experienced or the accompanying, not to say bewildering varieties of land tenure to which it has given birth. Though in the course of

historical development it has been more or less transformed, the continuous existence and recognition of the claim can be traced throughout the history of most of the Indian continent. In short, the payment of land revenue to the State has been uniformly an incident and an obligation attaching to indigenous Indian recognition of permanent rights over land in favour of individuals and communities.

In the Hindu era the traditional, but by no means the invariable share of gross produce taken by the Raja or ruler was one-sixth. The Muhammadan conquerors maintained their predecessors' claim; and in order to render it more effective, developed and organized a definite land revenue system, with which, of course, the names of the Mughal Emperor, Akbar, and of his famous Hindu Finance Minister, Raja Todar Mal, are intimately associated; and of which a full account is contained in the memoir known as the *Ain-i-Akbari*, written by Akbar's minister, Sheikh Abul-Fazl. The Muhammadan demand for land revenue, which was largely assessed in cash, was based on a third share of the gross produce as compared with the Hindu one-sixth; but it had reached an even higher standard in many places, if not generally, before the advent of the British. It was the Muhammadan system, or rather its decayed and disorganized remains, which the British took over at the commencement of their rule, on the assumption of the *Dewani* of Bengal, Bihār and Orissa in 1765. It may, therefore, be said without exaggeration that it was Akbar's great land revenue settlement and his general revenue system which formed the foundation on which the corresponding institutions now existing have been built. The Indian land revenue, then, is no new creation of a "Satanic" alien government, but an ancient Indian institution inherited from previous generations of Indian rulers; a point which cannot be too clearly emphasized.

It would be impossible, and indeed irrelevant, in a paper

such as the present to sketch even briefly the development of the British-Indian system of land revenue administration, characterized as it is by wide local variations in the application of fundamental principles and in the nature of the land tenures which it affects and which are to a large extent its outcome. The main principles may be stated, perhaps not inaccurately nor inadequately, as follows :

Firstly, the determination of rights in land ; primarily the rights of those who are liable for the payment of the State's demands ; and, as a necessary adjunct, the rights of those who hold subordinate but permanent or semi-permanent recognized interests in land.

Secondly, the limitation of the State's demand for land revenue ; this being secured by assessing it not as a share of the gross or total produce of land, as was generally the practice under the primitive indigenous system, but generally as a moderate share of the net rental as estimated on the data available. I need scarcely point out that the second principle, so far as it is observed—and fully observed it generally is—secures a subsistence, and in most cases a good deal more than a subsistence, for the actual cultivator and a substantial share of the rental for the land revenue payer, a state of things which was by no means assured under the indigenous system of a share of the gross produce for the State. It is this limitation of the State's demand, as introduced by the British Government, which has in fact given material reality and value to rights which previously under indigenous rule had often little more than a sentimental existence.

The above fundamental principles were reached not at once, nor in any one particular locality ; but in the course of some fifty years, as the result of laborious and extended investigation and of growing experience of novel conditions and of strange usages and customs, dissimilar to anything then actually existing in the native country of the new rulers. The latter for the most part wisely held their

hands before committing themselves irrevocably to definite systems. There was indeed one exception: the permanent settlement of Bengal, effected by Lord Cornwallis in 1793, under the orders of the Home authorities and in the teeth of experienced official opinion in India. It covered the provinces of Bengal, Bihár, and Orissa, as then existing, and was subsequently extended to portions of the Madras Presidency and to certain other tracts. Its characteristic features, of course, were the fixation of the State's land revenue demand in perpetuity and the definite conferment of proprietary rights on the *zamindárs*, or ex-Mughal revenue contractors, in respect of the lands concerned, for the land revenue of which they became liable. Many years were to elapse before the subordinate rights of tenure holders in the permanently settled lands received attention. The merits and results of the Permanent Settlement have been the subject of prolonged discussion and of much more or less drastic criticism into which it is neither necessary nor possible for me to enter. So far, however, as these results have been evil, the responsibility rests on the Home authorities of the time, who, relying on *a priori* theories, disregarded the more cautious course advocated by officials in India who knew enough to know that there was much more to be known before coming to a definite decision on a vital point of administration. The main gravamen of the charge against the settlement has been, of course, that it has deprived the State of all participation in the greatly increased rental of land, which as long ago as 1871-72 was officially stated to be many times the amount of the permanently fixed land revenue. According to the official statistics of 1919-20 the total of that revenue in the provinces of Bengal, Bihár and Orissa, Agra and Oudh, and Madras stands at approximately 2·9 million pounds sterling. On the data available in the same statistics I calculate that, at the existing standards of the neighbouring temporarily settled tracts, the revenue of those permanently settled should be roughly 2·5 million pounds

sterling more than it is ; a figure which, if correct, is some measure of the bounty which a minority of the landowners of India are enjoying as a result of the action of Lord Cornwallis.

