CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FIRST ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE 1930-1931

The Liberals ultimately left for London amidst the maledictions of the Congress sympathisers. They knew that there was little, if any popular support for their co-operation. "The Conference without Gandhi" said India, "will be like the drama of Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark". The conference was inaugurated by His Majesty the King Emperor in London on 12 November 1930. The session continued till 19 January 1931, under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald. It was attended by eighty-nine members - sixteen from the three British Parties, sixteen from the Indian States, and fifty-seven from British India. Most of the prominent Liberals were included among the delegation from British India - Tej Bahadur Sapru, Srinivasa Sastri, C.Y. Chintamanani, M.R. Jayakar, Pherozesinh Sethna, P.C. Mitter, N.M. Samarth, N.M. Joshi, C.H. Setalvad, C.P. Reddiwami Aiyar, Diwan Bahadur Ramchandra Rao, J.N. Basu, Cowasji Jehangir and a few others. Among the eminent Liberals only Sir Sivaswami

3. Joshi went to conference as a representative of Labour but he had attended most of the Liberal Federation session while in India.
Aiyar was excluded. Setalvad wanted him also to be included in the delegation. But Irwin declined to accept such a request in view of the resentment that it might provoke among the non-Brahmins of Madras. Among others who attended from British India were Moslems, members of Hindu Mahasabha, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, Europeans and members of the Depressed Classes.

The Conference did not open under anything like ideal auspices. Before the Round Table Conference met, the Government of India's despatch on the Simon Commission Report had been published. The Simon Report recommended 'that ultimate constitution of India must be federal' but '... the evolution will be slow and cannot be rashly pressed'. It also shrank from giving any responsibility to the Central Government. The scheme of provincial autonomy, as 'sketched' in the report marked little improvement over the Mont-Ford Report. The recommendations of the Simon Commission failed to satisfy the aspirations of the politically educated classes. The Civil Disobedience movement that was sweeping over India now gained in

4. Irwin to Setalvad, 29 September 1930, Halifax Collection, op. cit., Letters and telegrams from persons in India, July to December, 1930, p. 421.
5. Ibid.
8. Ibid., pp. 113-64.
momentum. The absence of any representative of the Congress Party, was the second difficulty. The rising Hindu-Muhammedan enmity and the strengthening opposition in certain quarters in Great Britain to any important changes in the system of Government of India, made the Liberal delegation's task more difficult. Sapru, as the leader of the Liberal delegation, was aware of these difficulties and before the Conference met he and Jayakar had held several interviews with the Secretary of State who was impressed. In an historic speech of 17 November 1930 he advanced India's claim for an equality of status with other members of the British Commonwealth, an equality which would give a Government not merely responsive to, but responsible to the popular voice. He told further that mere provincial autonomy, unless it was coupled with a decided and clear change in the constitution of the Central Government, would not do. Sapru admitted that during the period of transition they must be prepared for certain anomalies, and certain subjects, such as the Army and Foreign Policy, must be dealt with by the Viceroy. As regards Finance, he would have a clause acknowledging in the most explicit

10. Wedgwood Benn to Irwin, 31 October 1930, Halifax Collection, op. cit., Letters from Secretary of State for India, January to December, 1930 and January to April, 1931, p. 224.

But he pleaded eloquently that, with these safeguards and reservations during the transition period, the Central Government of India should be answerable for its conduct and for its decisions to the Central Indian Legislature. The Government had so far no backing in the Legislature or in the country. It had not been able to deal with the question of Law and Order successfully, but had to resort to the extraordinary powers of the Governor-General. But only if the Legislature knew that it was going to be responsible for its decisions, could it acquire a sense of responsibility and show greater moderation in dealing with actual problems of Government. He next adduced arguments against possible objections to an unrestricted responsible Government at the Centre. They were the question of Law and Order, European interests and the entire system of Commerce and Finance which was the basis of all constitutions. He pointed out that these should not be insurmountable difficulties in the way of an unrestricted responsible Government at the Centre. He made it clear that the British would never be able to maintain Law and Order so long the political aspirations of the people remained unsatisfied, so long the question of minorities was not settled and so long the Untouchables and Depressed Classes did not feel that they would have a definite position of honourable equality. As regards

12. Ibid., pp. 29-31.
13. Ibid., p. 32.
Commerce, he informed the Conference that they had no intention of robbing the Europeans who had invested capital in this country of their capital and that they were welcome to suggest any safeguard for the maintenance of their interests and that Finance also would not be an obstacle as soon as the Reserve Bank would be established. As regards the Army, he wanted that opportunity should be afforded to Indians to train their own men and establish defence institutions. So far as the British Army was concerned, he said that they had no objection in keeping its control in the hands of the Viceroy and his exercising it through a Commander-in-Chief or through a Minister whom he might appoint. Indians would willingly provide the funds for and agree to a statutory charge in respect of the Army.

