

Colonies. British Guiana.

From the self-governing Dominions I shall pass on to the colonies and very briefly allude to our position there. In British Guiana I gladly acknowledge that our Indian population can live on terms of honour and equality of treatment. Their grievances are comparatively very much fewer.

Fiji.

In Fiji my countrymen demand more adequate representation, based on a satisfactory franchise, in the legislative bodies; they also ask for the settlement of a minimum wage based on the cost of living; they ask for the removal of the poll-tax, which presses very hardly upon them. They ask further that land should be given to them for settlement. They ask—and I have received a cable from an important quarter—that if these grievances are not removed they should be repatriated.

Kenya.

In Kenya the Indians desire a common roll instead of communal franchise. They protest against the administrative veto, which prevents them acquiring land from willing European sellers in the highlands; and they fear that the immigration restrictions may be employed in such a way as to prejudice the development of the colony by Indians.

Uganda and Tanganyika.

In Uganda the Indians are pressing for representation by two nominated members of the Legislative Council; and in Tanganyika, which my countrymen helped to win for the Empire, they have certain grievances which, I understand, are at present under the consideration of the Colonial Office, such as profits-tax, peddlers' licenses, and trade licenses; and may I express a fervent hope that the Colonial Office will give most sympathetic consideration to those grievances before they arrive at any decision?

Thus, wherever we may turn, we see circumstances in the local status of Indians which are not to be reconciled with India's national aspirations, or with the position which she will obtain as the result of the declared policy of His Majesty's Government—a position which I hope to achieve much sooner than some people realize.

“C” Mandates.

At this stage I will slightly digress from my argument and refer to the “C” mandates in a very few words. In regard to the administration of what I will call the “C” mandated territories, which have been committed to the charge of certain Dominions, I desire to say that my countrymen cannot acquiesce in any position which does or may in the future make their status inferior to what it was when those territories were administered by Germany. I have already read to you the views of the Government of India in the telegram. The matter is at present not of very great practical importance, as the number of my countrymen is very small; but I must in fairness enter a caveat against any action which may in future turn to our disadvantage. May I also in this connection remind you of the provisions of Article 22 of the League of Nations? I will only quote the material portions. After referring to Central African and other peoples, it lays down that the Mandatory Power, besides certain other duties, shall “secure equal opportunities for the trade and commerce of other members of the League.” I take my stand on that.

Resolution of 1921 Conference.

Having thus reviewed the position in the self-governing Dominions and the colonies according to the information available to me—and I shall not object to any member of this Conference correcting me if I am wrong in any detail—let me tell you what the position was that was taken by this Conference in 1921. Lord Peel read out to us a portion of that resolution, but I propose to read out to you the whole of that resolution. That resolution runs as follows:—

“The Conference, while reaffirming the resolution of the Imperial War Conference of 1918 that each community of the British Commonwealth should enjoy complete control of the composition of its own population by means of restriction on immigration from any of the other communities, recognizes that there is an incongruity between the position of India as an equal member of the British Empire and the existence of disabilities upon British Indians lawfully domiciled in some other parts of the Empire. The Conference accordingly is of opinion that in the interests of the solidarity of the British Commonwealth it is desirable that the rights of such Indians to citizenship should be recognized.

“The representatives of South Africa regret their inability to accept this resolution in view of the exceptional circumstances of the greater part of the Union.

“The representatives of India, while expressing their appreciation of the acceptance of the resolution recorded above, feel bound to place on record their profound concern at the position of Indians in South Africa, and their hope that by negotiation between the Governments of India and of South Africa some way can be found, as soon as may be, to reach a more satisfactory position.”

Immigration Question does not arise.

You will thus see that the resolution divides itself clearly into three parts. I will take up the first part, which deals with the question of immigration. It gives each Dominion the fullest and the freest right to regulate the character and the composition of its own population. I am bound by that; you are bound by it. But, just as I am bound by it, you are also bound in honour by the second part of the resolution, which really is the most vital part with which I have got to deal, except, of course, that portion which relates to South Africa. But before I proceed further let me make one