Let us turn now to a brief consideration of the position which land revenue receipts have occupied in the finances of India during the past half century. Variations in the sterling value of the rupee introduce inevitable complexity into any comparison of the past and present fiscal figures of India ; but, allowing for this, those appended below (in round numbers) are perhaps sufficiently accurate for the purpose in view :

Year.	Total Income of the Indian Government.	Land Revenue Receipts.	Proportion of Land Revenue.
	£ Millions.	£ Millions.	Per Cent.
1871-1872	50·1	20·5	41
1881-1882	64·0	21·1	33
1891-1892	68·8	23·9	34·7
1901-1902	76·3	19·1	25
1911-1912	82·8	22·1	26·7
1919-1920	131·6	24·5	18·6

Fifty years ago land revenue was the backbone of Indian finance, the next largest items being opium, 9 million pounds, and salt, 6 million pounds. In 1919-20 land revenue receipts stood at 24·5 million pounds, the pound being taken at fifteen rupees instead of at ten as in 1871-72. Land revenue was still the largest head of income ; but it was closely followed by net railway receipts with 21·3 million pounds ; while we find also such comparatively high items as Income Tax, 15·4 million pounds ; Customs, 15 million pounds ; and Excise, 12·8 million pounds ; figures not dreamt of by the Finance Minister of the seventies. The result is in accord with the well-recognized normal course of fiscal development, in which State income from State property, such as is the Indian land revenue, tends to decline, not necessarily in absolute amount, but in the proportion which it bears to income from taxation proper. Nevertheless land revenue still re-

mains an indispensable, though not the only buttress of the Indian fiscal system. It should be observed that since the introduction of the reformed Constitution in 1921 land revenue has become an entirely provincial head of receipt ; and as the Indian provincial exchequers, under the fiscal arrangements which have been adopted, do not share in the important heads of Customs and income-tax, land revenue is at present and at any rate for a long time to come must, it would seem, continue to be the sheet anchor of their finances.

But, in truth, the ultimate future of the Indian land revenue has to be considered from a wider point of view, a point of view which embraces the future political development of India in its bearing, firstly, on the peace, security, and efficient government of the Indian continent ; and, secondly, on the nature of the fiscal system which an Indian democracy, if and when it comes, will adopt, and of the distribution of fiscal burdens which it will seek to enforce. Here, indeed, it is that we enter the wide field of political and economic speculation. The avowed object of the reformed constitution, which has recently been introduced, is "the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the Empire." These few pregnant words, of which the meaning, the issues, and the outcome are to be revealed in the course of the next century, or perhaps still later, express what is probably the most momentous political enterprise to be found in human history. Never before, so far as I am aware, have the future political destinies of one-fifth of the human race been compressed into a formula so brief and yet so replete with enormous consequences. How far the words were the result of insight, of careful consideration of the issues involved in the light of available knowledge, of some clear vision of the political and social conditions which will constitute the future goal, it is not for me to venture to judge on the present occasion. Time, in due

course and in its own way, will doubtless give unanswerable replies to such questions. What I am concerned with is the fact that India has been definitely started on the path of democratic self-government of the responsible type. To consider whether the path is one along which it will be possible for her to proceed to its ultimate goal would be obviously beyond the scope of this paper. But, in view of recent events, this much may, I think, be said with confidence: that the path will be neither smooth nor easy, nor progress either uniform or devoid of aberrations and retrogressions, more or less temporary though these may be. Assuming, however, future democratic development; a point which is fairly clear is this: that the 70 per cent. of India's population which directly depends on agriculture for its daily bread must play an effective, not to say a predominant part in any Indian democratic system which is to lay claim to being a natural and healthy Indian development. It is scarcely conceivable that within any measurable interval of time the predominance of agriculture as the premier occupation of India can be threatened, much less vanish, in spite even of the fervour of those who seek in high protection a means towards the speedy and intense industrialization of India "by a rapid increase of machinery, factories, and great manufacturing cities," to quote from a recent paper read before this Association.

I am, therefore, perhaps not unduly rash in anticipating that, in the increasingly democratic Indian political system of the future, as contemplated in the recently introduced constitution, with its representative bodies more and more closely, and, as it is hoped, more and more intelligently controlled by growing electorates, preponderantly agricultural and rural, questions relating to agriculture, land, land tenure, and the fiscal burdens attaching to them will in an increasing degree occupy the time and attention of the provincial Governments and Councils. I speak here not entirely without reference to facts; for before I left India last year, I had on several occasions opportunities of dis-

cussing such questions with agricultural members of one provincial Legislative Council and of taking part in more formal debates dealing with some of these questions in the same Council; and the experience thus obtained tends to confirm the views which I have suggested. Moreover, a recommendation made by the Joint Committee of Parliament, in their report on the recent Government of India Act, to the effect that the principles governing the Indian land revenue should be reduced to statutory form, so far as this has not already been done, will doubtless encourage the early ventilation of such questions. The reflective agriculturist land revenue payer, and of these there are not a few even now, aware that land revenue has in the past been the most evident and the most pervasive element in the fiscal demands of the State, is disposed to contend that the time has come for some redistribution of the burden in the direction of more adequate taxation of industrial, commercial and professional wealth; and while no doubt inclined to exaggerate the amount of such wealth, he has insisted, and I think rightly, that the pitch of income-tax, an impost which, of course, does not apply to agricultural incomes in India, has been unduly low, and that its assessment has been evaded to a substantial extent and without much difficulty by methods not uncommonly prevalent in Oriental countries, nor unknown elsewhere. Recent years have undoubtedly seen some alteration in this state of affairs. I have already indicated that income-tax has now become a substantial item in the annual receipts of the Indian Government. Let me quote definite figures. In 1909-10 the yield was 1·56 million pounds; while during the four years ending with 1919-20 it ascended steeply to 3·7 million pounds, 6·3 million pounds, 7·7 million pounds, and finally to 15 million pounds. Of the latter sum, however, some 11 million pounds were collected in the provinces of Bengal and Bombay alone, that is to say, mainly in the cities of Calcutta and Bombay, leaving only some 4 million pounds for the rest of India. There is then

some ground, whether justifiable or not, for the comparison which presents itself to the land revenue payer between land on the one hand, and trade and industry on the other, as contributors to the finances of the State.