The question of a responsible Government at the Centre naturally gave rise to the question of whether the constitution should be unitary or federal in character. The Liberals had always demanded a responsible unitary Central Government on the lines of the Dominion Constitutions with certain reservations or safeguards for the transitional period. The Commonwealth of India Bill in 1925 and the Nehru Report of 1928 were moves in that direction. But to the English mind this idea of Dominion Status with reservation was a contradiction in terms. According to the British, where there was full Dominion Status there were no reservations or safeguards as the Indians contem-

14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., pp. 31-32.
plated and where there were reservations there could be no full Dominion Status. In short, to the English 'Dominion Status was an achieved constitutional state and not merely the hallmark of a position to which the Indians wished to be recognised as entitled to grow up'.

While this controversy as regards the interpretation of the term Dominion Status was raging, a change in the attitude of the princes took place. The Nehru Report had recommended that the Government of India's role in relation to the native states should be transferred to the Indian Dominion. This had made them anxious about their position vis-a-vis the future Government of India. Secondly, they received a further setback when the Butler Commission Report was published. Though the report said that paramountcy would not be transferred without the consent of the princes, it proclaimed at the same time that 'paramountcy must remain paramount'. Princes were now anxious to find out an alternative to the present method by which paramountcy was

16. The First Earl of Halifax, op. cit., p. 122; also Irwin to Wedgwood Benn, 6 November 1929, Halifax Collection, op. cit., Letters to Secretary of State for India, January to December 1929, p. 158; also same to same, 26 November 1929, encl. Irwin's Note on Dominion Status, ibid., p. 172.


18. Indian States Committee (1928-29) with Sir Harcourt Butler as Chairman appointed by the Secretary of State in 1927.


20. Ibid., p. 39.
exercised. The Bombay meeting of June 1929 reflected the views of the princes over the consequences of constitutional reforms in British India. They now declared that they were 'in sympathy with the legitimate aspirations of British India ... and willing to open avenues of negotiations with a view to the closer association of two Indias in future'. In October 1929 Bikaner also declared that 'the ultimate solution of the Indian problem and the ultimate goal' was 'Federation, a word which had no terrors for the princes and governments of the States'.

'The appearance of this new element' could not be ignored by the Government which had always shied at the idea of Dominion Status and it led the Government to revise the procedure for constitutional review. Thus the idea of a federation came to be mentioned as a possibility both in the Simon Report and Government of India Despatch on it. To the Liberals the first essential thing to secure in the ensuing session of the

22. Times, 26 June 1929.
Round Table Conference in London was responsibility at the Centre. Sapru as the leader of the Liberals perceived that, though there was no hope of securing this by asking for Dominion Status, it could be achieved by asking for federation. Once he realised this fact, he set himself towards securing the consent of the princes. He had already been the legal confidant to the Nizam of Hyderabad, and the Maharajas of Kashmir and Patiala among others. During the weary months of July-August 1930, he had established contact with the princes and had acquired an understanding of their constitutional position. He had also accumulated a vast knowledge of the federal constitutions of the different countries of the world and had collected relevant portions from those constitutions for incorporation into the new scheme. In this way, before the conference actually met in London, Sapru had prepared himself for the scheme of an All India Federation.

In the preliminary discussion in the ship which carried them to London the Liberals learnt that the princes had also agreed among themselves upon a common plan for an All India Federation. When they arrived in London they found that opinion in the Liberal and Conservative circles in England had

26a. Chintamani to Sivaswami Aiyar, 9 September 1928, Sivaswami Aiyar Papers, op. cit.

hardened still more against the idea of Dominion Status.

Sapru found Wedgwood Benn 'determined to help us, but he warned
me against Lord Reading and Lloyd George'.

Under such circumstances Sapru decided to change his line
of action. On behalf of the Liberal Party and the British
Indian delegation he invited the princes to join in an all
India Federation. He welcomed the association of Indian
states with British India, as he told subsequently, for three
reasons. Firstly, they would furnish a stabilising factor in
the constitution. Secondly, the process of unification would
begin at once and thirdly, in regard to matter of defence they
would furnish a practical experience which was yet wanting in
British India. Sapru's appeal brought a prompt reply from
H.H. the Maharaja of Bikaner that they were prepared to come
into a federation so long as it was an independent authority,
not controlled from London. The Chancellor of the Chamber
of Princes himself, the Maharaja of Patiala, raised no objec-
tion. The spokesmen of the leading states gave their approval.

