

BADE MATARAM
PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

READ BY

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AT THE

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OF THE

PUNJAB PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE

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The Sixth Punjab Provincial Conference.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

Chairman of Reception Committee, brother delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to thank you all for the great honor you have done me by asking me to preside at this Conference. This is one of the proudest moments of my life, but let me assure you that the pride I feel is tempered with a good deal of humility, and at this moment I am not conscious of the honor so much as of my own unworthiness to adequately discharge the duties you have entrusted to me. To be called on to preside at a Provincial Conference is the greatest honor that the people of the Province can bestow on any public worker, and if one only deserved it, one can lay the flattering unction to his soul that he had done his duty to his country and that the country has not only fully appreciated his services but nobly rewarded them too. I am not vain enough to believe either that I have done well enough by my country or that this high distinction is deservedly meted out. I am conscious of the fact that some of the best and noblest sons of this Province are in Jail. Of those few who are yet out, some have already had the honor conferred on them while others are unable to respond to the call for one reason or another. Your choice is restricted and in selecting me you are only making the best of a bad situation. I cannot sufficiently thank you for your kindness and I trust that you will continue it right through this session and that I can unreservedly count upon your kind advice, help and guidance in discharging my duties and making this Conference a success.

We are meeting at a most critical stage in the affairs of our country, and especially of the Non-co-operation movement to which we have sworn allegiance. The times are difficult and it would need a very wise head, indeed, to correctly estimate what we ought to do at this juncture. On the one hand, the onward march of our movement has been temporarily stayed by our leaders and a programme placed before us really intended to give us breathing time, to review our position to close our ranks, and prepare ourselves for what lies ahead of us. On the other hand, the Government, perhaps, interpreting this slackening of our pace as a sign of weakness, is resorting to severer repression, evidently with a view to suppress or kill the movement altogether. What matters more to us, nearly all the most responsible leaders and the wisest heads are removed from our midst and they

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are cheerfully paying the necessary price of swaraj by undergoing imprisonment in the jails. The duty of conducting the struggle thus rests on our shoulders and it behoves us to worthily discharge our trust in the best manner we can. It becomes, therefore, of prime importance that we should deliberate deeply over the present situation and adopt a course which would be best calculated to lead us to victory. Above all things we should keep our ranks solid and firm, and present a united front to our opponents. The presence amongst us at this moment of some of the eminent leaders from other provinces is a cause for great joy and satisfaction, and I cannot sufficiently thank them for the great kindness they have done us in coming to grace our Conference at great personal trouble and discomfort and giving us the benefit of their sound advice and mature judgment in our deliberations.

Our first duty is to accord our meed of praise and admiration for all those noble souls who, in their country's cause, have not hesitated to court or suffer imprisonment at the command of the Congress in defence of the sacred and inalienable rights of freedom of speech, of association and the press. The sacrifice that we have offered at the altar of liberty is very great indeed, but what country in the world can achieve freedom without paying for it dearly? If we feel sorry at this moment that our beloved leaders all over India are in jail, we would be betraying a woeful lack of confidence in the justice and righteousness of our cause, for it was an inevitable consummation of our nonviolent non-co-operation movement that at some time or other we would be called upon to part temporarily with what is best and noblest amongst us. But one may be pardoned if, at this great gathering, one misses the sight of those old familiar faces who have been the inspiration of gatherings of this kind in the past and who have helped to build the political life of this Province. Can we be blamed if we were to regret that the stalwarts of the political life of this Province like Lala Lajpat Rai, Agha Mohammad Safdar, S. Kharak Singh, Dr. Kitchlew, Dr. Satya Pal, Mr. Stokes, Master Suudar Singh, Syed Habib, Sardar Sardul Singh, M. Zaffar Ali, L. Gowardhan Das, L. Duni Chand, S. Amar Singh, Master Gurditta Mal and a host of other equally enthusiastic and no less patriotic persons are unable at this present moment to be with us to advise and guide us. Though we are deprived of their bodily presence, we can well say with truth that their spirit will remain with us and inspire us to acquit ourselves worthily at this critical juncture. Our object will be and must be to get them out as soon as possible in the only way that they would like to be free, that is by achieving success in the cause for which they so gladly sacrificed their liberty.

Nor should we omit to remember with grateful appreciation the equally noble and no less great sacrifices made by that large band of youngmen who, at the very thresh-hold of their lives, and fired with the purest ambition to serve their Motherland, have come forward in their hundreds and thousands

and given their all in this noble cause. Our hearts go out to them into their prison cells in all loving respect, and let us by our own hard work and unshakable determination to get Swaraj assure them that their sacrifices will never go in vain.

Before proceeding further, it is our privilege as also our sacred and bounden duty to offer our deep and reverent homage to our great and saintly Leader, Mahatma Gandhi, who inaugurated this unique movement of Non-violent Non-co-operation, and for nearly 20 months guided and controlled it with a combination of wisdom, courage, tact and foresight without a parallel in the annals of the world. It will be impertinent on our part if we try to appreciate his work or even attempt to pass encomiums on the great qualities that he possesses. I shall not attempt to do so. We can only bow our heads in deep thankfulness to Providence which has vouchsafed to grant us the inestimable boon of such a great personality at a time when India, fallen and stricken India, stood sorely in need of a strong hand to pull us out of the Slough of Despond. At the time when he entered into the arena of politics, it looked as if the claims of India to justice, freedom and self-determination had been for ever ruthlessly trampled under foot. The solemn pledges given by the British Prime Minister to the Muslims had been cruelly broken, and the faith, that one rightly or wrongly had in the justice and fairplay of the English, was gone for ever. The horrors of the Martial Law in the Punjab and the subsequent denial of even bare justice to the Indian nation by the Indian and British Governments, nay, the very British people themselves had made us despair for ever that the Indians would ever be treated as human beings entitled to ordinary human rights and privileges. Further the despatches following on the grant of the Reforms had clearly demonstrated that it was not the intention of the Bureaucracy to adhere to their solemn pronouncements in any generous spirit; and indeed, they had given good grounds for believing that the old, old game was being played again, of taking with one hand what was being given with the other. Progress by means of constitutional agitation implies good faith both on the part of those that give and on the part of those that receive. It, however, became soon evident that our rulers were lacking altogether in this element of good faith. Consequently, a large section of thinking Indian population who believed in the efficacy of Reforms and progressive realisation of self-government by, what are termed, constitutional means had their moorings unloosed and were drifting hopelessly and aimlessly. It was at this moment of gloom and despondency when hope had died down and faith in the goodness of human nature was shattered, that Mahatma Gandhi came forward and we began to see a ray of hope whereby we could triumph inspite of the forces of reaction which stood arrayed against us. He showed us a path for us to travel, treading on which we could by pure self-reliance, self-purification and self-sacrifice, attain our goal without taking thought of

the strength of the opposition. He put before us definitely the programme of Non-co-operation which, in essence, means that if we would destroy evil and triumph over it, we can do only by religiously disassociating ourselves with it and turning our faces away from all the cheap, temporary and momentary advantages and benefits which co-operation with it does generally give. This was a bold and uncompromising doctrine, religious in its essence, now being applied in the field of politics for the first time in the history of the world. I do not mean to say that Non-co-operation was unknown before, but *Non-violent* Non-co-operation was certainly a novelty, as non-violence implies a deep religious feeling and an abiding faith in the ultimate triumph of good over evil. This movement would have shared the fate that all movements, inspired by a lofty and high idealism and divorced from the common devices peculiar to the popular conception of politics, have shared in history, were it not that the same genius that conceived it was there to put it into practice and to see it through its successive stages overcoming every difficulty by the sheer weight of the great driving power of a tremendous personality, in short by his Soul force. The position to-day is that this movement has taken deep root in our soil and the whole mass of the Indian nation, barring a handful of the educated community, has been stirred to its very depths as never before in the history of this ancient land, and, inspired with the basic doctrines of the movement, is prepared to see it triumph or die in the attempt. Whether this movement has been a success or a failure, I will leave it to others to judge but there is no denying the fact that the marvellous enthusiasm with which it has been taken up and carried on shows unmistakably that, with all its call on the noblest and the best in human nature, with all the sacrifices it involves and the high spiritual elevation that it exacts, it is a movement which seems to be peculiarly fitted to the genius of the people of India. Mahatma Gandhi, who inaugurated it, and carried it on in all its initial and difficult stages, has been put away from the scene of his active labours to enjoy a well earned rest. Are we to be glad or sorry that we are deprived of his guiding hand at this moment? It is a most difficult question to answer, but speaking for myself I am disposed to be glad of it. It seems to me that this imprisonment of his is, perhaps, a test placed on us by Providence to see whether we have imbibed the real spirit of his teachings, whether we have grasped it sufficiently to be able to carry on the movement in his absence with the same vigour and in the same pure and religious spirit which he tried to breathe into it. If we can stand this test, then indeed, success is certain; for a movement which depends on one or a few personalities can never hope to succeed or if it does succeed, will the success be permanent.