Pressure in the direction of relieving land of some part, at least, of its fiscal burden will, I anticipate, mainly take three directions :

1. A reduction in the standard of land revenue assessment ; that is to say, broadly speaking, in the share of net rental claimable by the State.

2. An extension of the term, or period of temporary settlements.

3. Limitation of the proportion of enhancement impossible at successive settlements. I propose to say a few words on each of these points.

The share of net rental claimed by the British Government has undergone successive reductions since the days of the permanent settlement of Bengal at the end of the eighteenth century. It is not generally recognized, I think, that that settlement was, at the time when it was made, a very severe one if judged by modern standards ; for the demand was considered as equivalent to ninety per cent. of the net rental, a figure which would be regarded as preposterous at the present time. In the settlements effected in the United Provinces between 1820 and 1840 the standard adopted was five-sixths, which was lowered to two-thirds in the latter year, and to one-half in 1855. In the Punjab since 1871 the standard has been one-half, and the same proportion applies to the Central Provinces and Madras and, I believe, to the greater part of Burma. In practice the standard is treated as a maximum which may not be exceeded, and the actual assessments imposed are frequently, if not generally, well below it. In the Punjab settlements, for instance, which have been carried out during the last ten years, the average proportion of the estimated net rental which has been actually taken has been about one-fourth in place of one-half. The result has been

due to the practical impossibility of imposing the large enhancements of demand which, in consequence of the great increase in agricultural assets, due to higher prices and to expansion of the cultivated area, the application of the theoretical maximum standards to actual or estimated net rental would have yielded. The demand for a reduction of these standards has thus been already met in part ; but in pursuing the subject the landed interests will, I have little doubt, lay stress on a comparison with the corresponding standards observed in the case of income-tax. Under the present Indian Income-Tax Act, annual incomes between Rs. 2,000 and Rs. 10,000, figures, of course, very far in excess of the annual incomes of the vast majority of Indian land revenue payers, are charged at rates between $2\frac{1}{2}$ and 3 per cent., against which 25 or 30 per cent. for land revenue in the case of net agricultural rental certainly looks large. The suggested argument is, of course, fallacious in that while emphasizing the superficial similarity between income-tax and land revenue in respect of their operation as charges on income, it disregards their otherwise essential dissimilarity in origin and nature. The former is a demand of the State in virtue of its general taxing power ; the latter is far more in being an ancient seigniorial claim of the State, always recognized as a liability and an obligation attaching to rights in land throughout India. It is to be hoped that an attempted assimilation of land revenue and income-tax for fiscal purposes will be firmly resisted, both theoretically and practically. . Assimilation would presumably involve, *inter alia*, the exemption, as in the case of income-tax, of agricultural incomes of less than Rs. 2,000 per annum ; a measure which would undoubtedly wipe by far the greater portion of the Indian land revenue out of existence altogether. In the Punjab, and I believe also in the United Provinces, a reduction of the maximal standard from 50 to 33 per cent. of the net rental has been suggested by the landed interests in the course of discussions which have already taken place ; but, as I have already indicated,

the latter figure is itself in excess of the share of rental which has actually been realized in recent settlements in the former province. The practical results of the suggested reduction are, therefore, not likely to make themselves felt for some time ; but pressure in the direction of further reductions in the future will no doubt continue ; so that it is possible that in time a proportion as low as 20 per cent. or less may be demanded.

It is, however, for the extension of the term of temporary settlements that pressure will probably be greatest. At present the normal term is thirty years over the greater part of British India, though under special circumstances shorter terms, generally not less than twenty years, are fixed. It is, I think, likely that the landed interests will demand an extension of the term to fifty years at least, while the substitution of permanent for temporary settlements will probably be broached, if indeed, not urged. As regards portions of India outside those which have been under a permanent settlement since the end of the eighteenth century, such a substitution was definitely negatived by the Secretary of State in 1882 after many years of discussion ; but there is apparently nothing to prevent the question being reopened in the future in the Indian Legislative Councils, in the direction of extending the area of permanent settlement ; or of revising arrangements in those to which it applies at present so as to bring them into line with the rest of the country, and thus remove the differentiation which has long existed in favour of the landed proprietors of Bengal and Bihár and of portions of Madras and the United Provinces. It is, however, unlikely that so large and so contentious an issue as the latter will be raised for many years to come, if at all. A conceivable alternative to the wider introduction of a permanent settlement is the redemption of annual land revenue by the payment of its capitalized amount. It is, I think, not improbable that schemes for the gradual adoption of such a measure will be put forward, and possibly find favour, in

the future in the provincial legislatures as a means of raising capital for productive works. Indeed, before I left India I saw one such tentative scheme framed by a well-known Hindu gentleman who, among other things, has been a highly successful agriculturist. Whatever may be the merits or demerits of such schemes, one chief difficulty will be to fix terms for redemption which shall be at once fair to the State as well as sufficiently attractive to the land revenue payer.

