Chapter Three

ABSOLUTE INDEPENDENCE OR EQUAL PARTNERSHIP, 1930-34
Though the demand for Dominion Status was withdrawn and Complete Independence was declared as its goal, the Lahore Congress in 1929 left the door open for negotiations with the British Government. The language of the 'Independence Resolution' shows that the Congress wanted to have a reasonable and honourable compromise with the Government. It appreciated "the efforts of the Viceroy towards a settlement of the national movement for Swaraj" and further resolved that "in the existing circumstances" there was no purpose in attending the Round Table Conference. Objection was taken to the words 'in the existing circumstances', but in vain. Gandhiji, the author of the resolution, clearly explained that "all his Non-co-operation was for co-operation and all his fight was for a settlement."

The moderates like Pandit M.M. Malaviya pleaded for postponing the change in the Congress to Independence until another All-Parties Conference considered the matter again.

(1) For the text, see Appendix I.


(3) See M.M. Malaviya's amendment to the Independence Resolution. INC, Report of the 44th Session, Lahore, 1929, 89. M.S. Aney wanted a special session of the Congress for the purpose. See ibid., 114.
The extremists were not satisfied with the resolution; and while the change in the party's creed was welcomed, Subhas Chandra Bose proposed the addition of a rider to complete independence - "implying thereby complete severance of the British connection." On the other hand, Mahatma Gandhi made it clear that "independence need not mean complete disassociation from British connection." Mr. Bose's amendment was rejected by an overwhelming majority.

The Lahore Congress was a great victory for Mahatma Gandhi, and by advocating independence he "was able to win over some of the Left-Wing elements" including Jawaharlal Nehru. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru remained silent throughout this momentous debate. In his Presidential address, of course, he made some interesting observations on this subject:

"Independence for us means complete freedom from British domination and British imperialism. Having attained our freedom I have no doubt that India will welcome all attempts at world cooperation and federation, and will even agree to give up part of her own independence to a larger group of which she is an equal member. (7)

(4) S.C. Bose's amendment. Ibid., 92.

(5) D.G. Tendulkar, Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Bombay, 1952) III, 76.


(7) INC, Report, n. 3, 29.
Jawaharlal Nehru, it seems, was not opposed to the British connection as such. He was against 'British domination and British imperialism'. And because he thought that the British Commonwealth was, then, based on imperialism and exploitation, India could not have any connection with such a Commonwealth.

The British Empire .... cannot be a true commonwealth so long as imperialism is its basis and the exploitation of other races its chief means of sustenance .... [And] India could never be an equal member of the Commonwealth unless imperialism and all it implies is discarded. So long as this is not done, India's position in the Empire must be one of subservience and her exploitation will continue. (8)

Thus we see that Jawaharlal Nehru was willing to accept India's membership of the Commonwealth if the Commonwealth discarded imperialism and exploitation. He was doubtful about it. He doubted very much whether the British Government would give real freedom to India. Nehru seems to have implied that if real freedom, by which he meant "the entire withdrawal of the alien army of occupation and economic control," were given to India this would amount to changing radically the nature of the Commonwealth and in that case India's membership could be reconsidered. The Dominions in 1929 had neither the British army of occupation nor British economic control in their respective territories. They were enjoying real freedom, the

(8) Ibid.
(9) Ibid., 30.
freedom which Jawaharalal Nehru wanted India to enjoy. Though Jawaharalal Nehru expressed his hostility to Dominion Status, he was not irrevocably committed to a total break under all conditions. His interpretation of independence as President of the Lahore Congress was not far different from his interpretation of the same objective as Prime Minister of free India.

From the above we can safely conclude that the Congress, at least a great majority, by its new creed of Complete Independence did not mean independence outside the British Commonwealth. It was, it seems, a tactical change born of circumstances and despair. The Daily Herald (London) described the change in the Congress creed "as an academic change involving no immediate consequences." The Bombay Chronicle commented that there was no material change in the Congress creed and therefore "it need not prevent those who are for Dominion Status in ... from joining or remaining/the Congress." At least it was true for Gandhiji and Gandhiites who formed an overwhelming majority in the Congress. And the success of this group, which also included Pandit Motilal Nehru, Sardar Patel and

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(10) For reasons for the change in the Congress creed as explained by Mahatma Gandhi, see Young India (Ahmedabad), 12 (9 January 1930) 12-15 and (16 January 1930) 17.


(12) The Bombay Chronicle, 10 January 1930, 4.
Dr. Rajendra Prasad, at the Lahore Congress was undeniable. The extremists were ousted and the leadership of the Congress passed completely into the hands of Gandhites. Mahatma Gandhi being the greatest leader became the chief spokesman of the Congress. For the Indian masses Mahatma Gandhi was the Congress and the Congress was Mahatma Gandhi. In brief, Mahatma Gandhi was all in all in the Congress.

On 2nd January, 1930, the Congress Working Committee decided that the 26th of January 1930 should be observed all over India as the Purna Swaraj (Independence) Day, and subsequently it issued a declaration to be read in public meetings on the Independence Day. The declaration inter alia said:

The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe therefore that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or complete independence. (14)

Here, the severance of the British connection was mentioned, though only a few days before at the Lahore Congress Mr. Bose's amendment to this effect had been rejected. So one finds apparently a contradiction between these two statements of the Congress - the Independence Resolution of the Lahore Congress.

(14) INC. 1930-34: (B), 1.
Congress and the Independence Day Declaration of the Working Committee. But really it was not so. The members of the Working Committee were Gandhiites and moderates - except Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru whose position will be discussed later on. And by the phrase severance of the British connection, they meant severance from the then existing British connection which was unnatural and based on the exploitation of the Indian masses. They wanted to sever the British domination and British exploitation, but not necessarily British connection based on willingness, freedom and equality. Mahatma Gandhi who had been trying to come to some reasonable compromise with the Government explained:

It is the substance that India wants. British domination must cease. British exploitation must cease. British administration, that is costing the country far beyond its means, must end now, not in the remote future.

And referring to the English people he added:

Complete Independence does not mean arrogant isolation or a superior disdain for all help. But it does mean complete severance of the British bondage, be it ever so slight or well concealed. (16)

The Congress' new creed of Complete Independence and the Independence Declaration, it seems, did not materially change the attitude of Mahatma Gandhi. Soon after the Lahore Congress, Gandhiji clearly and repeatedly explained that the

(15) Jawaharlal Nehru, though a loyal follower of Gandhiji, in popular opinion was not regarded as a Gandhiite.