28. Menon to Dunnet; 16 November 1930, G of I, Reforms Office,
173/301,
29. Sapru to P.N. Sapru, 23 October 1930, Sapru Papers.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., pp. 36-37.
33. Ibid., pp. 77-80.
Sir Akbar Hydari, representing no other than the Nizam of Hyderabad, declared for federation. So also did Sir Mirza Ismail, the Dewan of Mysore, and Colonel K.N. Bakshar who held a watching brief for Kashmir and Gwalior. The princes' attitude thus transformed the whole position. The other Indian members and British delegates also agreed to the idea of a federation, and the main principle having thus been settled, a number of sub-committees were appointed to work out the details. The Liberals were fairly represented in each of these committees. Commenting on the situation, as it seemed to emerge at the end of the first day's proceedings, Wedgwood Benn wrote: "The general debate began Sapru making a very reasonable speech in a manner I thought extremely attractive ... the proceedings concluded ... with a general feeling that a high note had been struck and the business started auspiciously."

Of the committees the most important and the strongest in personnel was the Federal Structure Sub-committee with six British members (one of whom Lord Sankey, the Lord Chancellor, was Chairman), five representatives of the states and ten of

34. Ibid., p. 164.
35. Ibid., pp. 116-17.
36. Ibid., pp. 177-80.
37. Ibid., pp. 39-186.
38. Wedgwood Benn to Irwin, 17 November, 1930, Halifax Collection, op. cit., Letters from Secretary of State of India, January to December 1930 and January to April 1931, p. 246.
British India among whom there were four Liberals - Sapru, Sastri, Jayakar and C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar. The Liberal politicians, who had acclaimed all India Federation to be the ideal form of Government in India, were bewildered with the complexities and controversies that arose in the course of political bargaining. After crossing many hurdles, the Federal Structure Committee was able to reach a series of provisional decisions. The structure and composition of the federation was discussed and it was unanimously decided that component elements of the proposed federation would be, on the one hand, (a) the federating Provinces of British-India and, on the other, (b) such Indian states or groups of states as might enter the federation.

Executive authority should be exercised, in accordance with the Dominion precedent, by the Governor-General, representing the crown, advised by a Council of Ministers. The Governor-General should be instructed to invite one Minister to form a Government which would be collectively responsible to the Legislature. There was 'general agreement' that the assumption by India of all the powers and responsibility, which had hitherto rested on Parliament, could not be made at one step, that during the period of transition, Governor-General should be responsible for Defence and External Relations. It was provided that the Governor-General (in the interest of peace and


tranquility) must be empowered to act in responsibility to Parliament and, to implement his decisions if occasions so demanded by requiring appropriation of revenue to be made or by legislative enactment. In the sphere of Finance, it was found necessary to reserve to the Governor-General, in regard to budgetary arrangements and borrowings, such essential powers as would enable him to intervene, if methods were being pursued which would, in his opinion, seriously prejudice the credit of India in the money markets of the world. Efforts should be made to establish a Reserve Bank which would be entrusted with the management of Currency and Exchange. There should be a provision requiring the Governor-General's previous sanction to the introduction of a Bill to amend the Paper Currency or Coinage Acts as recommended by section sixtyseven of the Government of India Act. Until the Reserve Bank of sufficient strength and equipment was set up some special provision would be necessary to secure to the Governor-General adequate control over monetary policy and Currency. Finally as a means of securing greater stability for the Executive it was provided that Ministers should not be compelled to resign save in the event of a vote of no confidence passed by a majority of at least two-thirds of the two chambers sitting together.

41. Ibid., pp. 214-15.
42. Ibid., pp. 215-16.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., p. 221.
C.H. Setalvad, P.C. Mitter, Chintamanl, Joshi and Ramchandra Rao were members of the Provincial Constitution Subcommittee, presided over by Arthur Henderson. They unanimously came to the conclusion that in the Governor's Provinces the existing system of Dyarchy should be abolished, that all Provincial subjects, including Law and Order, should be administered in responsibility to the Provincial Legislature. The committee also recommended the retention by the Governor of certain special powers.