Let us see then what position we occupy to-day and whether the Non-co-operation movement has been a success or a failure. In my humble opinion, there can be no two opinions about it, and that it has been a success

and a success from start to finish. For what, after all, were we striving for? Our object was the righting of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs and the winning of Swaraj. Though we had a triple goal to attain we might as well say that our object was the attainment of Swaraj. Once we attained the power to rule ourselves and control our destinies, the solving of the other two problems would follow as a matter of course. Swaraj, then, being our goal, let us proceed to consider what were the real obstacles in our way. The reply naturally is firstly our internal dissensions, especially between the Hindus and the Mohammadans, and secondly the present bureaucratic foreign Government, whose mainstay was prestige and our willing co-operation with it in keeping us in bondage. There is no denying the fact, whatever might be said to the contrary, that the English domination in India is being kept up by prestige and prestige alone and it is because of this prestige that we have upto now been offering it our co-operation. In estimating, therefore, our achievement in the past 20 months since Non-co-operation was adopted by the Indian National Congress at Calcutta, we have merely to consider what progress we have made in these two directions.

A careful study of the present situation will convince even the most hostile critic that we have, achieved almost or nearly, all that we had in view. Hindu Mohammadan dissensions, the root cause of our weakness, are nearly non-existent to-day. We have made rapid strides in sinking our differences and creating that atmosphere of mutual trust and good will without which no common endeavour is possible. I do not mean to say that we have done all we wanted to do, but I most certainly maintain that we have advanced so far in this matter that our future is full of promise and there is no room for despondency. If we only proceed on the same lines and with the same zeal, the end of distrust and suspicion is in sight. There is doubtless need for ceaseless endeavour, for most vigilant nursing, but we can safely say that the tree has already taken firm root and has only to be tended and cared for before it bursts into full blossom and ripens into fruit. In the serious conflict with the authorities that has taken place, all the communities have stood shoulder to shoulder with one another and have suffered in common. Where blows have been received, where liberty has been restricted and where blood has been shed, the Hindus and Muslims have vied with each other in offering the greatest sacrifice. If this common suffering, willingly undergone, nay, sometimes even invited, cannot cement us together, then no force on earth ever will.

Now let us consider how does the prestige of the Government stand to-day. That prestige is in the dust, never more to rise again to enslave our minds and exact help from us in our own degradation. All over India the message of Swaraj has been carried to every hearth and home. Everyone, be he Moderate, be he Extremist, considers self-Government as indispensable

for India to be able to rise to her full stature and take her rightful place among the nations of the world on a footing of equality. The present system of Government is considered an evil, to be ended and replaced by full responsible Government at as early a stage as possible. The word of the Government is no longer believed in and faith in its integrity and good intentions is shaken for ever. Belief in the justice of the British courts, specially in political cases, is almost a thing of the past. As the Leader of Allahabad, a paper which certainly does not err on the side of extremism has put it. "We used to be told in the old Congress days that the educated classes did not represent the masses but that the masses were too passive and too ignorant to care for politics and regarded the British officers as their trusted leaders. The scene is changed...the vast depths of tireless immobility are heaving with life. Where is that trust now? Why has it melted at the non-co-operators' touch as snow melts before the Sun of June? The one feeling of the masses appears to be an absolute distrust of Government...they are ready to believe anything, however monstrous and incomprehensible, about it and of it. It is not merely that they are credulous...this distrust and disbelief has been fostered by the actions of Government itself. Promises have been made and then broken...pledges have been given and then explained away. Let us face facts courageously and frankly." The soundness of the education imparted in schools is questioned, And hope that the British people will some day grant Dominion status out of the goodness of their heart, has been given up once and for all. Even the unlettered peasant and the ignorant wage earner has found out for himself that the policy of this Government is one of exploitation throughout-exploitation of the brain, exploitation of the body and of manhood and exploitation of the fruits of labour; and every man, woman and child has grasped the lesson that if we would be free we will have to attain freedom by our own unassisted efforts and in spite of the opposition of our present Government. The lesson of self-reliance has gone home and the whole nation has been taught that what it would have, it will have to strive for and that nothing is worth having which had not been won by one's own efforts.

I ask, is this a small achievement.? The battle is more than half won and it would be foolish if any one were to be despondent to day. It is true, no doubt true that we have not wrested the power from the hands of the Bureaucracy, but that is only a question of time. If we would only persevere in the same path and with the same zeal, the day would not be far distant when we would have secured full Swaraj.

In considering this matter, it would be very helpful for us to take into account the present position of our adversary, and try to draw a lesson both from his acts and mentality. At the beginning of the Non-co-operation

movement, the Government seemed to think it a mad scheme and announced that it was not going to interfere with it, but was going to leave it to die of inanition. They seemed to think that it was such a hopelessly futile scheme that it was not necessary to take any action against it or its advocates, so long as they refrained from preaching or practising violence. This policy it adhered to for nearly a year. But what is the position to-day? Contrary to their expectations they found the movement gaining strength day by day, that at last they became alarmed and had to take most desperate and, what I can safely call, ill-advised action. Remember that we had not departed from our ideal of Non-violence. We had preached it so constantly and so thoroughly that at the present day India is more non-violent in its political attitude than India or any other nation ever was or can hope to be. We had inculcated this doctrine in the masses so successfully that, inspite of grave provocation, non-violence even under most trying circumstances has been the rule. Outbreaks of a violent character there have been, but they have been few and far between and really insignificant in their magnitude, or in their effects on the rest of the country. But inspite of all this, the Government has had to depart from its professed attitude of non-interference. We have given most astonishing proofs of our strict adherence to non-violence as a method of political warfare, and the 40,000 men or so who have gone to jail are an incontrovertible proof of this statement. But what has been the result? The result is that to-day in the Punjab and some other provinces, the Government seems to have entirely lost its head and has resorted to repression pure and simple. Out of our own free will we suspended the movement of mass civil disobedience throughout the country. If the Government had been really of the opinion that violence was the one thing it objected to, then, after the Bardoli resolution there was no need for any action on its part of a repressive character. Inspite of that it is now resorting in the Punjab to repression on such a large scale that it becomes evident that its avowed object of securing law and order is mere *Camouflage* meant to throw dust in the eyes of the outside world. I am becoming more and more convinced every day that the Government has just now begun to find out that the real danger to itself and to its existence is not violence on the part of the people but absolute non-violence. It might have had that knowledge before that if the people remained perfectly non-violent, voluntarily and willingly non-violent, that is to say, non-violent out of a consciousness of strength and spiritual and moral superiority and not merely out of cowardice, and at the same time are determined not to relax their efforts to achieve political freedom by this method, then they would be putting forth a power which no Government on earth can successfully cope with by the use of any amount of physical force or machine guns and aeroplanes. As one English writer puts it, "Passive Resistance is a most difficult weapon for a Government to cope with, for if the Government resorts to force to suppress it, it (Government) at once puts itself on a lower moral plane than the adversary."