(16) Young India, 12 (23 January 1930) 28 and 29 respectively.
new creed of Complete Independence did not mean breaking the British connection at all cost, and that the Congress was willing to accept partnership on equal terms in the Commonwealth. He said:

... the independence resolution need frighten nobody. I had repeatedly declared that for me, as for all other Congressmen, Dominion Status could mean only virtual independence; that is partnership at will for mutual benefit and to be dissolved at the instance of either partner. It only clears the issue, especially after Secretary of State for India, Wedgwood Benn's unfortunate statement that India already had a Dominion Status in action. (17)

Though 'equal partnership' in the British Commonwealth was acceptable to the Congress, the phrase 'Dominion Status' could no longer find favour with it. And apart from the Calcutta resolution (1928), one of the reasons for discarding the phrase in favour of complete Independence, explained Gandhi, was that the British statesmen like Mr. Wedgwood Benn (18) and Earl Russell had given "us plainly to understand that India's Dominion Status is something different from what we have always


(18) Mr. Benn and Earl Russell were the Secretary and the Under-Secretary of State for India respectively. Mr. Benn had been assuring the world that Dominion Status had already been in action in India for a decade; Earl Russell stated that Dominion Status was not possible at the moment and would not be for a long time.
believed to be, viz., a status allied to that of Canada, New Zealand and Australia. These they admitted are virtually independent." For most of the British statesmen Dominion Status for India was either something far less than independence or real Dominion Status would not be granted to her for a long time. Thus, they "made that phrase impossible of acceptance to convey the nation's meaning," wrote Gandhiji. The Congress meant something totally different from it. "For the Congress," added Gandhiji, "Dominion Status meant complete independence plus voluntary partnership with Britain as it might be with any other nation for mutual good." And therefore complete independence was not considered as incompatible with the genuine Dominion Status, then in vogue in the dominions.

On the eve of the 1st Independence Day (26 January 1930) Gandhiji asked the Indian people "to declare that we will be satisfied with nothing less than Complete Independence as opposed to Dominion Status so-called," and thereby made it perfectly clear that Complete Independence was opposed to 'Dominion Status so-called' and not to genuine Dominion Status. The addition of the word 'so-called' after 'Dominion Status' was meaningful. It clearly shows that Mahatma Gandhi, the

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(19) Address to the students of Gujarat Vidyapith. Young India, 12 (16 January 1930) 17.
(20) Ibid., 12 (9 January 1930) 12.
(21) Ibid., 12 (23 January 1930) 32.
author of the 'Independence Resolution', was opposed to that kind of Dominion Status which was declared to be applicable to India by British statesmen like Mr. Benn, and not to the real and full Dominion Status as was understood and applied in the Dominions. By complete independence he meant full Dominion Status with the right to secede at will.

In his subsequent statements Mahatma Gandhi explained still further the position of the Congress. In reply to the Viceroy's statement in the Legislative Assembly Gandhiji declared that he would be satisfied with the substance of Independence, and he mentioned eleven reforms to explain what he meant by that term: total prohibition; reduction of ratio to 1s. 4d.; 50 per cent reduction of land revenue and legislative control over it; abolition of the salt tax; reduction of military expenditure at least by 50 per cent to begin with; reduction of civil service salaries by half; a protective tariff against foreign cloth; enactment of a Coastal Traffic Reservation Bill; discharge of all political prisoners not condemned for murder or attempted murder, abrogation of Section 124-A and Regulation III of 1818, and permission to all

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Indian exiles to return; abolition or popular control of the CID; and issue of licenses for firearms for self-defence, subject to popular control. If these demands were conceded, wrote Gandhiji, then there would be no Civil Disobedience, and the Congress would "heartily participate" in any Conference where there was "perfect freedom of expression and demand." In this connection, it must be remembered that the Congress, in December 1929, had demanded an assurance that the Round Table Conference would proceed on the basis of full Dominion Status, and because the Viceroy could not give that assurance, the negotiations failed and the Congress changed its creed to Complete Independence at Lahore. Now Mahatma Gandhi was willing to persuade the Congress to participate in the RTC if his eleven reforms were granted. The basis of Congress participation in the RTC thus changed, it seems, from Dominion Status to the eleven reforms. And it is reported that Gandhiji communicated his willingness for negotiation on the basis of these terms to the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald.

Critics like Trivikramarav pointed out that Gandhi was inconsistent. In one breath he (Gandhi) insisted on independence and in another he declared that his minimum demand was not even Dominion Status, but just eleven reforms. Gandhiji replied:

(23) Young India, 12 (30 January 1930) 36.
I must admit my many inconsistencies. But since I am called 'Mahatma', I might well endorse Emerson's saying that 'foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds'. There is, I fancy, a method in my inconsistencies. In my opinion [he added] there is a consistency running through my seeming inconsistencies, as in nature there is a unity running through seeming diversity. (25)

And that is fact. Gandhiji had been trying to secure real freedom substantial independence for India. He did not mind by what name it might be called, so long as the contents remain the same. He was primarily interested in the 'substance' and not in the 'form' of Independence. And as regards 'contents' there was hardly any difference between complete independence and full Dominion Status after the Statute of Westminster or even after 1926. In the post-1931 period, and even earlier, the British connection in no way lessened the independence of the Dominions as was shown by Canada, the Union of South Africa and the Irish Free State. Taking into consideration this concept of Dominion Status, all the three phrases, 'Complete Independence,' 'Substance of Independence' and Dominion Status, specially with the right to secede at will, conveyed one and the same meaning as regards practical independence, i.e., freedom of action.

Gandhiji, there is no doubt, was anxious for an honourable compromise, based on Dominion Status, with the British Government. Before starting the Civil Disobedience movement, he

(25) Young India, 12 (13 February 1930) 52.
explained to the Viceroy the circumstances which led the Congress to adopt Complete Independence as its goal at Lahore, and further, tried to convince him that "the resolution of Independence should cause no alarm, if the word Dominion Status mentioned in your Viceroy's announcement of 31 October 1929 had been used in its accepted sense because responsible British statesmen, Gandhiji argued, had admitted "that Dominion Status is virtual independence." Yet, however, I fear," he added, "is that there never has been any intention of granting such Dominion Status to India in the immediate future." And after pointing out some of the evils of the British rule in India, Gandhiji further explained: "If we want to sever the British connection it is because of such evils. Then they are removed the path becomes easy. Then way to friendly negotiation will be open." In conclusion he asked the Viceroy "for an immediate removal of those evils" thereby opening a way for "a real conference between equals" and a "voluntary fellowship" with Britain.