The ostensible reasons generally urged for the extension of the term of temporary settlements are: firstly, an alleged discouragement to the making of permanent agricultural improvements, arising from the liability of the assets created by them to an early assessment to land revenue; and, secondly, the harassment caused to the rural public by settlement operations. The first reason has little or no foundation in fact, since improvements of the kind involved are expressly exempted from any enhanced assessment; in Madras and Bombay for ever, and in other parts of India for a period, irrespective of the term of settlement, sufficient for the capital sunk to be fully recouped from the additional assets created. As regards the second reason, improved executive and administrative machinery for the rapid prosecution of settlement operations has largely reduced, if not removed, a grievance which is, of course, of the kind which must, all the world over, more or less inevitably attend the assessment and realization of State income. An extension of term will, it is obvious, *pro tanto* deprive the State of its claim, based on immemorial usage, to a share in that unearned increment of agricultural land which must inevitably accompany economic development, and thus exclude it from the fiscal support derivable from the growth of a steadily, if comparatively slowly, expanding source of income. On such a view fifty years seems to be too long a term, having regard to the inevitable future fiscal needs of the Indian provinces, and to the depletion which the finances of several of them

show even now within a short period of the introduction of the new constitution. The whole question will constitute one of the many tests which India's hoped-for democracy will have to face in the course of its arduous journey to the goal which has been set before it.

As regards the proportion of enhancement of demand which may be imposed at the termination of the period of a temporary settlement, certain restrictions are already observed in some provinces. They usually take the form of limiting immediate increase of demand to a fixed proportion, generally 33 per cent. (in one case 25 per cent.), and postponing the imposition of any further increase, considered to be claimable, for terms of five or ten years from the date of the commencement of the new settlement; the object being to secure the gradual, as opposed to the sudden realization of large enhancements of revenue to which the State may be found to be entitled. As a matter of fact enhancement over a considerable tract of country nowadays seldom exceeds 33 per cent. by much, if at all; except in regions which have undergone rapid and extensive development through the introduction of canal irrigation. Efforts will doubtless be made sooner or later to secure further and more drastic limitation.

During the last fifty years the Indian land revenue, reckoned in rupees, has increased by a proportion which lies in the neighbourhood of 80 per cent.; but it is fairly evident that the combined result of the lines of pressure which I have indicated above will, in so far as they may be successful, tend to deprive it of such elements of expansibility as it still possesses. The effect of this will fall primarily and directly on the finances of the provincial governments, in which, as I have already observed, land revenue, under the new constitution, is the chief item of receipt; and the only one, except perhaps Excise, capable of a steady, if slow, expansion which can be forecasted. The effect will, of course, be accentuated if, as is conceivable, the landed interests should go so far as to press not

merely for a drastic limitation of the future growth of fiscal receipts from land, but for their actual reduction. The immediate present, indeed, is the day of retrenchment, not only in England, but in India also. If India, however, is to make moral and material progress under the new political and administrative system, growth in the expenditure of the State must, in accordance with a universally prevailing principle, be inevitable, and a corresponding expansion of income equally so. Whence are the provincial Governments to secure it if a main source of expansion is to be blocked ?

The fiscal problem is one which will demand, is, indeed, even now demanding, from the provincial Councils intelligence, self-restraint, and a sense of public responsibility. How far the demand is being met I do not propose to consider, but that met it will have to be is clear beyond dispute. It is by no means unlikely that in the course of future debate and discussion the whole theory of the Indian land revenue will be attacked, and the validity, under modern conditions, of the seigniorial claim of the State disputed. Assume—and I trust that it is a very large assumption—that such contentions were accepted ; what would be the result ? The ancient land revenue of India, as such, would presumably disappear. How then would the yawning gap of some 25 million pounds in the annual provincial finances be filled ? The only possible methods would be either, firstly, the taxation of the unearned increment from land, in accordance with the ideals of some modern economists, and of others, and that probably at a considerably higher standard than is applied to rental at present for the purposes of land revenue ; or, secondly, the imposition of an income-tax on all agricultural incomes, on that of the landed proprietor as well as on that of his tenants, who at present, of course, do not pay land revenue to the State. Such an income-tax would have to include within its scope incomes far below the present limit of exemption, which is Rs. 2,000 per annum. In short, income-tax on the lines of

the British Schedules A and B would be introduced for agricultural land throughout India. Either of these measures might fill the gap, but the complexities of assessment and collection would be enormously greater than at present; while, looking at the comparatively easy operation of the present system, it is difficult to contemplate with equanimity the volume of popular discontent which would be aroused.

Given, therefore, a democracy of reasonable intelligence, effectively controlling its representatives in the Councils—I do not attempt to estimate the extent of the assumption—anything like a complete abolition of the land revenue in India is not, I think, to be seriously apprehended. Its continuous growth, however, will very probably be checked in the more or less distant future, perhaps almost to the point of extinction. It will then be for the provincial Governments and for the popular Councils, which will control them, to devise measures for meeting the growing cost of administration; for grow it must, even though the axe of retrenchment be periodically applied. What those measures will be I will not venture to prophesy. But in this connection it is to be observed that the main sources of income in which comparatively rapid expansion may be anticipated, such as Customs, Income-Tax, Railways, fall to the Central Government under present arrangements. It seems highly probable, therefore, that some readjustment in this respect between it and the provincial Governments will, sooner or later, become inevitable.