The lesson I wish to draw is that the very intensity of the efforts the Government is putting forth to suppress this movement is a proof of the strength that the movement has attained. Judged by this standard, we can very well say that the non-co-operation movement in the Punjab has attained remarkable success, indeed. Ever since the Bardoli decision the Congress Committees in this Province had definitely made up their minds to settle down to a quiet programme of constructive work as outlined in the Bardoli-Delhi resolutions; but we find that the attitude of the Government has entirely changed, specially since the departure of the Prince of Wales from the Indian shores, and it has taken to methods which, I have no hesitation in calling as a repetition of the methods under Martial Law. It seems, the Government has issued instructions that the Akali, the Congress and the Khilafat movement in the Punjab and the system of panchayats must be completely suppressed and, I have it on a reliable authority, that one of the District officers had issued instructions to his subordinate to make a *clean sweep* of all the political workers in his district. Let me just detail to you some of the things that have been done and are being done in the name of law and order in this unhappy Province.

Arrests. Arrests are being made usually without warrants even in those cases where specific proceedings against individuals had been in contemplation for sometime. Recently, since the new repressive polity started about a month and a half ago, a number of blank warrants are issued by the magistrate to the police officials and the filling up of the names of the accused is left to their sweet will and pleasure. Sometimes the magistrate accompanies these parties of the police and sometimes not. But it can readily be imagined, what an abuse this practice lends itself to as it gives a wide scope to the police to terrorise innocent people and extort, perhaps, money from them by threatening them with arrest. A police party going into any village with blank warrants in their hands can terrorise the whole village, and especially those people who are not avowed non-co-operators. Reports have come from Sialkot district that the police have very often arrested people unconnected with political movements, especially non-co-operation, simply because they were easier game. The non-co-operators, not being afraid of arrest, on the contrary welcoming it, are not a paying proposition. Sometimes, where instructions to arrest two or three men in a village were given, the police have arrested a lot more along with them in the hope that those others would pay subsequently for their liberty. The result has been that several persons, who are hauled up, have been let go after a few days' detention without any charge being framed against them or cases brought. In Sialkot town itself, we have had the spectacle of nearly a hundred men being arrested in a few days' time, and after the lapse of a short interval all, but five or six of them, being let off without any explanation being offered. In Daska a small town in Sialkot District the whole bar consists of 6 gentle-

men ; of these 5 were arrested and the 6th was left out because he was not in the Station at the time. It seems they were not told what they were arrested for but were asked to express regret. They very properly refused to do any such thing as nothing was alleged against them and were let off after a few days, detention. In other places where people were assembled for quite legitimate purposes, the police had come on the scene and declaring the meeting an unlawful assembly, have asked them to disperse. On their refusal to do so, they have dispersed the meeting by use of brass bound sticks and butt end of guns and arrested as many as they liked. In the village of Subraon, where the people had assembled and were considering whether to pay the punitive tax or not, the meeting was forcibly dispersed and some arrests also made though they had not created any the slightest breach of the peace. Reports have also come in that in some villages anybody wearing a black turban has been proceeded against, evidently because he was an Akali and no more. The Sheromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee have made allegations that entirely religious gatherings have been prohibited and efforts also made to disperse them. The Government declared some-time ago that Kirpans of any length could be worn, provided certain conditions *e. g.*, carrying them sheathed in a scabbard and suspended on the side are observed. They seem to have revised their attitude in this respect and now-a-days many prosecutions for wearing Kirpans are taking place. It looks as if the Government had given a free hand to its subordinate magistrates and the magistrates in their turn to the police who are now all in all as in the old Martial Law days.

The arrests are being made in an unnecessarily harsh and cruel fashion. Complaints are pouring in every day that the police behave with great brutality, handcuffing all prisoners irrespective of their status and position, making them walk long distances in the burning sun inspite of bodily infirmities, keeping them overcrowded in the police lock-ups and not even giving them the ordinary facilities for performing their ablutions and very often sending them out for necessary purposes in pairs with their hands manacled. When assemblies are dispersed, an unnecessary use of force is made often causing severe injuries to the unresisting victims. The harrowing tales of the treatment, to which the volunteers were subjected in December and January, are still in our minds. Very often the police sub-inspectors boast that they have free permission to do what they like with a promise of support from their superiors for all their highhandedness. Picketing parties are very severely handled, and the brutal way in which some of the volunteers of Rawalpindi were treated so late as the end of March, where they were first soundly beaten and then dragged by the legs with their shoulder and head trailing along the ground until the hair was rubbed off and in one case at least an unmentionable but revolting cruelty practised, recalls some of the horrors perpetrated by the police officials in Martial Law days in Amritsar for the

purpose of extorting a confession from the hapless victims. What is worse still, the police seem to take a delight in offending the religious susceptibilities of the people they arrest; sometimes a Koran or a Bhawadgita is beaten with a shoe, sometimes a Sikh is pulled by his beard (as was brazenly admitted by a European police officer in the court of Mr. Keough the other day;) and sometimes the Sikhs are tied together by the hair of the head. It is to be remembered that all this time the people arrested are entirely non-violent and unresisting and make not the slightest objection to go along with the police officers. Only the other day, on the 18th of April, when a party of youngmen in Lahore were taking some of the old discarded foreign clothes, about 1000 in number, in procession the police surrounded them, belaboured them with sticks and snatched away all the clothes that were carried in procession. I do not know under what law they could confiscate these clothes; but it is a fact that the clothes have not been returned up till now. They did not even respect the modesty of women in Subraon, a village in the Lahore District. The president of the Sikh League has made a definite charge that the police entered the Zenana portions of the houses and made the women give up their jewelry, and sometimes even snatched them from their person. It is worthy of note that in this affair, the magistrate, who came to the village had no disraint warrants with him and yet forcibly took away the cattle, fodder and ornaments from the people's houses, who had to pay the punitive tax. No forms of law are observed, and if the people have lost all respect for law, the officers themselves seem to care equally little for the laws of their own making. Not even religious ceremonies are respected. At Waryam Mangal, in District Amritsar, a body of armed police appeared when the Amrit ceremony was being performed, and threatened that all those who would take part in the ceremony and become Akalies would be arrested. In Lahore, while some Hindu volunteers were performing Sandhya in the police lock-up, the Superintendent of police personally came and rudely interrupted and prevented them from going on with their Sandhya and punished them for alleged misbehaviour. When the matter was brought up before the authorities a most lame excuse was offered that the officer did not know that they were reciting Sandhya, though the officer is a person who knows the vernacular thoroughly well. No word of apology has been uttered, nor has the officer been censured up to now. From Raikot in Ludhiana District comes a tale that the Additional Superintendent of Police who went to make arrests, resented the people salaming Moulvi Fazal Haq after his arrest, and insisted on their salaming him instead. When they refused, he whipped them himself with his cane, and even an old woman of 70 and a boy of 5 did not escape his anger. When, as a protest against this inhuman treatment the shop-keepers observed a hartal, he had them hauled up before him and had them given five stripes each, and to what he considered the ringleader ten stripes for this heinous offence. The account of this has appeared in the papers, but so far the Government has not taken any

action on it. You are also aware of the case of a courageous lady of Amritsar who tried to shield with her body the poor volunteers from being mercilessly beaten by the police and got belaboured herself for her merciful intervention.

Take again the parade of armed forces in the several districts in the Punjab. The Government has not alleged that there is any rebellion or fear of any violence; still large forces are being marched through the villages simply with a view to overawe the public and strike terror into them. Is it any wonder if in these marches exactions are made or forcible supplies levied? In many villages punitive police are quartered, simply because the villagers take part in the Congress, Khilafat and the Gurdwara movement. This police acts with studied insult and cruelty towards the inhabitants. There is an account that in some places they prohibit the people going to their fields after 8 o'clock at night which means a great hardship to these agriculturists especially in these days when the harvest is getting ripe and needs careful watching. Such an order recalls the curfew order of the Martial Law days, only now we have it in the villages and that too without the declaration of Martial Law. In another place they go on singing ribald songs throughout the day in the middle of the village while there are women and girls about.