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Mahatma Gandhi was not alone in having this view. His views were shared by many other important Congress leaders. The terms for a settlement with the Government and the Congress..."

(26) H.R. Gandhi to the Viceroy Lord Irwin, 2 March 1930. Congress Bulletin (Allahabad), 6 (7 March 1930) 42 and 47. The bulletin was issued by the AICC.
co-operation with the RTC given by Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Motilal Nehru to Mr. George Slocombe, the representative of The Daily Herald (London), and the subsequent demand put by several Congress leaders from Yerawada Jail on 15 August 1930, clearly show that the other top leaders of the Congress also held the same views on this question. The first condition of Mahatma Gandhi, reported Mr. Slocombe, was that "The terms of reference of the RTC [should] include the framing of a Constitution giving India the substance of Independence." Pandit Motilal Nehru wanted "a private assurance" from the British Government and the Government of India that they would support a demand for "full responsible government for India," subject to certain "adjustments and terms of transfer" to be "decided (27) by the RTC." And finally Messrs Motilal Nehru, M.K. Gandhi, Vallabhbhai Patel, Jairamdas Daulatram, Syed Mahmud, Jawaharlal Nehru and Smt. Sarojini Naidu in their statement of 15 August, 1930, from the Yerawada Jail, inter alia, categorically stated that no solution would be acceptable to them unless "it recognises, in as many words, the right of India to secede at will from the British Empire ...."

(27) Sitaramayya, n. 2, 678.

(28) Extracts from Motilal Nehru's statement enclosed in George Slocombe to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, 23 June 1930, Sapru Correspondence, National Library, Calcutta.

(29) Copy of the joint statement. Ibid., G.10.
Though no agreement could be reached, for our purpose it is enough to know the attitude of these Congress leaders all of whom were members of the Working Committee. The very mention of 'the right to secede' presupposed India's partnership with the British Empire as without partnership the question of 'the right to secede' did not arise. Subsequently the Congress Working Committee at its Allahabad meeting of 21 January 1931, while adhering to the Independence resolution of the Lahore Congress, endorsed the view of these Congress leaders. Even Congressmen like Mr. S. Satyamurti who pleaded for Independence vs. Dominion Status at the Calcutta Congress (1928), were willing to accept Dominion Status in 1930. In December 1930, Satyamurti clearly stated that "if Dominion Status be achieved by India to-day, there is no doubt that the demand for Independence will lose considerably in volume...." He explained that, in practice, there was no difference between Dominion Status as it was understood then and Independence or the substance of Independence, as Mahatma Gandhi called it. All the Dominions exercised unquestionable paramountcy in all their external affairs, including the question of war or peace.

(30) For the details of these negotiations and their failure, see ibid., 6.7-15, 9.378 and Misc. 13 and 14.

(31) See INC, 1930-34 (A), 49.

Above all, the right to separate from the Commonwealth had been established, beyond doubt, he said. But he emphasized the importance of 'time-factor':

If to-day India's claim to be a self-governing dominion be immediately recognised, there is a chance of India and Great Britain continuing to be friends and partners. But if 'the moving finger writes and having writ moves on', one cannot predict the future. ... (33)

THE GANDHI-IRWIN PACT AND THE KARACHI CONGRESS

Ultimately a provisional settlement, known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact or Agreement, between the Congress and the Government of India was signed by Mahatma Gandhi and the Viceroy on 5 March 1931. The Congress agreed to participate in the second session of the Round Table Conference. The Agreement was based on the assumption of British connection and Dominion Status. At a press conference at Delhi on 6 March 1931, Gandhi explained that the Congress was participating in the RTC to achieve its goal of 'Purna Swaraj' (complete Independence), and reiterated that 'Complete Independence' did not exclude association with England. He was subjected to a heavy barrage of questions. Here are some of the

(33) Ibid., 842.

(34) For the text of the Agreement, see Sitaramayya, n. 2, 733-44.
important questions and answers:

Q. You say that complete independence is an indifferent rendering for Purna Swaraj. What then is the real meaning of Purna Swaraj?

A. Proper translation I cannot give you.... But Purna Swaraj does not exclude association with any nation, much less with England. But it can only mean association for mutual benefit and at will.

Q. Is the Settlement consistent with the Lahore (Congress) Resolution?

A. It is, most decidedly.

Q. What do you mean by 'Swaraj without the Empire if necessary', as you used to say?

A. The Empire no longer remains, it having turned into a Commonwealth, and Swaraj within the Commonwealth is perfectly possible. We may be an independent state and yet form part of a Commonwealth....

Q. There seems to be a gulf of difference between the position at Lahore affirming complete independence and the present parleys leading on to a settlement.

A. Even when I moved the Lahore Resolution, I made it quite clear that independence need not mean complete dissociation from British connection. If we have been fighting a violent war there might have been ruin for one or the other party. But ours has been a non-violent war presupposing compromise. We have all the while assumed it, desired it. My letter to Lord Irwin (of 2 March 1930) was conceived in that spirit.

Q. What is your idea of 'Purna Swaraj'? Would it be possible within the British Empire?

A. It would be possible but on terms of absolute equality. Complete independence may mean separation and popular imagination does understand it in that light. But, if we remain part of the Commonwealth, on terms of absolute equality, instead of Downing Street being the centre of the Empire, Delhi should be the centre. India has a population of about 300 millions and that is a factor that cannot be ignored. Friends suggest that England will never be able to reconcile itself to that position. But I do not despair. (35)

(35) Young India, 13 (19 March 1931) 38-9.
In short, Mahatma Gandhi, at his press conference, clearly explained that Purna Swaraj (Complete Independence) was quite compatible with India remaining within the Empire. But he emphasized that India's partnership with England must be "on terms of absolute equality." He further admitted that this state of equality implied the right to secede at will from the Empire. The fact that the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was based "on the definite assumption of future Dominion (36) Status with the substance of Independence," Gandhi again reiterated in April 1933.

The Congress Working Committee accepted the agreement. "Except for Jawaharlal Nehru, every member of the Working (37) Committee ... welcomed the Gandhi-Irwin Pact," reports Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Jawaharlal Nehru was not satisfied on the constitutional question. He deplored the acceptance of a basis of discussion at the RTC short of Complete Independence. (38) But he did not oppose the agreement. C. Rajagopalachari wanted "to bring India on a par with Ireland, South Africa or Canada." Like Gandhi, he stressed on the right to secede from the Commonwealth and said that the right was "now well

(36) Statement on White Paper and India's goal. The Bombay Chronicle, 8 April 1933, 1.
conceded, though not entered into any constitutional (39)
document." Vithalbhai J. Patel also asked the Congress to
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accept full Dominion Status. But Congressmen like B.
Sambamurthi, though a small minority, were against the
Agreement. Sambamurthi held the view that the Lahore
Congress had laid the foundation by defining Swaraj as
"independence outside the British Empire" and hoped that the
Karachi Congress would proclaim "the establishment of an
Indian republic." He emphatically declared that the Congress
would never accept "a humiliating settlement involving Dominion
(41)
Status."