Finance is one of the perilous rocks which threaten the bark of Indian democracy in its voyage to the Land of Promise; and, in its dealing with Finance, the treatment of land revenue will demand foresight, courage, and self-restraint.

DISCUSSION ON THE FOREGOING PAPER

A MEETING of the East India Association was held on Monday, May 28, 1923, at the Caxton Hall, Westminster, at which a paper was read by Sir Patrick J. Fagan, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., entitled, "The Future of the Indian Land Revenue." Sir William H. Vincent, K.C.S.I., was in the chair.

The following ladies and gentlemen, amongst others, were present: The Right Hon. Lord Pentland, G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., Sir Mancherjee M. Bhownagree, K.C.I.E., Sir Frederick Nicholson, K.C.I.E., Sir John G. Cumming, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Sir Charles Mules, C.S.I., Sir Duncan J. Macpherson, C.I.E., Sir William Ovens and Lady Clark, Sir Robert Fulton, Lady Fagan, Mr. F. H. Brown, C.I.E., Mr. F. W. Woods, C.I.E., Mr. E. R. Abbott, C.I.E., Mrs. Anstey, B.Sc., Mr. W. Coldstream, K.-i.-H., Miss Scatcherd, Mr. J. B. Pennington, Mrs. Drury, Mr. F. J. P. Richter, Mr. O. N. Ahmad, Mr. F. S. Tabor, Colonel F. S. Terry, Colonel and Mrs. A. S. Roberts, Mr. G. M. Ryan, Mr. H. R. H. Wilkinson, Miss Nina Corner, Mr. F. W. Brownrigg, Miss Partridge, Mrs. Martley, Mr. F. C. Channing, Mr. F. Grubb, and Mr. Stanley P. Rice, Hon. Secretary.

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen,—I have been asked to introduce to you Sir Patrick Fagan, who will address you on "The Future of the Indian Land Revenue." I may say that I know of few people more competent to speak on this subject than Sir Patrick. He has had a long and distinguished career in the Punjab, a province famous for its land revenue administration, and he is a man known in the province for his capacity and sound judgment. I myself can speak with some knowledge of this, having had the good fortune to work with him on many occasions; he has, I may add, devoted much of his life to a careful study of the subject on which he will lecture to-day. I will not waste any more of your time, but will ask him to commence his lecture. (Applause.)

The paper was then read.

The CHAIRMAN announced that the meeting was now open for discussion, and he would first of all ask Miss Scatcherd to read a communication which had been received from Dr. Pollen, their late Secretary.

Miss SCATCHERD said that Dr. Pollen had written his usual letter with regard to the paper, but as time was short she would only read one or two extracts from it. They were as follows:

"In India pre-eminently the tenure of land was originally a simple tribal one. The patch was cleared by the individual family, and the tribal chief or herdman, or godhead (if any), was given a share of the produce (if produce arose). Landlordism, in those days, there was none! All land belonged to the tribe and was the common property of all, and the common sense of the East and of India early invented a simple quit-rent, or crop-share, to be paid by the successful cultivator. This he always

paid, if he could! India happily escaped the evils of feudalism, and I agree with the lecturer that the common sense of the Indian Democracy (which in my opinion in all land matters is vastly superior to that of the Anglo-Saxon) will never abandon or give up its Indian Land Revenue, which is the chief and simplest source of its income.

"The fact is, Indians long ago recognized the palpable truth which is only just now beginning to be learnt by the West—viz., that land has *no intrinsic value* of its own! It cannot be eaten; nor can it, like gold, be hidden, buried, or carried away. Bad land, incapable of crops, here in the middle of London, may command millions, while millions of acres of the most fertile land in India may be described as absolutely valueless, and is abandoned to jungle. It is *the people round it* who make land valuable, and the first step in all agricultural development is to encourage and protect the cultivator, and this the Indian Village System certainly did; and now no Indian cultivator seriously objects to pay the quit-rent required by the State, provided the percentage of the crop is kept fair and low. The cultivator understands quite well that the so-called 'rent' or land tax is not in any way like the Income Tax or any other impost imposed by the whim of the State, but a very old tribal customary claim or cess which accompanies the right to cultivate and entitles the cultivator to certain privileges. It is a common mistake to confuse the Indian Land Revenue demand with the tax arbitrarily imposed here in England under our landlord-and-lawyer-made law! The Indian Land Revenue demand is not the queer thing called in the West 'rent,' the original cause of all the murder and agrarian outrages in Ireland! How the tenants in Great Britain would rejoice if they were only called upon to pay the small Indian Government demand instead of the heavy rents they now pay their so-called landlords!

"Let us hope that the ancient equitable and democratic Land Revenue System of India may not be wantonly touched or foolishly upset by the new Legislative Councils. There is nothing now to prevent the Indian tenant or occupier from improving his property or holding, for I remember, even in my time, 'the Tyrone or Ulster Tenant-right' was recognized at any rate in Bombay and Madras! Under it all improvements become the property of the occupant and constitute his working capital and the security for his skill and ability.

"Thirty years is quite long enough for any settlement. But increases in demand should be gradual and always limited to, say, 25 or 30 per cent. To make any settlement permanent would be sheer absurdity and contrary to all native sentiment.