Panchayats. There is also a regular campaign against the Panchayats, (Arbitration Courts) and the policy of the Government seems to be to suppress them at any cost. Sometimes whole Panchayats are arrested and false cases of coercion and intimidation brought against the Panches. Their only crime seems to be that they are trying to put down litigation by settlement of disputes among themselves. The Government seems to be alarmed at this move, as it not only deprives them of a large revenue, but also cuts at the root of their prestige to which they are desperately clinging. Some of these men are even charged under dacoity sections, but it is a gratifying sign that, inspite of this vigorous compaign on the part of the Government, the Panchayats are not suppressed and new men are willing to come forward to take the place of those arrested. It is not possible to say that these Panchayats might not have made mistakes or exceeded their authority in some instances but to take action against the erring Panchayats is quite different from carrying on a wholesale campaign of suppression of this character.

Cases in Court. Another scandalous feature of the present policy of the Government is that people after arrest are kept for long terms in the jails as under-trial prisoners and the trials themselves are unnecessarily prolonged in spite of the fact that the accused, as non-co-operators, do not take part in the proceedings. Sections 107, 108, and even 110 are most thoroughly abused and respectable men are charged under these sections for their political views, though, as a matter of fact, these sections are intended to be

used only against known bad characters. If no specific offence is forthcoming against any person, the powers have no hesitation in resorting to these sections. It looks as if the Criminal Law of India is insufficient for the purpose that the Government has in view. Very often persons are arrested under one section, proceeded against under another and finally convicted under a totally different section of the Penal Code. This evident lack of care and preparation on the part of the law officers of the Crown has entailed great hardships on the accused, as it prolongs the cases unconscionably. Lala Lajpat Rai was convicted about five weeks after his rearrest. Lala Gowardhan Das and Sardar Dilawar Singh were nearly three months in jail before their cases were decided. There are heaps of other cases which will tell the same tale. Another ingenuity which the police or the public prosecutors have devised is to charge a person under two or three different sections for the same act and get him cumulative sentences on each charge. Their object in this appears to be merely to secure as heavy a sentence as possible. Replying to a question in the House of Commons, the Secretary of State for India said "The sentence (on L. Lajpat Rai) under the I. P. C. was one of imprisonment only under sec 145 of the code. No fine was imposed. That sentence was remitted by the Punjab Government, because it considered that in effect the offence for which it was passed was indistinguishable from the offence under the Seditious Meeting's act. One conviction was for holding a prohibited Meeting and the other for continuing to hold it after the orders had been given for it to disperse. Two punishments for one offence were not justified." In spite of this pious expression of opinion by the Home authorities, there are hundreds of cases in which the same thing has been done over and over again in the last few months. Sometimes as many as three cases have been brought against the accused for the same act as in the case of L. Gowardhan Das. But worst of all is the practice which the police is resorting to, of bringing charges involving moral turpitude against prominent political workers simply with a view to lower them in the estimation of the public knowing full well that they would not, according to the principles of Non-cooperation, produce any defence or even cross-examine the prosecution witnesses.

Attitude of Courts. It is needless to say much here about the attitude of the courts. The magistracy has shown itself absolutely incapable of or unwilling to uphold the rights of the citizens and in all cases almost the courts have been merely the instruments for registering and giving judicial colour to the wishes and the policy of the Executive. In the case of Lala Lajpat Rai, the Court even went further, and though the Government Advocate clearly said that he could not press for a conviction under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the Court rejected his contention and sentenced Lalaji to one year's imprisonment. The fact that the non-co-operators would not defend themselves or appeal seems to have emboldened both

the magistrates and the prosecuting agency with the result that the cases are conducted in a most haphazard fashion and without any due regard paid to the forms of law or the substance of it. Perhaps the worst case is one from the Frontier Province where L. Paira Khan a well known and enthusiastic congress worker and some others of Bannu were sentenced to 2 years simple imprisonment. But it is not definitely known what happened afterwards but this sentence was changed to one of rigorous imprisonment subsequently without any judicial proceeding of any kind taking place. Then, again, very often prisoners are kept handcuffed in court, a most unnecessary and barbarous procedure, considering that these prisoners who willingly offer themselves for arrest cannot, in the least degree, be considered dangerous or likely to escape. It was mentioned in one case by a pleader, who was in court, that there was a circular of the Government against this practice; but no heed has been paid to these circulars, nor do courts consider themselves bound to observe any decency in these matters. The holding of trials in jails and the exclusion of the public and very often even the relatives of the accused, is a scandal very widely known. No system of justice can remain pure when trials are held practically *in camera*.

Sentences. In the beginning *i.e.*, December 1921 the sentences accorded were not very heavy. In many cases also simple imprisonment was given; but in the last two months the policy seems to have changed. Very heavy sentences of rigorous imprisonments have become the rule now. In two cases sentences of solitary confinement were awarded for an offence under the Criminal Law Amendment Act. I do not know on what principle the Magistrate proceeded, but so far his example has not been followed in any other case. Another curious feature is that when on the same set of facts two offences are made out, and two terms of imprisonment awarded, they are always made to run consecutively, the rigorous imprisonment being made to take effect first. It looks as if the magistrate is afraid that the sentences might be reduced soon after, and so dislikes the idea of the prisoner getting out before his term of rigorous imprisonment comes into operation.

Treatment in jails The treatment of political prisoners in jail is really disgraceful. In the Punjab the policy actually put into practice seems to be to make the jail life of these people as hard and unbearable as possible. Complaints are pouring in from all the jails, except a few, that the action of the authorities can only be construed as vindictive. The Punjab Government does not recognise any "Political Prisoners" as such, and treats them as common felons. Though a pronouncement was made in the Local Council that special treatment will be given to a selected class, yet, as a matter of fact, the people to be included in this class have been very few and even some of these have had to refuse to avail themselves of the privileges because the ordinary lot of an ordinary political prisoner is thoroughly bad. The Punjab Council passed a resolution that political prisoners ought to be given better treatment and carried the

resolution in face of Government opposition, which stood out for creating a special class entitled to special privileges, the right of selection to this class being left to the Executive itself. But this resolution of the Council has been entirely ignored, and the Government has stuck to its position that it was not going to give this treatment to all without distinction. Sir John Maynard quite lost his temper during this debate and went so far as to say that the Government was not prepared to give special treatment to every "scoundrel" who might get arrested in a political offence. It is, indeed, regrettable that in this country alone no recognition should be given to a person who suffers for his opinions and whose offence involves no moral turpitude. I would have no complaint to make if the Government frankly put forward the proposition that they meant to make the life of the non-co-operators in jails as hard as possible, so as to teach them a lesson. But they profess one thing and do another. The Government of India clearly stated in open Council that political prisoners would be treated with every consideration. This pronouncement evidently was meant for "Home" consumption and made with a view to set itself right in the eyes of civilized humanity as is evident from the question put by Col. Wedgwood in the Commons and the answer given by Lord Winterton. I make no apology for giving the full account as given by the correspondent of the Tribune.

"GAOL CONDITIONS IN LAHORE"

On Tuesday last Col. Wedgwood asked the Under Secretary of State whether there has yet been made in India any difference in the feeding or treatment in jail given to political and to ordinary prisoners; if so in what Provinces has such distinctions been made; and why is it not done in Lahore jail? Lord Winterton contented himself with reading out the statement made in the Legislative Assembly on the 16th January by the Home Member to the effect that prisoners under the Sedition Acts were receiving differential treatment in most of the provinces. The Under Secretary added that he believed the Punjab was one of the provinces referred to and he had no information that Lahore jail was an exception.

Col. Wedgwood. Will the noble lord-whom I am very glad to see on that front bench—himself wire to Lahore and find out definitely whether these instructions have been carried out there; my latest information is that they have not yet.

Earl Winterton. In regard to the question of the hon. and gallant gentleman opposite, if he will inform me of cases that he knows where that has not been done already I shall be glad to ask the Secretary of State to telegraph for information. My information is to the effect that it is being carried out in Lahore jail and elsewhere.

Col. Wedgwood. It was not being done in Lahore when the last mail left

Earl Winterton. Perhaps my hon. and gallant Friend will see me afterwards, and I will inquire."