Finally, the Agreement was put before the Indian
National Congress, the highest and final authority of the
organization, for its verdict. The Congress met at Karachi
on (29-31) March 1931, and, in spite of anti-British feeling
in the country specially because of the execution, a few days
earlier, of Bhagat Singh and his comrades, Sukh Dev and Raj
(42)
Guru, endorsed the Agreement without much opposition. The

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(39) Press statement. The Times of India (Bombay),
10 March 1931, 9.

(40) Message to the Congress from Vienna. See The
Bombay Chronicle, 26 March 1931, 1.

(41) Public address at Madras. The Amrita Bazar
Patrika (Calcutta), 29 March 1931, 5.

(42) See: Sitaramayya, n. 2, 767-9; also Tendulkar,
n. 5, 82-5.
resolution accepted the British connection in explicit terms:

This Congress, having considered the provisional settlement between the Working Committee and the Government of India, endorses it, and desires to make it clear that the Congress goal of Purna Swaraj (Complete Independence) remains intact. In the event of the way being otherwise open to the Congress to be represented at any Conference with the representatives of the British Government, the Congress delegation will work for this goal and in particular, so as to give the nation control over the army, external affairs, finance and fiscal and economic policy ... and the right to either party to end the partnership at will. Provided, however, that the Congress delegation will be free to accept such adjustments as may be demonstrably necessary in the interest of India. (43)

Thus, the Congress at Karachi, while adhering to its goal of Complete Independence, endorsed the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and asked its delegation to work at the Conference for the goal as well as for 'the right to either party to end the partnership at will'. This demand for the right to secede indicates that the Congress, like Gandhi, was favourably inclined towards the British connection. The simultaneous demand for complete Independence and the right to secede is a clear proof that the Congress' goal of Complete Independence was not incompatible with British connection. It shows that the Congress was demanding complete Independence not outside the British Commonwealth, but preferably within it. It is interesting to note that the resolution was moved by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the man who was not happy with the Agreement in the beginning.

Jasvadas Mehta opposed the resolution on the ground that it toned down the Lahore resolution. "You cannot go to the Round Table Conference hedged round with conditions and tell the World that you are still sticking to Independence," he argued. He strongly criticized Mahatma Gandhi for his interpretations of the Congress goal of Complete Independence since the Lahore Congress and remarked, "the man in the street really does not know what independence really means in the language of the Indian National Congress." J.N. Sen Gupta in support of the resolution argued that in the independence which the Congress sought "the old British connection of the master and slave, the old British connection of imperial and imperious Britain, and the dependency of India must end." And in its place "there is going to be equal partnership, if at all, which can be ended at will either by India or Britain," he added. S. Satyamurti, replying to Mehta's criticism, declared: "Dominion Status with the right to separate at any time is the same thing as Independence so far as practical purposes are concerned." At another place Satyamurti, while admitting that judged from the point of view of the Lahore Congress, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was "a great surrender",

(44) Ibid., 67-8 and 70 respectively.

(45) Ibid., 86 and 87 respectively.

(46) Ibid., 91.
defended the Karachi resolution as "a wise, patriotic and statesmanlike" decision, and reiterated that "Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress will be satisfied with the substance of Independence." Leftists like Subhas Chandra Bose wanted "a Socialist Republic in India." They condemned the Gandhi-Irwin Pact as "a betrayal of the Indian struggle for complete Independence by the Indian bourgeoisie, who dominated the Indian National Congress", and denounced the Congress' participation in the Round Table Conference as "a conspiracy of British imperialism and Indian vested interests for a joint and greater exploitation of the Indian masses." But they, being a small minority, were not in a position to offer strong opposition to the resolution and prevent the ratification of the Pact at the Karachi Congress. Moreover, some left-wing leaders like Dr. Mohammad Alam became supporters of Gandhiji, and some others like Swami Govindanand were willing to accept "the substance of real independence," if it could be achieved by "means of negotiations"


(48) Subhas Chandra Bose's Presidential Address, Navajawan Bharat Sabha (All India Youth Conference), Karachi, 27 March 1931. The Times of India, 30 March 1931, 16.

(49) Resolution, Navajawan Bharat Sabha. Ibid., 51 March 1931, 4.

(50) See Bose, n. 6, 231.
at the Round Table Conference.

Among others Khan Abdul Chaffar Khan and Dr. M.A. Ansari supported the resolution. Functionally all the amendments were withdrawn and the resolution was passed almost unanimously.

Thus, the Indian National Congress not only accepted the Gandhi-Irwin Pact but also fully endorsed Gandhiji's interpretation of Complete Independence and the phrase 'sovereignty of the British connection'. It left no ambiguity that the Independent India would like to remain a free and equal partner of the British Commonwealth. Even men like V.J. Patel, who held the view that originally at the Lahore Congress complete independence was understood to mean complete sovereignty of British connection, admitted that:

Since the Gandhi-Irwin truce, however, there has been an expression of opinion from some very eminent and responsible Congressmen that **Purna Svaraj / Complete Independence** is not inconsistent with the voluntary association of India with Britain as a full, free, and willing partner in the British Commonwealth of Nations.

And they further admitted that the Karachi Congress had **unequivocally accepted Dominion Status as a step towards its**

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(51) Suvid Govindasand’s statement on the resolution, Karachi Congress. He stated that he was voicing the sentiments of the forward party in the Congress. INC, Records, no. 43, 75.

(52) No leader of India Sane opposed the resolution. And out of 4000 delegates not more than 10 opposed it. See The Indian Annual Register (Calcutta), 1941, 1, 276.
goal of Purna Swaraj." The Karachi decision was reiterated and the right to secede at will was emphasized by many Provincial Conferences also.

INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AND THE
SECOND ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

Subsequently, after his second agreement with the Government of India on 27 August 1931, Mahatma Gandhi, the sole representative of the Congress, proceeded to England to represent it at the Second Session of the Round Table Conference. He explained that in London he would strive for India's freedom with "the right to secede at will." And in his first speech before the Federal Structure Committee on 16 September 1931, Gandhiji at the outset stated that he had come to London absolutely in a spirit of co-operation. He read out the Karachi Congress resolution and explained that the Congress, instead of aiming at the severance of the British connection, "contemplates a partnership ... a connection with the British people;" but "that connection," he added, should "be such as

(53) V.J. Patel’s Presidential Address at the Indian National Conference in Great Britain, June 1931. V.J. Patel, The Indian View (London, n.d.) 6 and 7 respectively. (pamphlet)

(54) For the text of the agreement, see INC. 1930-34: (B), 148-50.

(55) Reply to a query from Rentier’s correspondent. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 4 September 1931, 5.
can exist between two absolute equals." He rejected the Empire ideal in favour of that of the Commonwealth, and said:

Time was when I prided myself on being, and being called, a British subject. I have ceased for many years to call myself a British subject; I would far rather be called a rebel than a subject. But I have aspired - I still aspire - to be a citizen, not in the Empire, but in a Commonwealth; in a partnership if possible - if God wills it an indissoluble partnership - but not a partnership superimposed upon one nation by another. Hence the Congress claims that either party should have the right to sever the connection, to dissolve the partnership. (57)

He further pleaded that "India is a valuable partner, not held by force but by the silken cord of love." And in conclusion he said that he would like to go away from the British Isles "with the conviction that there was to be an honourable and equal partnership between Great Britain and India"; and it would be his "fervent prayer", during his sojourn, Gandhi added, "that this consummation may be reached."

During his stay in England, Mahatma Gandhi addressed many private and public meetings and from several platforms he explained the aim and demand of the Congress. After going

(56) Indian Round Table Conference (Second Session), 7 Sept. - 1 Dec. 1931, Proceedings of Federal Structure Committee and Minorities Committee (London, 1932) 17.
(57) Ibid.
(58) Ibid., 17 and 18 respectively.
through the records of these meetings and discussions, one undoubtedly gets a clear impression that the Congress unequivocally stood for a voluntary and equal partnership with Britain in the Commonwealth. Gandhiji categorically stated that "the aim of Complete Independence" meant neither "isolation" nor "exclusion of partnership on equal terms." He explained that the Lahore resolution and the Karachi resolution were "identical." Whereas the former "erased the idea of the Empire from the minds of Indians and placed independence in front of them," the latter not only reaffirmed it, but also provided the interpretation, "that even as an independent people we could have partnership with Great Britain, if, of course, she wants it." To the question, how far would he cut India off from the Empire, Gandhiji replied:

From the Empire entirely; from the British nation not at all, if I want India to gain and not to grieve. The British Empire is an Empire only because of India. That Emperorship must go and I should love to be equal partner with Britain sharing her joys and sorrows and equal partner with all Dominions. But it must be (he added) a partnership on equal terms. (61)


(60) Address to the Indian Students' Central Union. Young India, 13 (16 October 1931) 305.

(61) Talk at the Raleigh Club, Oxford. Ibid., 13 (12 November 1931) 356.
Gandhi j wanted that the Empire should vanish and a Commonwealth of free nations should replace it, because he thought that it would be for the good of mankind. At Cambridge, he said that India's partnership "means that the present relationship must be completely transformed though the connection may be retained, and that connection should be wholly and solely for the benefit of mankind ...."; and, again,

... I want to seek this partnership not merely for the benefit of India, and not merely for mutual benefit; I want to seek this partnership in order that the great weight that is crushing the world to atoms may be lifted from its shoulders. (63)

Although Gandhi was quite willing or rather anxious to keep India a free and equal partner in the British Commonwealth, he did not like her status to be called Dominion Status. He thought that the term Dominion Status was aptly applicable to a daughter nation and, therefore, was not an appropriate term for India which, unlike Canada and other Dominions, was not a daughter nation. He preferred to call it 'partnership'. But Gandhi was not very adamant on this point. At the plenary session of the Conference he categorically stated that

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(64) See *Young India*, 13 (15 October 1931) 305 and (19 November 1931) 365.
he would count no sacrifice too great if, by chance, he
could pull through an honourable settlement, and passionately
appealed to the British Government:

... there is ample room for compromise. It is
friendship I crave. My business is not to throw
overboard the slave-holder and tyrant. My
philosophy forbids me to do so....

He further explained:

[India's] mission is today to convert English-
men. I do not want to break the bond between England
and India, but I do want to transform that bond. I
want to transform that slavery into complete freedom
for my country. Call it complete independence or
whatever you like, I will not quarrel about that
word, and even though my countrymen may dispute with
me for having taken some other word I shall be able
to bear down that opposition so long as the content
of the word that you may suggest to me bears the
same meaning. (65)

Thus the Karachi resolution and the pleadings of
Gandhiji in England positively prove that the Lahore resolution
and the Independence Day Pledge, 'that India must sever the
British connection', caused no material change in the Congress
attitude which was still in favour of a free and equal partner-
ship in the Commonwealth. Complete Independence and 'severance
of the British connection' were explained as the necessary
conditions and complements of India's membership of the
Commonwealth.

(65) Speech at the 2nd plenary meeting of the Indian RTC,
30 November 1931. Indian Round Table Conference (Second
Session), n. 63, 395.
On 28 December 1931, Mahatma Gandhi came back disappointed from the Round Table Conference, was greeted by the severe repressive policy of the Government of India, and soon after found the Congress dispersed. But in spite of this and the subsequent disappointing developments in the country - the imprisonment of Congress leaders including Gandhi, the ban on the Congress organization, the revival of the Civil Disobedience movement, the enactment of the Government of India Act 1935, etc. etc. - Gandhiji continued to hold the same view regarding India's connection with Britain.

Like Gandhi, an overwhelming majority of the Congress leaders held the view that complete independence did not exclude equal partnership with Britain in the Commonwealth. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, a leader of great influence, emphatically declared:

This independence does not mean, was not intended to mean, a churlish refusal to associate with Britain or any other power. Independence therefore does not exclude the possibility of equal partnership for mutual benefit and dissolvable at the will of either party. If India is to reach her independence through consultation and agreement, he argued, it is reasonable to suppose that there will be British association. (66)

He denounced those who urged the severance of the British connection and explained that India needed her military skill for her defence and in several other spheres British help would be invaluable. He criticized the idea that before

a partnership could possibly be conceived there must be a
period of complete dissociation, as "a sign of weakness and
(67)
of disbelief in human nature."