"In supporting Sir Patrick Fagan I now say: Let the new Legislatures continue (or revive) the old native Government taxation if they would avoid being dashed on the rocks of financial disaster in their voyage to the land of promise!"

Mr. CHANNING said that he agreed generally with Sir Patrick, whose experience had been much on the same lines as his own. Any scheme of redemption of land tax must be based, he thought, on a permanent assessment of the tax. It was so in England, where the land tax was fixed in

perpetuity on the separate parishes in 1798. Since then about half the land tax had been redeemed, and that fact made it difficult to reform the taxation on land. All stereotyped valuations soon became unequal; so that the taxpayers no longer contributed in accordance with their means. If the permanent settlement were now extended to the whole of India the existing inequalities would not disappear, as the incidence of land revenue was so different in the areas now under permanent and in those under temporary settlement. As to what the future may be, he was not a prophet; but apparently under any real system of self-government the agricultural interest will be dominant, and whether the results will be to the liking of the commercial and professional classes time will show.

Mr. F. W. WOODS said he thought the lecturer had dealt with the subject in too narrow a spirit; he seemed to regard taxation as something beneficial in itself, and that the material progress of the country would advance in proportion to its taxation. He drew a distinction between land revenue and income tax. He said in his paper: "Income tax is a demand of the State in virtue of its general taxing power; the latter is far more in being an ancient seigniorial claim of the State, always recognized as a liability and an obligation attaching to rights in land throughout India." It seemed to him that was a distinction rather than a difference; a matter of words. It was said that they had taken over the system of land revenue from the old Mogul rulers, but there were many of the old practices of the ancient rulers they had decided not to continue, and it was quite reasonable to reconsider the land revenue system on its merits. The lecturer had told them that originally land taxation in Bengal was fixed at 90 per cent. of the net rental, later being reduced to five-sixths, afterwards to two-thirds, and then to a half; and in the Punjab recently to about a quarter. This all went to show that at the time of each such reduction it was recognized that the taxation had been too high, and that it was desirable to lower it. A continuation of the process of reduction might bring it down to the level of the income tax, or the income tax might be scaled up to the level of the land tax.

He did not see that there was any distinction in the matter of immemorial usage between land taxation and any other form of taxation; all taxation was of immemorial usage, whether it was a hut tax or a poll tax, or any other kind of tax. It was only a question of administrative procedure in what form taxation should be levied. The lecturer showed statistics of land revenue receipts for the last fifty years, but his figures obscured matters through being expressed in terms of sterling instead of in rupees. The figures in sterling implied that the land revenue remained almost stationary, although in terms of rupees the revenue yield had been nearly doubled. It stood to reason that with the development of railways, customs, and so on, that the land revenue receipts bulked not so largely, in comparison with the total revenue, as it used to; but it was still an expanding source of taxation.

One fact, of course, was obvious, and that was that the Government must have taxes in order to carry on, but it need not necessarily lean so heavily on land taxation; it was entirely a matter of procedure based on

State policy. Curtailment of expenditure was a sound alternative to heavy taxation, since ample revenues were apt to encourage bureaucratic extravagance.⁴ The lecturer finished off by saying he wanted to know what would take the place of the land revenue if land revenue were to disappear? He had himself acknowledged that income tax could take its place simply as a matter of procedure. The rest was a question of policy.

He agreed with the lecturer that sound finance was the essence of the foundation of all government, and that the treatment of land revenue questions would demand foresight and self-restraint; as to "courage," of course they would have to distinguish between courage and rashness. It was more essential that there should be self-restraint and foresight. (Hear, hear.)

Sir CHARLES MULES said he presumed there can never be any question of extending the area under permanent settlement so long as a sane and reasonable Government exists in India and this country. That settlement, a folly the offspring of ignorance and incompetence, has been completely discredited, and no revenue officer could be found to defend it. He had himself been one for some thirty-five years. But though Government is now, as all Indian Governments have been from time immemorial, the owner of the land, all who had passed their lives amongst the people of India felt how important it was to protect the interest of the agricultural classes in every possible way. There had been in the past a tendency on the part of those in authority at the top of the tree to make the period of settlements too short; in his part of India they had had to suffer under ten years' settlements, and he had frequently urged that they should be for not less than thirty years as a minimum; it was not fair to the cultivating classes that they should at comparatively short intervals be subject to scrutiny and possible increases. He thought, speaking generally, that thirty years was a fair term. Where great irrigation projects were being carried out, of course Government might say: If we have more than a short term the cultivator will reap the benefit. Why should not he reap the benefit? He laboured under the most terrible disadvantages; the seasons were never to be relied upon. He suffered from droughts and floods, locusts and rats, blight, the ravages of wild animals, and many other troubles; therefore, if there was any little benefit to be obtained, by all means let him have it. (Hear, hear.) Unfortunately of late the agricultural classes had been undergoing a period of great ferment. They were most contented in the good old days, but, as an example of the mischievous agitation of recent years, since he had left India, from one of the richest and most prosperous parts of the Province in which he served, owing to the machinations of the notorious Moslem Ali brothers, the Hindu Gandhi, and their partizans, many thousands had suddenly and causelessly fled into tribal country and Afghanistan, where numbers had met with a most miserable fate. In the old days the rural classes, zemindars, peasant farmers, and labourers, looked upon their district officers as men who would and could protect their interests as, to use their own expression, "their father and mother. Now all was changed. But difficult as the position of the present-day

district officers is, they are still doing their utmost to keep the old spirit of loyalty alive, and one of the most important means to that end assuredly is to charge the agricultural classes moderate rentals and in renewing settlements to grant them a good long fixity of tenure. (Hear, hear, and applause.)