I wonder if the noble earl has thought fit to make the enquiry since and whether he is satisfied that the special treatment is given in Lahore. It can safely be said that, as a rule, preferential treatment is not given, and no real attempt has been made in this Province at least, to put this excellent principle in practice. This duplicity is on a par with the action of the Government in other spheres. The prisoners in most of the jails in the Punjab are made to wear the degrading jail uniform. It consists of a shirt with half arms and a pair of shorts. No chaddar even is given, with the result that, in summer, exposed portions of the body are simply eaten alive by the mosquitoes. They are not afforded any facilities for reading newspapers. No light is allowed to them at night. The sanitary arrangements are defective and no attempt is made to secure privacy even in the latrines. The food is the ordinary mess common to the jails, very often unwholesome and disgusting, flavoured with half heated oil, which stinks in the nostrils and with a good admixture of dust and grit. In some of the jails very hard work, like grinding of corn and preparing reeds for rope making etc., are given to these people who are mostly town-bred and unaccustomed to hard manual labour. They are made to undergo periodical parades simply to humiliate them. For fancied offences against jail discipline harsh punishments like solitary confinement, standing hand cuffs etc. are awarded. In Lyallpur jail, I have been told, men are made to work at Munj Pounding in the hot blazing sun. In several cases even the ordinary right of interviews by relatives allowed by jail rules are taken away, and a prisoner like Lala Lajpat Rai is not allowed to see even his relatives. The result of this policy of wanton insult and degradation has been to force the prisoners very often to go on hunger strike as a protest. In Ambala jail the prisoners are not allowed to say their prayers. It was alleged that a Mohammadan boy was punished for asking for water to perform ablutions before prayers. This has been denied by the Inspector General of Prisons, but when I asked for an independent enquiry to find out the truth or falsity of the allegation, the Government has chosen to keep quiet. In Ludhiana Jail the religious books have been treated with disrespect by the jail officials and when a protest was made the alarm was sounded and, it is said, that shooting also took place, causing injury to a few persons. The conditions are the worst in the Lyallpur jail. In Mianwali there is a good deal of discontent caused by people who are put in the special class being deprived of this privilege later on for no rhyme or reason. The conditions in Sialkot, Lahore and D. G. Khan seem to be better. But in Lahore there is no improvement at all in the food given to the prisoners except that the ordinary food is slightly better cooked. The creation of the special class of prisoners and the very limited extent to which the selection to this class has been made, seems to have been done with a set design to cause

heart burning among the prisoners themselves. It appears to me that the policy of divide and rule seems to be attempted by this Government even inside the precincts of the jail. The only solution to this distressing state of affairs is either for the Government to improve its treatment of political prisoners in actual practice or to give up its professions that some consideration is shown for this class of prisoners.

Prohibition of Meetings and Normal Activities.

The use to which section 144 has been put throughout the whole of India is a noteworthy example of the extent to which the Bureaucracy is prepared to go in applying the Penal sections of the Criminal Law for purposes other than those for which they were intended. This Province could not be expected to be an exception to the rule, and it can safely be said, that in all cases where section 144 has been put in requisition there has been a clear misuse of law and authority. The Seditious Meetings Act seems to have become almost a permanent feature of the administration of the central districts of the Punjab, viz Amritsar, Lahore and Sheikhupura. From December 1920, the Seditious Meetings Act has been applied on two occasions, that is, within the last 17 months the Act has been in force for quite 11 months. There can be no severer condemnation of the Government than that, in the heart of the Province, nay in the very Metropolis it cannot govern except with the aid of penal laws. Not only that, but a most ruthless and illegal use of the Act has been made by prohibiting meetings which did not fall under the Act and were not intended to be covered by it. During the Municipal elections last year, no meeting was allowed to be held for electioneering purposes and even when permission was sought it was refused by the District magistrate. The meetings of Congress Committees have been, time and again, prohibited though they are not public meetings as defined by the Act. The latest instance of prohibiting the meeting of the Congress Committee at which Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviyaji was to address on a comparatively harmless subject, is another most glaring example of the misuse of power by the Executive. This is all the more strange as in January last the Government gave out that meetings of Congress Committees and associations would not come under the Seditious Meetings Act and on this ground set Lala Lajpat Rai, Malik Lal Khan, Dr. Gopi Chand and myself at liberty. One begins to wonder whether there is any law or rule at all which this Government is prepared consistently to follow. The normal activities of the Congress too are, very often, restricted and efforts are made, though not openly, to prevent recruitment of members of the Congress. The attempt to suppress the Panchayats, I have already mentioned. Picketing of a peaceful kind for stopping the sale of foreign cloth or liquor is anathema to the Government officers, and they have stopped at nothing to discourage and put an end to this form of activity. The wearing of black puggrees seems to have become a crime and in Lahore, at least, the wearing of a Gandhi

Cap or a black puggree sends the District Magistrate crazy. Under these circumstances, to carry on even the quiet constructive programme outlined in the Bardoli resolutions becomes very often difficult and it speaks volumes for the courage and perseverance of the workers here that they are pushing on their work with redoubled zeal undaunted by any persecution.

Press. This tale of woe will not be complete without an account of the severe ordeal that the press of this Province has had to pass through. I donot think there is any other Province in India where the press has suffered so much as in the Punjab, nor where it has put up such a valiant fight and emerged triumphant in spite of opposition. All the Nationalist newspapers have had occasion to feel the heavy hand of Government on them at one time or another and only the "loyalists" in sentiments have escaped scot free. But the circulation of the loyalist papers is very limited, as their combined circulation does not even come up to that of the nationalist paper with the least circulation. The principal nationalist papers are, the "Bande Mataram", the "Zamindar", the "Pratap" and the "Akali" and the "Kesri". Of these the "Zamindar", the "Siasat" and the "Akali" have had to cease publication. The "Zamindar" has suffered the most, having had its press and Rs. 10,000 security also once confiscated, Rs. 2,000 security confiscated two or three times in addition to having four sets of Editors and Publishers prosecuted and sent to jail, where they are serving the sentences. The "Akali," except that it did not have its press confiscated has no less proud a record. The case against its fourth set of Editor and Publisher is going on at the present moment. The "Siasat" after its Editor went to jail and its security was confiscated has had to close down. The "Bande Mataram" had its security of Rs. 2,000 twice forfeited and three successive Editors have been proceeded against. The "Pratap" and "Kesri" have also had the honour of having their securities forfeited once at least. It remains to be seen whether these papers, will be safe from prosecution in future.

I have tried to narrate briefly some of the most salient facts connected with the repressive policy of the Government in this Province. It is by no means exhaustive, nor can I do justice to this subject within the short space that is available to me in this address. The material at our disposal is so abundant that it would not be difficult to fill a goodly sized volume with a mere narration of all the cases within our knowledge. I have merely tried to indicate how heavy the hand of repression is in this Province and what difficulties the Congress and Khilafat workers and workers of the Gurdwara Movement have to meet with. The number of those arrested and in prison at the present moment cannot be less than 3,000 consisting of some of the best and most influential leaders of all the communities. Those that are outside, though not great in number, are carrying on the fight valiantly. It is

difficult to say which to admire most, the courage and self-sacrifice of those who have cheerfully gone to jail or the undaunted spirit and enthusiasm of those who are working outside in face of great odds. The Hindus and the Mohammadans have done very well, indeed, and given a splendid account of themselves; but the palm in the matter of suffering and self-sacrifice is certainly to be given to the Sikh community. Though, last year they lagged behind the other two communities in political work, they made rapid strides when the time of actual conflict came and have given a glorious account of themselves in keeping with their best traditions. True, the Sikhs are more engaged in the Gurdwara Reform movement and have not taken as large a part as the others in the fight for political liberty; but at the same time it cannot be ignored that in carrying on their agitation they have imbibed all the essentials of the non-violent non-co-operation movement and adapted their methods to the new policy outlined by the Congress. They have high and glorious, and what is more, recent military traditions behind them. They are a race of born fighters, thoroughly martial in spirit, yet in this non-violent fight they have shown incontestably that their power of suffering without retaliation is as great as their capacity to fight. Under the most provoking conditions they have exhibited exemplary patience and self-control which cannot but evoke admiration from all lovers of true courage. The hand of the Government has been brutally heavy on them during the last six weeks and they have already sent to jail nearly 2,000 workers. Their spirit is still undaunted and when the cause of non-violent non-co-operation triumphs, the Sikhs can very well claim a large share of the victory. I only hope that the Hindus and Mohammadans will learn a lesson from their Sikh brethren in the matter of organisation and discipline.