The Minorities Sub-committee was presided over by the Prime Minister himself. The committee unanimously accepted 'that the new constitution should contain provision designed to assure communities that their interests would not be prejudiced.' It was also agreed that the claims of the various communities to employment in the Civil Services should be adjusted by Public Service Commission at the Centre and, on the question of minorities, there was general concurrence that 'separate electorates should be retained'. But the Liberals failed to secure an agreement on the question whether this privilege should be accorded to minorities other than Moslems and whether this privilege should disappear after a certain time.


47. Ibid., pp. 332-33.
One new feature of the discussion was that on behalf of the Depressed Classes Dr. Ambedkar demanded that those Classes should be regarded for electoral purposes as a community separate from the Hindu population at large.

The disappointment of the Liberals at the failure of the Minorities Committee was, however, balanced by the fairly satisfactory decision which they were able to reach in the Defence Sub-committee. The Liberals in the committee - Sapru, Sastri, Jayakar, Feroze Sethna, B.N. Mitra, and Ramchandra Rao - were mostly interested in the question of Indianisation and they succeeded in persuading the other members of the committee to recognise that 'with the development of new political structure in India the defence of India must, to an increasing extent, be the concern of Indian people and not of British Government alone', and to recommend that the rate of Indianisation should be increased and Indians were also entitled to have an Indian Sandhurst to train candidates for commission in all arms of the Indian Defence Service.

The discussion in the Sub-committee on Franchise mainly centred round the question of adult suffrage. Chintamani, P.C. Mitter, Sastalva, J.N. Basu, Ramchandra Rao and Feroze Sethna unanimously held that full adult suffrage was immediately

48. Ibid., p. 338.
50. Ibid., para 4(2) (a) (b) (c), pp. 330-94.
practicable. The remainder agreed on a plan which was to
enfranchise not less than ten per cent and not more than
twenty-five per cent, of the total population - with a bias
apparently towards the lower figure. The main qualification
would be some rough measure of income, and, in addition, the
vote would be bestowed on those who would possess some educa-
tional qualifications or had served in the Army, while some
special consideration was suggested for women.

The Services Sub-committee said that due provision
should be made in the new constitution for the rights and
safeguards of the existing members of the Services. The
Liberals however emphasised the fact that recruiting and
controlling authority in the future should be the Government
of India.

Sind was separated from Bombay in accordance with the
report of the Sub-committee on Sind, and the North Western
Frontier Provinces was constituted into a separate Governor's
Province like all other Provinces on the recommendations of
the Sub-committee on North Western Frontier Provinces.

The Liberal ideal was secured in the Federal Structure
Sub-committee's report but when the same report was presented
before the committee of the whole conference, it was found

51. Report of the Sub-committee No. VI (Franchise), ibid., p. 386.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid., pp. 387-88.
54. Report of the Sub-committee No. VIII (Services), ibid., p. 404.
55. Ibid., p. 405.
that it was only in reference to a 'paper sketch' of a form of federation that unanimous consent were obtained at the conference. Efforts to fill in the picture at the open session provoked doubts and reservations. "We can only federate", said the Nawab of Bhopal, "with a self-Governing and federated British India and that if British India is not self-Governed any federation with the present Government of India will, it is evident, be to our own disadvantage." The Maharaja of Kashmir showed eagerness to know the number of states' representatives in each chamber of the federal Legislature and particularly about weightage.

Within a few days of the plenary session all sorts of rifts appeared and it became painfully clear that the path to federation was not going to be altogether plain sailing. The princes realised that federation would mean relinquishment of a part of their traditional sovereignty and they began to look more closely at the consequence of their entry into the federation. In fact, even before the conference met in London several of them had already dropped hints to the Viceroy about their anxiety in regard to their position in the future. The Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes in 1930 was H.E. the Maharaja of Patiala whose relation with Bikaner and Bhopal were

59. Ibid., p. 259.
60. Irwin to Birkenhead, 26 May 1927, Halifax Collection, op. cit., Letters to Secretary of State for India, January to December 1927, p. 120; also same to same, 11 May 1927, ibid., pp. 92-94.
strained. As a result the attitude of the Indian princes towards a preliminary discussion of the federal problems was marked by a lack of decision and unity. Individual states showed themselves to be less eager to put something into the 'common melting pot' than to recover things which had been lost to the Government of India. They failed to perceive the necessity of a strong Central Government and it became soon clear that a state like Hyderabad was trying to maintain intact the autonomy of his own dominion under the cover of supporting the loosest of federal associations. The states were also opposed to the establishment of the Federal Court of Appeal and incorporation of fundamental rights in the consti-

61. In an interview with the Secretary of State Bikaner told him how Patiala was opposing him and expressed his differences of opinion with Patiala. Wedgwood Benn to Irwin, 11 November 1930, ibid., Letters from Secretary of State for India, January to December 1930 and January to April 1931, p. 238.