MR. PENNINGTON said he would like to ask one question, and that was as to the position of the cultivator. The lecturer had said that the actual cultivator was protected against all increase, but he did not see how he was protected at all; at any rate he never was in his time.

MR. COLDSTREAM said that he would have liked the lecturer to have given a little more detail in his statement regarding the actual practice of assessment of land revenue. Sir Patrick was very well qualified, from his long experience and his great sympathy with the people, to tell them a good deal as to how the system worked, and how it was adjusted with reference to the seasons and the various calamities of nature which may affect the income of the cultivator. In his opinion, as the result of considerable experience in India, he felt that the present Government viewed the cultivator with great sympathy, and the system which had been elaborated during the past sixty or eighty years in North India met the case entirely; it was a system on which much care had been expended. He thought that anything like complete abolition of the land revenue would never come to pass. It was important that they should bear in mind that the assessment of land revenue was one of the sources of income to which the Indian people had been accustomed for ages past, and they should take great care that the idea that the State had a claim on the share of the produce should be maintained, and not allowed to slide, though it should be adjusted with the greatest care and consideration. (Hear, hear.)

MR. ABBOTT said there was a matter he would like to draw their attention to, and that was that between the land revenue in India and taxation there was a very great difference, which Mr. Woods apparently had not recognized. He had never come across anybody who clamoured to pay taxes, but it was not an uncommon experience in India to find people coming forward and clamouring to pay land revenue. That was an extraordinary thing, and distinguished the payment of land revenue from the payment of ordinary taxes. As a Collector he had men, widows, and even children battering at his door to accept the payment of land revenue due on a disputed holding. The point was that the payment of land revenue was the outward and visible sign of an inward right; that was to say, the payment of land revenue in the eyes of the zemindar was a sign of his right in the land which he cultivated (hear, hear), and even if the entry in the records were destroyed or lost, the fact that he had been seen to give his contribution to the quota collected could be vouched for by everybody, and as an outward sign of his title to the land. In considering the future of land revenue in India, therefore, they had to take cognizance of the fact that the zemindar himself insisted upon paying it; he might object to paying the amount claimed, but that he should pay land revenue was a cardinal point in his village polity. In considering the future of

land revenue they must also recognize that there was a very large rural zemindar majority in the Councils. No doubt, within the necessities of balancing the Budget, there was a tendency to reduce the percentage of profit which the Government claimed as its due, and also to increase the length of the term for which assessments took effect. He himself was strongly in favour of those two tendencies. (Hear, hear.) He had recently had occasion to advise on the system of land revenue imposed by one of the great feudatory states of India, and he was astounded to see the great progress the British Government had made in the leniency of its assessments as compared with the Government of that particular state. The percentage which the Governments in Northern India took from the zemindar was now much less than when he first went to India. The 33 per cent. which it was now proposed to make the legal maximum in place of 50 per cent. of the rental, the present maximum, if adopted, would not in practice make any great immediate change in the amount of land revenue collected, but it would be a starting-point from which further leniency might be expected. He was strongly in favour of every effort being made towards greater leniency within the possibilities imposed by the financial obligation of paying one's way. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. RICE said that he had listened in vain for any constructive criticism of the title of the paper, but it seemed to be the assumption generally that land revenue itself was essential to India, and most of the discussion had been devoted to showing not only that land revenue was essential, but in what direction it could be improved, and as to how great a blessing it had proved in the past. Mr. Woods had made the pregnant suggestion: Why have land revenue at all?

Mr. WOODS: No; I said there must be taxation, but that it need not necessarily come from the land.

Mr. RICE said they ought to look at the subject from the objective point of view of what was likely to happen. It was said that land revenue was immemorial, and that they had only improved upon it. There had been a great many other changes in India. While the India of thirty or fifty years ago was very much on the old lines adopted by the ancient rulers, nowadays India was changing rapidly, and there was a considerable clamour for alteration in the executive machinery, and it was quite possible that an entirely new democratic Government in India might begin to question whether the system of land revenue was the best thing for India. If they could abolish land revenue, it would be a good thing for the agricultural population. He did not say land revenue was a good thing or a bad thing, but in the future it was quite possible a democratic Government might prefer to raise the revenue in many other ways; it was not at all beyond practical politics that the whole question of land revenue in the future might be discussed, and other means found for supplying the money.

Mr. F. S. TABOR said that with regard to the point which had been mentioned as to why there should be land revenue at all, if they looked at the question as it stood they had in India landlords who owned the land

and revenue; they had either inherited it or bought it, and they knew it was subject to land revenue when they bought it. The land revenue in India varied according to the assets, and if land revenue should be abolished it would simply be making a free gift to those owners of land, just the same as if they were to abolish the tithes in this country. He himself lived in a district where the tithe was higher per acre than the land revenue was in India. They might say: Why not abolish that? If they did, that would be a free gift to the owners of the land, and there was no reason at all why that should be done, any more than they should abolish land revenue in India.