There is still another side to the activities of the Government, which has not contented itself with mere repression. You are all aware that in the last meeting of the Council they got a grant for publicity work. Though the publicity department was abolished last year, still the work that was done by that department is evidently going to be carried on in future, too, and we will have to be on our guard more than ever, because we do not know what form this will take, whether it will be open or secret, whether it will be merely by means of Government Communiques or propaganda through the Press. I am credibly informed that the Government intends subsidising certain newspapers on the quiet and also certain individuals to do its work from behind the scenes. We will never be able to know for certain what persons or papers would undertake this work, and I would, therefore, warn the people generally to be extremely careful in believing all that is written or said in the press or the platform. I know of two instances where an attempt was made to belittle our movement and cast aspersions on our work by writers who either wished to remain anonymous or signed themselves as "Nationalists." One such case, relates to a communication which was sent to Mahatma Gandhi, compla-

ing about the Sikh movement in the Punjab, and the writer signed himself as "Punjabee Nationalist." I do not know whether he was really a Nationalist at heart, but this much is certain that, when, subsequently, the Government Communique appeared on the same subject, the allegations made and the words used were almost identical, showing clearly that the source of inspiration was the same. To me this proves beyond doubt that, whoever it was that wrote it, could certainly not have been a Nationalist if he got his cue from the Government. In the second instance, I understand that certain articles were sent for publication to a paper, very cleverly written and which, if published, would have led the people to believe that the sentiments expressed therein were those of a conscientious Nationalist or Extremist who was not afraid to be frank and fair; but I know that the author of these articles could not, by any stretch of imagination, be said to harbour any great patriotic sentiments as we understand them. He wished to remain anonymous and, I am glad to say, that the paper refused to publish them except under his name. These are only indications of how the wind is blowing and how the Government is determined, by all possible means, to counter the spread of non-cooperation. I have no doubt, even with my limited experience of political life, that the Government will try to sow dissensions amongst us so as to break our ranks, by means which are known or which may be invented by them. Apart from this activity, specially encouraged by the Government, there is also the action of a certain class of mischief makers who, without any inspiration or help from any Government agency, will try to create suspicion and ill-will between the different communities, and different workers, purely out of a perverted spirit, which delights in seeing quarrels, and dissensions, and derives enjoyment therefrom. Against all this, we must take precautions, and the best way of meeting these dangers ahead of us, is, for us, to remain firm and steadfast in our principles, and taking a determined stand on a high moral and spiritual plane, refuse to let ourselves be drawn into harbouring distrust or hatred towards anyone what-so-ever. I know that, in the last few weeks, certain things have appeared in the press and been done by bodies, which, under other circumstances, would have embittered the relations between the different communities. But, I am glad to say, that they have produced no lasting ill-effect, and this is a matter for great joy and hope. It cannot be too strongly emphasised, that, if we steer clear of this danger, our success in future is assured.

I hope I have demonstrated clearly that the very intensity of the repression by the Government, the nervousness betrayed by it and the other steps taken by it to counteract the effects of the movement of non-cooperation is a sure sign that our movement is stronger than ever to-day and that far from losing its hold on the people, it is bound to gather fresh strength day by day. It behoves us, therefore, to consider the steps we ought to take at this present moment to properly guide or control the movement in the

country. A programme of constructive work for the next few months has been laid before the people by the All-India Congress Committee. This programme has caused some dissatisfaction in certain quarters, as being rather slow and entirely inadequate for the object we have in view. Those who hold this view, maintain that the Bardoli decision suspending all civil disobedience activities at a time when the whole country had responded most enthusiastically to the call of Mahatma Gandhi, acted as a damper on the people and that if this prohibition of civil disobedience is persisted in, there is sure to be a lack of response and of a falling off of enthusiasm, which is sure to set back the progress of the Non-co-operation movement. I am afraid I cannot agree with all that they say. I am quite willing to admit that the sudden halt called had produced a certain amount of unpleasant surprise at the time. I am also willing to admit that our workers who were in the midst of the fight and believed themselves to be within measurable sight of achievement, felt great disappointment when they were ordered to fall back, which meant a postponement of the day of victory. But I cannot admit that in the country generally and especially in the Punjab there has been any slackening of the support or drooping of spirits. It was inevitable that there should be a certain criticism of this sudden lull, especially in those places where the Seditious Meetings Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act were most successfully disobeyed, and a large number of arrests were taking place. But I have found that the people who criticize most this suspending of civil disobedience are generally of that class which has not been prepared to make great sacrifices or ever meant to take part itself in this form of activity. They are mostly in the position of spectators, who would naturally enjoy a keenly contested fight, themselves sitting at a safe distance in the gallery and prepared at most to applaud one side or the other. To them this decision has naturally made the political position tame and insipid. A constructive programme whereby we repair our mistakes and consolidate our positions has nothing spectacular about it and offers no excitement to the looker on. But I do humbly submit to you that such kind of criticism has not much value, and we should not attach undue importance to it. To those who maintain the contrary view, I would suggest a simple test whereby they might correctly gauge the public feeling. When they hear a complaint made to them they should ask the complainant whether he himself was prepared to take part in civil disobedience and undergo imprisonment and also ask him what sacrifices he had made for the National cause. I feel confident that if they do this they would find my contention correct.

We find that the public generally is more responsive than ever to the call of the non-co-operation movement. Those who have toured the districts invariably report that the people are as enthusiastic as ever and are willing to carry out any directions given by the Congress and sister committees. A very encouraging sign is that in spite of the great depletion in the ranks of

our workers there are new men coming forward to take their place and carry on the work. It is true that these people are not quite as experienced as the ones that have gone before, but it is only a matter of time before they become quite efficient. I would, therefore, exhort everybody present here to carry on this programme as vigorously as ever, and perfect our organisation before thinking of taking any other step onwards. It should not be forgotten that the present constructive programme is only temporary, meant to give us time to acquire fresh strength and greater control over the people, so that, when, at a future time we have to take decisive steps, we might be certain of a united front and might count on the observance of perfect non-violence under all circumstances.

The salient points of the new programme, as you are all aware, are ;—

1. Recruitment of members for the Congress Committees and collection of Tilak Swaraj Fund.
2. Removal of untouchability.
3. Promotion of unity among all classes.
4. Effective boycott of foreign cloth and encouragement of Swadeshi.
5. Stoppage of drink evil.
6. Establishment of Panchayats and Arbitration Boards.

Of all these, I consider the encouragement of khaddar and the establishment of Panchayats as the most essential items that we should immediately take up in this Province. I consider that if we achieve perfect success in these two particulars, we are sure to go a long way towards achieving our object. I do not mean to minimise the importance of making Congress members or collecting funds or the question of untouchability. They should all be carried on as vigorously as possible, but I mean to say, that for the immediate future as well as for the distant future we should specially concentrate all our energies on the two items of Panchayats and khaddar. If we do this we can feel perfectly certain that Hindu Muslim unity will follow as a matter of course. You will excuse me if I dilate a little on these two subjects.