SUSPENSION OF CIVIL DISOBEEDIENCE AND
REVIVAL OF THE SWARAJ PARTY

On 8 May 1933, Mahatma Gandhi was released from
Yerwada prison. Simultaneously with his release, the Civil
Disobedience movement was suspended; and, not long after,
Congress leaders, having discussed the situation in the country
at the Poona Conference (July 1933), again sued for "an
(68)
honourable settlement with the Government." But having
received no satisfactory response from the Government, it was
decided to continue the struggle in the form of individual
(69)
Civil Disobedience.

Many Congress leaders were not, however, willing to
continue the Civil Disobedience movement. They believed that
Civil Disobedience as a political weapon had outlived its
usefulness, at all events for the time being. They held the
view that, in the situation existing in the country as a result

(67) Ibid., 17.

(68) The Indian Annual Register, 1933, II, 326.

(69) For Poona Conference and the subsequent developments,
see Ibid., 325-36.
of Ordinance rule, a programme of Council-entry should be adopted. Subsequently, in October 1933, new political parties with Council-entry programme were tentatively formed within the Congress.

In Maharashtra the Democratic Swaraj Party was formed by Congressmen who claimed to be followers of Lokamanya Tilak and his policy of 'responsive co-operation'. The Congress creed of Complete Independence (Purna Swaraj) was adopted as the objective of the Democratic Swaraj Party. Mr. N.G. Kelkar, an old Congress leader and one of the sponsors of the Democratic Swaraj Party, speaking on the objective of his new party, explained that all political parties, including the Congress, would willingly accept Dominion Status. He categorically stated that "the Dominion Status, as contained in the Westminster Statute" was the aim of the Democratic Swaraj Party. Further, he assured Britain that India would gladly co-operate with her, "provided England make no trouble about India ultimately getting independence like the colonies." The Congress Independent Party in Bengal and the Congress Swaraj Party in Madras were formed with more or less similar aims and objects.

(70) For the formation of the Party, see ibid., 253-60.

(71) Address to the All Maharashtra Political Conference called by the Democratic Swaraj Party, Bombay, 28 October 1933. Ibid., 257.
exclusively by Congressmen. Still, there number was not large.

Gradually, with the ebbing in the individual Satyagraha, perhaps mainly, because of the heavy repressive policy of the Government, Gandhiji's engagement wholly in the Harijan work, the propaganda of Maharashtra and Madras Swaraj Parties in the South, and the Bihar Earthquake in the North, the number of such Congressmen increased. By the end of March 1934, a vast body of Congressmen became supporters of the Council-entry programme. This view found organized expression in a move to form an all India organization to take up this programme. Finally, in May 1934, with the support of Mahatma Gandhi, they persuaded the All India Congress Committee to resolve for the suspension of the Civil Disobedience and the revival of the All India Swaraj Party which was to work, broadly, under the guidance of the Congress, but should be autonomous in regard to internal working and finances. "The attainment of Swarajya by the people of India" was declared as the objective of the Party. This was identical with the creed of the pre-1929 period. The

(72) For the Bengal and the Madras Parties, see The Hindu (Madras), 12 October 1933, 8; and 20 October 1933, 7 respectively.

(73) See Sitaramayya, n. 2, 944-51.

(74) Constitution of the All India Swaraj Party. The Indian Annual Register, 1934, 1, 275.
Swaraj Party in the legislature would work, it was declared, for the rejection of the proposals contained in the White Paper and getting "them replaced by the National Demand on the lines indicated by Mr. Gandhi at the Round Table Conference." The Party would demand the right of self-determination through a Constituent Assembly. Explaining the aims and objects of the Swaraj Party, Dr. Ansari said that there was nothing new in India's demand for a Constituent Assembly as there were precedents in the British Empire. He cited the examples of Australia, South Africa and Ireland and argued that when the British Parliament had conceded that right to those Dominions, "Why India should allow herself to be deprived of it."

The demand for a Constituent Assembly based on the right of self-determination, therefore, does not indicate that the Congress necessarily favoured a breakaway from British connection. On the contrary, doubts were expressed in certain quarters both inside and outside the Congress, that high and responsible Congressmen had been striving for a compromise with the Government and, therefore, "toning down, as far as

(75) Ibid., 262.

(76) Resolution on White Paper. Ibid., 279. For further information re: revival, aims and objects of the Swaraj Party, see Ibid., 261-94.

(77) Press statement, 21 May 1934. Ibid., 295. Dr. Ansari was one of the sponsors of the Swaraj Party's revival. He presided over the Delhi and the Ranchi Conferences.
they dared, even the political objective of the Congress."

Certainly, there was no unanimity, specially between the Right and the Left wings, within the Congress about the definition and content of Complete Independence. Even Mahatma Gandhi expressed doubt "if all Congressmen understand the same thing by the expression 'Complete Independence'." The doubt was so prevalent that the Working Committee thought it advisable to define the Congress goal and explain its contents. So, in September 1934, the Committee while reaffirming the Congress goal as Complete Independence and expressing its strong desire "to end the present unnatural and humiliating connection" between India and Britain, categorically stated that India "will gladly cultivate friendship with the British" on the basis of free and equal partnership. It clearly explained that complete independence did not mean that a free India should have no "freedom to make its choice between voluntary partnership with the British and complete separation." In short, it was "virtually a repetition of the Karachi position" which has already been discussed.


(81) Dr. B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya's comment. Sitaramayya, n. 2, 969.
This view was, subsequently, endorsed by the Indian National Congress at its Bombay Session (1934). And the President of the Session, Dr. Rajendra Prasad unequivocally and emphatically explained:

Independence .... cannot mean isolation, particularly when we remember that it has to be achieved by non-violence. Though it means the end of exploitation of one country by another .... It contemplates a free and friendly association with other nations for the mutual benefit of all. It forebodes evil to none, not even to those exploiting us except in so far as they rely upon exploitation rather than goodwill .... Conceived in this light, our Independence therefore ought not to frighten even the British unless they aim at perpetuating the present unnatural conditions. (83)

It is a positive proof that the creed of Complete Independence did not necessarily imply severance of the British connection and the Congress was not averse to India's connection with Britain as a free and equal partner in the British Commonwealth. It was an important decision because the Congress, then and perhaps finally, declared that it was not primarily interested in breaking the British connection and thereby set at rest the controversy and doubt about the interpretation of Complete Independence.

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(83) Presidential Address. Ibid., 53.
OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES

Other important all-India political parties were firmly wedded to the British connection and had from the very beginning been opposed to the ideal of Complete Independence. The Muslim Leaguers expressed their "fundamental disagreement" with the Independence resolution of the Congress, condemned it as "dangerous" and declared: "Our community will take no part in any action by the Congress to effectuate its demand ...." On the eve of the Independence Day, Maulana Mohamed Ali, Shankat Ali, Shafi Daoodi and Navab Ismail Khan issued a statement urging the Muslims "not to participate in the Independence demonstration of the Congress."