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, it seems to me that there is really very little difference of opinion, save perhaps on the part of one or two members of the audience, on the question whether land revenue is a fair form of taxation in India, or a sound method of securing revenue for the Government; there may be differences as to the amount, and as to the period of each settlement, but the general consensus of opinion is, I think, strongly in favour of the view that land revenue is *per se* not an objectionable levy, and I venture to suggest that there is a great deal to be said in support of that position. One great merit the land revenue system has is its antiquity, for men bear more readily a form of taxation to which they have long been accustomed. Further, as was pointed out, suddenly to abolish land revenue now would be merely to benefit one particular class consisting largely of people who have no claim to hold the land free of assessment. I do not myself believe also that if you were to free the land from all payment of land revenue to-morrow you would benefit the position of the actual cultivator in the future—say five or ten years hence—in the least. There is nothing in our experience to support such a contention; apart from all this also I suggest that the abolition of land revenue as a source of income is not a practical proposition at present. I have never heard of this being suggested in India, nor would it be possible to substitute for land revenue any demand in the nature of income tax under present conditions. I do not think that anyone with recent experience of administration in India would regard that as a feasible proposition.

There are one or two points in the address on the future of land revenue to which I should like to draw attention. The lecturer said, for instance: "70 per cent. of India's population which directly depends on agriculture for its daily bread must play an effective, not to say a predominant, part in any Indian democratic system." Now, if members have examined the composition of the new Councils they will see that every effort that is possible has been made to secure rural representation, and, in fact, in the Provincial Councils rural representatives command a large majority. In the United Provinces Council during the last year the landlord interest was able to oppose successfully efforts made on one occasion by a Minister of the Government, and on another occasion by a member, to alter the law affecting the position of landholders to their disadvantage.

Similarly, if you take the Punjab—I hesitate to say that the figures I put before you are definitely correct—but I think there are about forty-five landlords, or persons connected with agriculture, out of about sixty in the local Council. In the Legislative Assembly there are twenty-five landlords

besides lawyers interested in land. Seats have been reserved for landlords in all Councils, and in addition to that they secured more seats through the ordinary rural electorate. In fact, the ryot looks on the landlord as his supporter and as one of the best representatives he can get *vis-a-vis* urban members.

I should like also to answer a question a lady asked about agricultural agitation in India; undoubtedly there has been a great deal of such unrest in recent years. For instance, in certain districts of Oudh last year there was agitation of a dangerous character, and, even if promoted by political agitators, it was carried on by the rural population against the landlords of Oudh, who are more in the position of feudal landlords than zemindars elsewhere, in that they claim greater privileges than ordinary landlords. Similarly, in other parts—e.g. in Behar and Chota Nagpore—there have been from time to time outbreaks of agrarian disorder, the tenants in some cases claiming the lands as their own property. Another question discussed was the probability of a reversion to the permanent settlement. One speaker suggested this was not a real danger as long as there was a sane Government in India or at home. I cannot answer for the sanity of the Government, but I may say that there are no indications of the insanity taking that particular form, nor is it likely it will. The rural interests are very largely represented in Councils, but the landlords know very well that directly the idea is started that no increase in revenue is payable it is a very short step to saying that no increase in rent is payable, and he is not in the least likely to support such a proposal. No doubt landlords might almost support permanent settlement, but I think the tendency in the country is rather the other way, and to say where there is permanent settlement that it should be done away with for the benefit of the State. The landlords in Bengal certainly have been apprehensive of this, and are anxious to know how far the covenants entered into will be observed and are binding on their successors. In fact, however, the benefits of a permanent settlement to the actual cultivator are very doubtful. If you read the Land Revenue Resolution published by Lord Curzon's Government, you will find that whereas in Bengal the State realized about four crores in land revenue, the actual assessments on the tenants was something like sixteen crores, and that the tenants pay far more than they pay in other Provinces. My personal experience in one or two districts confirms this view.

As one speaker remarked, rents in Bengal are amazingly high, and it was this that was one of the reasons for the Bengal Rent Commission in 1879. One remark more and I have done. The lecturer at the end of his paper said: "Given, therefore, a democracy of reasonable intelligence," and I want to warn the audience that in my judgment it will be a long time before you have a real democracy of any kind in India. A transfer of power at the present moment would certainly not be the transfer of power to a democratic Government, but a transfer from one oligarchy to another. (Hear, hear.)

LORD PENTLAND, in proposing a very hearty vote of thanks to the Lecturer and the Chairman, said they would like to record their grateful

thanks to Sir Patrick for his remarkably interesting paper, and the judicious examination of the whole subject of land revenue, and their gratitude was increased by having Sir William Vincent in the chair. He had only recently returned from the closest touch with affairs in India, and they were delighted to see him looking so well. (Hear, hear, and applause.)

The LECTURER, in reply, said there was only one point he would like to refer to, and that was Mr. Woods's remark that the lecturer appeared to be a person who regarded taxation as a blessing in itself. He would like, however, to assure him that as an Irishman—and one smarting under a 5s. or a 4s. 6d. income tax—he was very far from entertaining any such idea. If he might say so, with well-simulated indignation, he desired to repudiate the suggestion *in toto*.

In conclusion, he would like to thank them all for the very kind way in which they had referred to his paper; it had been sufficiently long, and if he had dealt with the subject in more detail, as had been suggested, he would probably have had to detain them beyond the limits of their patience. (Hear, hear.)

The proceedings then terminated.