Mahatma Gandhi's last message before he went to jail was that the whole country should adopt khaddar, and that khaddar would be the salvation of India. It is very often asked how khaddar would bring about swaraj, and people wonder that Mahatma Gandhi attaches so much importance to it. They are willing to admit its economic utility, but are doubtful of its political value. I can only say that those who raise this objection have not grasped the full significance of the non-co-operation movement. To me the beauty of this movement lies in the fact that it is not only a weapon whereby we can force the Bureaucracy to surrender its power, but is also a means whereby we might

perfect ourselves and make ourselves fit to exercise that power when we do obtain it. If we have lost our liberty it is because we deserved to lose it, and English domination of India was achieved, not by the strength of England's arm, but by the weakness of the Indian people. The non-co-operation movement aims at removing all the evils inherent in us, and by strengthening ourselves, *ipso facto*, weaken the forces that have overpowered us. The extent to which we succeed in removing the root cause of the evil will also be the extent to which we can hope for success. Internal dissensions, lack of self-reliance, and weakening of the social fabric, drove us into the arms of the foreigner who came to India originally for purely commercial purposes. He took advantage of our weakness to establish his domination, but the object of this domination, was purely commercial gain. He perpetuated his rule in India, not because of any altruistic motives or any lust for mere political power but simply with the object of exploitation of the abundant resources of India for the benefit of England. If we would only grasp sufficiently clearly the patent fact, that Englishmen would not care to rule India if it were not for material advantages, and that political domination is of little attraction to the Englishmen except as a means for finding markets for the products of their own country we would have gone a long way indeed in correctly diagnosing the political illness we are suffering from. It is because we had not-thoroughly understood this, that, for the last 35 years nearly, we had been frittering away our energies and wasting away our strength in directing our endeavours to trying to obtain small concessions here and there in the machinery of the Government of the country. The very methods by which England consolidated her power in India ought to furnish us with a lesson as to how we ought to proceed to achieve self-government for ourselves. You might be quite sure that, if England could only dictate the commercial policy of India, she would tomorrow grant us full powers in all other directions, and it is because she is afraid that, with the loss of political power and domination, she would lose the right of controlling the commercial policy, that she is determined not to let us get the right of governing ourselves. It follows, therefore, that our first object, if we would overcome the opposition of the English Government to our right to rule ourselves, ought to be to remove the temptation that is before her, and demonstrate once for all, that India is no longer going to let herself be exploited of her resources. If, by a voluntary effort, we were to adopt khaddar and bring about a complete boycott of foreign cloth, and thus save about sixty crores of rupees going out of India annually to enrich England, while all the time we possess the raw materials, the labour and the skill to work them into finished products for our own needs, this would be an indisputable proof that we have made up our minds to be no longer mere hewers of wood and drawers of water. Moreover, this will be a further proof of the solidarity that the nation has attained, for lack of which, we have hitherto been a subject nation. It will further be a demonstration of the fact that we have got rid of that feeling of helplessness and dependence on others

that has been our bane hitherto. That is why the day that the whole of India is clad in cloth of our own manufacture and the import of foreign cloth ceases absolutely, that day will usher in Swaraj. To achieve the boycott of foreign cloth we will have to be quite united and all the communities in India will have to work hand in hand, and this common effort will promote our unity as nothing else will. This is the political significance of the khaddar movement, and who can deny, that apart from its economic aspects, it has got a political side to it of great potency?

But it may be asked, why insist on khaddar, and not merely on swadeshi, including therein all the mill made cloth in India. I have devoted a good deal of thought to this and discussed this question with several business men and they are all of opinion that insistence on khaddar is quite sound from all points of view, and that it is the only course we ought to pursue at present. There is no objection to Indian mill made cloth as such; but the difficulty comes in when we find that the mills which exist in India today cannot possibly increase their production to such an extent as to be able to supply the deficiency that will be caused by the shutting off of the foreign import. The question naturally arises, how is this deficiency to be made good? There is no other way possible except by encouraging hand spinning and hand-weaving on a large scale. There is also another aspect of this question and that is, that if we would avoid repeating all the disadvantages of the capitalistic industrialism of the West, and at the same time make the lot of the poor people, a large majority of whom are dependent on land, happy and prosperous and save them from the horrors of recurring famines, it can only be by furnishing them with a bye—industry to occupy their spare hours, and which, by its very nature, will have to be a cottage industry. Spinning and weaving are the most suitable for this purpose and the only form of occupation which can be universally adopted in every cottage. If I had the time and the space I would very much have liked to have gone into this question more thoroughly and deeply. But I must here content myself with indicating merely the arguments, and leave it to some other occasion to prove the soundness of the case by detailed facts and figures. Both economically and politically, the propaganda of khaddar is the soundest weapon we have got in our armoury, and we would be unwise if we did not make the most of this. In the last 18 months we have achieved a great deal and the import of foreign cloth into this country has declined by over 50%. There is still a lot to do, and we cannot devote our time to better advantage than by concentrating our efforts on this particular item. It ought not to be difficult for us in the Punjab to establish it on a large scale as the industry (even before our movement came in) had never died out, and perhaps was being carried on, on a more extensive scale than in any other province in India. Our task here, therefore, would be easier than elsewhere and all that we have to do now, is to so change the taste and mentality of the people as to make the coarse

cloth the fashion, so that there might be no hankering in the minds of the people in general, for foreign gauds and fineries. Fashion is a most potent factor in shaping the lives of human beings, and if we would address ourselves to making the wearing of home-spun and home-woven cloth a matter for pride and respect, we would have achieved the doom of the cheap foreign cloth.

The other item of the programme that we ought to pay our greatest attention to immediately, is the formation of Panchayats. Luckily, in the Punjab, the old social polity, with the village as the unit and the village organisation, more or less, self-sufficient for the people of the village, is not entirely dead, perhaps because the Punjab was the Province which was the last to come under the English domination. The Panchayats were the special feature of the ancient village communities, and even to-day, inspite of the ramifications of the British Courts of justice, many cases are decided by the people among themselves. But the Panchayats which exist now-a-days are mostly on a communal basis, or more properly speaking, on a caste basis. We ought to revive the village Panchayat so as to wean the people from that most reprehensible of tastes, a love of litigation. The peasantry in the Punjab, which is perhaps more prosperous than the peasantry in any other part of India, wastes a good deal of its hard earned money in litigation, which not only ruins them financially, but is a fruitful source of crime and hatred and enmity. There is no doubt that, if Panchayats become the rule, the Government revenue would be affected and even more so the Government prestige. That is perhaps the reason why, a dead set is being made against the Panchayat movement spreading. But we ought to understand, that this movement is one which will conduce most to the moral, social and material well-being of the people and so we ought to persevere in it, inspite of any amount of opposition. The Punjab Provincial Congress Committee has, happily, taken this matter in hand, though perhaps late in the day, and rules are being drafted for the guidance of the Panchayats. They will be published soon, and I trust that every worker will devote a large part of his time to establishing Panchayats and encouraging them. For those who desire Hindu-Muslim unity, this ought to appeal very much, as the Panchayats will be an effective means of checking and minimising inter-communal disputes.

I have dilated a good deal on the unhappy condition of affairs in this Province, due to the policy of repression adopted by the Government, but I cannot pass on without making mention of the still more unhappy lot of our long suffering brethren of the Frontier Province, who, in the Congress scheme at least, are joined with us. If repression and suppression of the liberties and rights of the people in the Punjab has become rather epidemic, this state of affairs is endemic in the Frontier Province. As a correspondent writing to the "Tribune" aptly puts it. "It is a patent fact that this unfortunate province is practically a dumb province. There are no newspapers, nor any associations which give expression to its grievances, troubles or pains. The Government is keeping the Province muzzled and gagged, on the excuse that

any agitation, even if justifiable and well meaning, is liable to have a sinister effect on the transborder tribesmen. The very word 'agitation' is considered to be synonymous with sedition and crime. Even attempts to expose the high-handedness of officials and the police, in individual cases, as also of the Jirga, are suppressed." Those who are at all acquainted with the state of affairs in the Frontier Province, and the practical military dictatorship that has been established there, will agree that this description is, if anything, an understatement of the case. During the early stages of the non-co-operation and Khilafat movements, there was some stir in several towns on the Frontier. But by a ruthless use of section 40 of the Frontier Crimes Regulation, wholesale arrests were made and harsh and vindictive sentences awarded, with a view to kill the movement. On account of the peculiar nature of the Government of that Province, any regular political work has become impossible; even attendance at the Congress was considered such a heinous offence that the authorities had no hesitation in threatening, by a written notification, all who would do so, with expulsion from the Province. But at the same time, the aspiration of a people for political emancipation cannot be killed by mere repression. That our brethren in the Frontier Province are as keenly alive to the political awakening as we are here, is evident from the reception given to the Prince of Wales in Peshawar. Without any effort and without much preparation, Peshawar on that occasion observed a complete hartal, in spite of the best efforts of the officials and the police to keep the shops open. It was the one place in the whole of India where our "benign" Government thought fit to take His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, through the Indian section of the town, perhaps because they thought they had coerced and frightened the people into an amount of "loyalty," sufficient to satisfy their needs, and perhaps, mislead the Prince. But Peshawar, though it might be situated in one extreme corner of India and though it might be kept in military subjection, is throbbing with the same new life as pervades the cities in the heart of India and therefore it made up its mind to have none of the official dictation on such an occasion. It is said, that when the Prince passed through the bazaar not a shop was open and the people cried "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai." What a remarkable proof of the widespread nature of our movement and the hold that Mahatmaji has on the minds of the people, irrespective of caste or creed! If the Bureaucracy would only learn the lesson, this unexpected and singular demonstration ought to teach it that the desire for liberty and self-government is not the result of a fictitious or superficial agitation, but comes from the innermost hearts of the people. I cannot close an account of the sufferings of the Frontier Province without giving you an extract from the report of the Judicial Commissioner himself, on the Administration of Justice in that Province, which will show how deplorable is the state of affairs there even normally :—