The Liberals believed it was to India's advantage to be connected with the British Empire and severance from it would involve a great and serious danger to her. Dewan Bahadur T. Rangachariar argued that the British Empire was a powerful empire and had a world-wide importance, and said: "It should be our proud boast to belong to the Empire,] of course, not with the dominant partner and we being subordinate partners. But we

(84) Press statement of the President of the Provincial Muslim League, United Provinces and the Muslim members of the U.P. Legislative Council. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 19 January 1930, 5.

(85) The Indian Annual Register, 1930, 1, 22.
went to, be equal partners in that Empire." Hindu Mahasabha leaders, most of them like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, N.C. Kelkar and Dr. B.S. Moonje were in the Congress, also were not happy with the decision of the Lahore Congress.

All these parties welcomed the Viceroy's announcement, opposed Council-Boycott, and decided to stem the tide of Congress politics and rally the forces of co-operation on the side of constructive work through Councils. Unlike the Congress, all important non-Congress leaders and organizations declared their willingness to co-operate with the proposed Round Table Conference and evolve "a Dominion form of Government rather than pursue the will-o'-the-wisp of independence."

Accordingly, important leaders of the Indian political parties (except the Congress) participated in the first Round

(86) Speech on the resolution on Dominion Status and the RTC. NLF, Report of the 12th Session, Madras, 1929, 63.

(87) Decision of a meeting held in Delhi on 18 January 1930 under the presidency of M.N. Malaviya and attended by the Nationalist, Independent, and Central Muslim groups of the Central Legislatures. The Statesman, 19 January 1930, 9.

Also an All-Parties Conference, representing all parties except the Congress, held at Delhi in February 1930, condemned 'Independence' and approved 'Dominion Status' as the political goal for India. See The Indian Review, 31 (March 1930) 201.

(88) For the Indian delegates, see Indian Round Table Conference, 12 November 1930 - 10 January 1931, Proceedings (London, 1931) 11-15.
Table Conference. And all the Indian representatives unanimously demanded Dominion Status for India. On the very first day Jinnah expressed the hope with jubilation that the Conference would "witness the birth of a new Dominion of India ... within the British Commonwealth of Nations." Sir Muhammed Shafi wanted "India to attain Dominion Status as an equal partner in the British Commonwealth of Nations." He explained that in the existing conditions no country in the world, however rich or powerful, could afford to lead an isolated life and the tendency of international movements was towards the association of nations and countries for the purpose of security and mutual help. "Therefore we Mussalmans of India realise," he said, that India's continued association with the British Commonwealth "is ... for her own benefit and in her own interests." "That is the deep-rooted conviction in our minds, and that is the reason of our traditional loyalty to the British connection," he added.

Dr. B.S. Moonje explained that "India wants to be a Dominion within the British Empire, so that India may also be in a position to own the Empire as its own." Mr. M.R. Jayakar

(89) Ibid., 22.
(90) Ibid., 54.
(91) Ibid., 55.
(92) Ibid., 86.
assured the British Government that "if you give India Dominion Status today, in the course of a few months the cry of independence will die of itself." He explained that the cry of independence was a cry of despair, distrust and suspicion, and it was emanating from those who had lost their faith in Britain's promises to India. "The cry of independence is proceeding from those," he said, "who either do not believe that England wishes to give India Dominion Status or who very tactfully ask for independence in order that Dominion Status might come."

Sir Taj Bahadur Sapru categorically stated, "India wants, and is determined to achieve, a status of equality with the other free members of the British Commonwealth." Mr. V.S. Srinivasa Sastri wanted to see "India once more not only happy within her borders but a contented partner in the British Commonwealth." Sir A.P. Patro and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar also pleaded for Dominion Status.

In subsequent years, though the Indian political parties continued to adhere to Dominion Status, the communal problem occupied the central place in Indian politics. For organizations like the Muslim League, the Muslim Conference, and the

(95) Ibid., 41.
(94) Ibid., 42.
(96) Ibid., 28.
(96) Ibid., 152.
(97) See Ibid., 92 and 134 respectively.
Hindu Mahasabha, it became a pivot round which their political activities revolved. The settlement of the communal question, satisfactory to their respective communities, now became the main concern of these organizations and reacted upon the wider issue of Dominion Status or Independence.

After the 1st Round Table Conference, a large section of the Indian Muslims was seriously perturbed at the prospect of an early grant of Dominion Status and responsibility in the Centre without the question of Muslim demands being settled first. Fear of Hindu domination and the feeling that only British rule could protect them seems to have been at the back of it. It was true not only for the League but also for the All India Muslim Conference which under the leadership of Agha Khan (in the absence of any unity in the League) dominated the Muslim politics from 1929 to 1934. Therefore they, instead of opposing the British connection, needed British support for their cause. And it remained more or less a permanent feature of the Indian politics until the country was partitioned and Pakistan was established.

The League leaders reiterated their "faith in British justice and constitutional methods", condemned terrorism and opposed the Civil Disobedience movement, as they thought it was "not in the best interests of the nation." Perhaps to gain

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(98) S.M. Abdullah's Welcome Address, 22nd League Session, Delhi, 1931. The Times of India, 29 December 1931, 5.
further concessions in the proposed constitutional reforms, the League expressed its willingness to co-operate with the British. And to make its friendship easy the League changed its creed in December 1931. So far its object had been the attainment of Swaraj, now, it was changed to "the attainment of full responsible government for India... with adequate and effective safeguards for Mussalmans." Amendments for the retention of the word 'Swaraj', and the substitution of Complete Independence were rejected by large majorities, only a couple of members voting for them. Thus the League made it perfectly clear that it was firmly wedded to Dominion Status as India's ultimate goal. Further, it was also made clear that Dominion Status was not the immediate demand of the League.

The President of the Session, Chowdhury Zaffarullah Khan, however, explained:

"In the sphere of political liberty the ultimate ideal that we have in view is not capable of being defined and confined within the limits of such expressions as 'Dominion Status', 'Responsible Government' or even 'equal partnership'; for, circumstances are conceivable under which the interpretation of the terms may be confined to the expression of that relationship alone which the future Government may bear to the British Government and yet leave untouched the essentials of liberty to be provided and secured for every class and section of the people of this country and it is obvious that unless this last condition is fulfilled freedom from outside control may merely result in greater licence being afforded to those in whose hands political power may vest to encroach upon the rights and liberties of the people of the country or of certain section of it."

It was opposed to responsibility at the Centre, which Dominion Status involved, unless and until the rights and interests of the Muslims were effectively safeguarded. And "a period of many years will probably elapse," said the President of the League, Mr. Zaffarullah Khan, "before a constitution ... with responsibility at the Centre will be established in India." "The immediate establishment of complete autonomy in the provinces" only was the demand of the League, he explained.

The League remained disunited and less influential up to March 1934 (and even for about 2 years more afterwards) when Mr. Jinnah was elected President of the united body. During the period, 1932-34, Leaguers, however, continued to stress the communal demands of the Muslims and reiterate that the League stood for the "attainment of Dominion Status by constitutional means."

The All India Muslim Conference was no less loyal to the British connection. Its leaders participated in the 1st Round Table Conference and pleaded for Dominion Status. But thereafter, like the League, it opposed the establishment of

(100) Ibid., 5.

(101) See The Indian Annual Register, 1934, I, 317.

(102) Rashid Ahmed's speech, AIML Council, New Delhi, 12 March 1933. Ibid., 1933, I, 411.
Dominion Status and vesting of responsibility at the Centre (103) unless their demands were conceded. Men like Maulana Hasrat Mohani even declared that "any constitutional advance without a satisfactory settlement of the communal questions will result (104) in a civil war in India." Realizing that the communal question could be settled in their favour only with the help of the British Government, they pleaded for securing "the sympathy (105) and active support" of the British people. Presiding over the Special Session of the Conference (1931) Maulana Shaukat Ali advised the Muslims not to "talk of threat and rebellion ... but to try to win the confidence of the British people who are a little unnecessarily nervous about the future of India." Naturally, the Conference continued to adhere to the ideal of full responsible government with British connection (i.e., Dominion Status), to be realized not immediately but sometime in the future after the Muslim demands had been conceded.

If there was a lull in the Muslim politics after 1929, the position of the Hindu Mahasabha was no better. It continued to be under the shadow of the Congress. Before 1933 the


(104) Maulana Hasrat Mohani's resolution, All India Muslim Conference Working Committee, Delhi, 1 March 1931. Ibid., Vol. I, 284.

(105) Ibid.

(106) Ibid., 286.
Mahasabha though not exactly a corollary of the Congress
"at least felt shy of assuming the role of an independent
All-India organisation with a bold and clear-cut policy." (107)

By electing Bhai Parmanand as President in that year, it began
to come out from the influence of the Congress. But even
then it did not form an independent policy and outlook on
political questions. Like the League and the Muslim
Conference, it was engrossed in the communal problems of the
day. And "its sole concern" continued to be "to safeguard the
legitimate interests ... of the Hindu community and prevent
these being adversely affected in any way."

Before Bhai Parmanand became President, the Mahasabha
had been guided and dominated by such right-wing Congressmen
as M.M. Malaviya, N.C. Kalkar and specially Dr. B.S. Moonje
(109)
who "virtually controlled the destinies of the Hindu Mahasabha"
for about six years from 1927 to 1933. The views of these
right-wing leaders are well-known; they have been fully
discussed in the preceding pages and need not be repeated.

(107) Indra Prakash, Where We Differ? (New Delhi, 1942) 34.

(108) Rev. Ottama Bhikku's Presidential Address, 16th

(109) Indra Prakash, A Review of the History and Work
of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Hindu Sanghatan Movement (New
They were great advocates of India's partnership in the Commonwealth and other leaders followed their lead.

After the 1st Round Table Conference, the Mahasabha, unlike the League and the Muslim Conference, pleaded for "immediate full Dominion Status and full responsible Government" and expressed its desire, like them, for "peace and friendship ... between England and India." The demand was stressed and reiterated many times during the subsequent years by the Hindu Mahasabha and Bhai Parmanand's leadership did not bring any change in its attitude in this respect.

The Liberals were great enthusiasts about the Round Table Conference and they whole-heartedly co-operated with the British Government in making it a success. They were satisfied with the 1st Round Table Conference. They were instrumental in effecting the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and thereby bringing Gandhi to the 2nd Session of the RTC. The Liberal Federation was quite hopeful that the 2nd Session of the RTC would produce "a workable and satisfactory constitution for

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(110) See, for instance, C. Vijiaraaghavachariar's Presidential Address, 13th Mahasabha Session, Akola, 1931. The Indian Annual Register, 1931, II, 245-53.

(111) Resolution, 13th Session. Ibid., 253.

(112) See, for instance, Ibid., 1932, I, 322; and 1933, I, 420.
securing genuine responsible government for India as an equal (115) partner in the British Commonwealth of Nations." After the discouraging 2nd and the 3rd Sessions of the RTC the Federation expressed "its sense of profound disappointment at the 'Proposals of Indian Constitutional Reform' embodied in the White Paper." Declaring that the "proposals do not advance India to the status of a Dominion and nowhere is there even a mention of this as the objective", it clearly and emphatically asserted that "no scheme of reforms can ... satisfy Indian national aspirations, or ally political discontent which does not confer the full status and power of a dominion on India (114) within a short period fixed by statute."

Despite the disappointment the Liberal Federation remained firm to its ideal of Dominion Status and its leaders unequivocally reiterated that "it is a perfectly satisfying goal ... to be a member of this self-governing Commonwealth, but [the membership] must be ... on equal terms with Great Britain ... and with ... other dominions." Liberals were


(114) Resolution on White Paper. NLF, Report of the 14th Session, Calcutta, April 1953, 2. The resolution was reiterated at the next session of the Federation also.

(115) V. S. Srinivasa Sastry's speech on the resolution on White Paper. Ibid., 46.
convincing that "India's interests will be better served by becoming a free country within the Empire than by Independence", and also believed that "to talk of Independence under the present conditions in India is crying for the moon."

The overall conclusion which emerges from the survey of Indian political opinion between 1930 and 1934 must therefore be that the Lahore Congress' declaration of its creed of Complete Independence did not rule out equal partnership with Britain in the Commonwealth. Indeed, the subsequent interpretations of complete Independence by the top leaders of the Congress, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, the Karachi Congress decision and the Congress participation in the 2nd Round Table Conference proved that the Congress was in favour of equal partnership in the Commonwealth. The other parties were more inclined in favour of Dominion Status. They did not talk of Independence at all.

(116) Joint Press statement of Sir Cowasjee Jehangir (junior) and Sir Chimamal Setalvad, 30 May 1934. The Indian Annual Register, 1934, I, 296.