Notwithstanding the slight improvements shown in the subjects mentioned, the standard of work generally, it is to be feared, fell below the level of previous

years. The increasing number of cases dismissed in default, of ex-parte decrees and of commissions and the heavy arrears, especially in Peshawar, all indicate a lack of interest and energy, and a desire to stave off as long as possible, the evil day of finality. Many courts seem to have fallen into a state of lethargy, and efforts to awaken them appear to be unavailing. Frequent inspections have little or no result and the same defects are found to recur with unfailing regularity; in many Courts it is doubtful whether inspection notes are ever read at all. The faults noticed are general. Too much is left to the Court subordinates, especially in the preliminary stages of original cases and execution proceedings. Dates of the hearing are fixed and processes are issued without method, and the cause of delay in their return is ignored. Cases are postponed mechanically and adjournments are given on inadequate grounds. The working of many of the Courts has been hampered by constant changes of presiding officers, who, in some cases, willfully neglected their duties with the knowledge that their tenure was to be short. Another adverse factor has been the mediocrity or inexperience of some of the District Judges, who held charge during the year: the work of supervision has suffered in consequence." It is certain that the Bureaucracy with certainly not do any thing to ameliorate the position. True, they have appointed a commission of inquiry, but from what I have learnt of the probable *personnel* of it, I feel that the result will be most disappointing and the commission will merely strengthen the hands of the forces of reaction. The only hope of any remedy lies in Swaraj.

I have taken a good deal of your time, but there are so many burning questions of the day expected to be dealt with in an address of this nature, and it is very difficult to confine the remarks within a short compass. There are many subjects I have omitted altogether, and those that I have touched I have discussed very superficially, as was inevitable in the circumstances. I crave your indulgence for all the shortcomings. Though I feel I have taxed your patience a good deal, still, I cannot close without a word to our Moderate friends, some of whom have very kindly accepted our invitation to be present at this Conference.

By "Moderates" I mean all that class of people who are not openly with us now, working with us side by side. Such a use of the word for all the people included in this definition is perhaps not justifiable, but still I stick to it merely for convenience. This will naturally include men of different categories. First there is the class of persons who are thoroughly in sympathy with our movement, who believe in non-co-operation, who believe in the Programme as laid down by the Congress, but, who, for various reasons, are unable to make all the sacrifices expected of them. In this category will be included all the lawyers who cannot give up their practice; the merchants who cannot give up their trade in foreign cloth and the reises

and title holders who cannot come over to us and work with us openly. To all these, I wish to say on your behalf and mine own, that we sympathise with them in their difficult position, and though we cannot approve of their attitude, we are full of hope that sooner or later, sooner perhaps than later, they will take the plunge and range themselves alongside of us. At the same time, I would tell them that even as it is, there is a lot of good work that they can do without coming actually into the lime light. All the lawyers and merchants can actively help in the new constructive programme before the country in a quiet way. We invite their co-operation, and we hope that they will respond to it, considering that there is no difference of opinion amongst us. It is to be regretfully admitted that they, as a rule, have not given as much help as they could, in the past 18 months; but I am not without hope that they will do much better in the future.

There is a second class which, though believing in the principle of Non-co-operation as an effective political weapon, does not believe in the programme as laid down, either as practicable or as expedient. They desire Swaraj, and admit it would be most foolish to expect to get self-government as a sort of gift from the ruling nation. They agree with us that we will have to work and strive hard for it; but they do not believe in the efficacy of some of the steps we have adopted. To these I would only say "if the success we have achieved already by means of this programme has not convinced you of the still greater success we can achieve with the hearty co-operation of all like you, then it were, indeed, vain to hope that any arguments of mine will convince you. But while there are so many points of agreement between you and us, there is no earthly reason why you should not join hands with us whenever it is possible. The greatest dis-service that you are doing at this moment is by remaining passive, as your passivity gives an occasion to the Government to say, that your class is really in sympathy with it and its actions. The least that you can do, therefore, is to make clear to the world and to the Bureaucracy, in all possible ways, that the Government is mistaken in considering you to be tacitly its supporters, or at least not in sympathy with us. You should make it clear that if you are not avowed non-co-operators, it is only because of a slight difference of opinion as to the methods adopted and not because of any active sympathy with, much less appreciation, of the present form of Government. If you would only go a little further and, without sacrificing your principle or your conscience, would give us all legitimate help possible, we will have great reason indeed to be satisfied.

There is a third class which does not believe in non-co-operation, which, while desiring ultimate self-government, believes that it can only be achieved by slow stages, by means of "constitutional agitation" and who, perhaps, honestly believe that non-co-operation is an extreme expedient entirely un-

necessary under the circumstances. They are welcome to their belief, but we have a right to expect of them that they should not, in all fairness, shut their eyes to the practical demonstrations that are being given by us from day to day, of the efficacy and chances of success of the Non-co-operation movement, and of the inadequacy of the methods they cling to. They will pardon me if I say that they should avoid giving the impression that they are one with the Bureaucracy or, at any rate, of being considered to be blind supporters of the Government. I know for a fact that most of them are not, and that they would be prepared to criticize boldly, and indeed, severely, such actions of the Government as they disapprove of. But unfortunately they very often keep quiet when they ought to protest and thus give occasions for misapprehension of their attitude. There are some politicians of very old standing among them, who are entitled to our respect for their long and meritorious public services; but do they think they are doing the right thing at the present moment by maintaining a non-committal attitude? It is surely permissible to ask of them whether they are with the Bureaucracy in the present policy of wholesale repression, and the brutal and uncivilized methods adopted by it to suppress the Non-co-operation, Khilafat and Gurdwara movements? I am sure they are not, and I consider it their duty to speak out their disapproval. I am also certain that they are anxious to prevent any misuse of power. But are they discharging their duty? I hope our friends of this class will ponder over these questions deeply and do their duty according to their lights.

Before I finish I would appeal to you all assembled here, workers as well as sympathisers, to go away from this Conference with a heart full of joy and hope, with your faith in the ultimate destiny of India strengthened by the free and frank exchange of views and opinions that you will be having to-day and in the succeeding days. There is no cause for despair, so long as each person is prepared to do his duty, so long as the spirit of self-sacrifice is not dead in this country, and so long as the love of freedom burns brightly in every bosom. Our achievements might be small or great, but remember that, very often, the beauty of an action and the merit of it lies in the endeavour itself and not in the fruits thereof. If non-violent non-co-operation is the right thing to do, then whether we succeed or we fail ought to be no matter of consequence to us. I would only quote a verse on this point from Shirmat Bhagwadgita and I hope that every one of you will imbibe the true spirit underlying these words of Sri Krishna: —

“Karmanyevádhipikaras te má phaleshu kadáchana.

Má karmaphalaheturbhur má te sangostvakarmani.”

“Thy business is with action only, never with its fruits; so let not the fruit of action be thy motive, nor be thou to inaction attached.”

BANDE MATARAM.