63. The attitude of Hyderabad at the time was revealed in a letter which Sapru wrote to the Nawab of Bhopal two years later in which Sapru stated that the Nizam did not want to part with autocracy by joining the federation. By keeping the resident pleased he could do anything and finally 'he would do whatever he was asked by the political department to do.' Sapru to Hamullah, Nawab of Bhopal, 12 January 1932, Sapru Papers.
But the Labour delegates, the representatives of Depressed Classes (Ambedkar and B.V. Jadav) wanted that the federation should be based on a universal declaration of fundamental rights and 'a consistent coherent system of law and justice'. The princes were also anxious to secure representation in the proposed upper chamber. It was found impossible to satisfy all claims. If one section wanted a large federal senate, another section insisted on a small compact house. It became distressingly obvious to the Liberals with time that 'what many of the princes meant by federation was the reverse of what was practical or, indeed of what was honest'.

Among the British-Indian delegates there was little unanimity. From the Muhammadan side Fazlul Haq informed on behalf of the Aga Khan that, as no settlement of the outstanding Hindu-Muslim problem had been effected, no constitution

64. For instance Akbar Hydari expressed a very definite view that acceptance by states of such rights if framed in constitution act would involve bringing states' internal administration before Federal Court and also undermine the basis of federation which was related to specific subjects only. Manubhai Mehta and Mirza Ismail both agreed with Hydari's main position that acceptance of fundamental rights by states could not be made a condition precedent to their admission to federation. G of I, Reforms Office, confidential no. 34/2/32-R and K.W. Also Progs. of the Federal Structure Committee, op. cit., pp. 677-80.

65. N.M. Joshi and B. Siva Rao who had attended most of the Liberal Federation sessions while in India.


would be acceptable to the Muslims of India, without adequate safeguards. The breach among the Liberals themselves was now much wider than at the beginning of the conference. As regards the Federal Constitution, the Liberals were not unanimous amongst themselves. Sastri was at first dubious about the connection with the princes. Chintamani was also in the beginning opposed to the conception of federation. Even before the conference met, the Liberals had met in session everyday for two or three weeks, but they could not make up their minds. In the Federal Structure Committee the division was even more marked. The financial safeguards, the Governor's special powers, and the failure of the Defence Sub-committee to mention any definite period during which the Army was to be completely Indianised were points on which the Liberals were clearly divided. Chintamani expressed his dissatisfaction over the reservations proposed with regard to the questions of Finance, Currency and Exchange. He pointed out that the manner in which Finance, Currency and Exchange and allied

69. Ibid., p. 151, also Wedgwood Benn to Irwin, 26 December 1930, Halifax Collection, op. cit., Letters from Secretary of State for India, January to December, 1930 and January to April 1931, p. 303. Also Sastri to Sivaswami Aiyar, 8 October 1930, op. cit.
70. Chintamani showed a bias towards the unitary principles even when the progs. of the conference had already started, Wedgwood Benn to Irwin, 17 November 1930, ibid., p. 247.
71. Leader, 2-9 November 1930.
subjects were managed by the Government of India surely did not establish their claim to the reservation of power in such matters in the hands of Viceroy in future; and if there was one matter on which Indian opinion was most keen it was that India should be in a financial sense mistress of her own household. Thus Financial safeguards, provided in the report of the Federal Structure Committee, created a storm. Jayakar wanted that the only safeguard during the period of transition should be the Reserve Bank and nothing more. He was not in favour of giving special powers to the Governor-General in the period of transition, controlling legislation which would affect Finance. "In Finance", said he, "there ought to be a complete transfer and perfect freedom". Sir Cowasji Jehangir and Jinnah were also disappointed over the Financial safeguards.

Chintamani next pointed out that while in theory there should be an Executive removable by the Legislature, in practice it would be an irremovable Executive on almost all occasions. The responsibility of the Executive was to both the Houses of Legislature, composed in very large part of members nominated by the ruling princes, and even that responsibility was further limited by the fact that it required the vote of a two-thirds majority of a joint session of two Houses for the

73. Ibid., p. 276.
74. Ibid., pp. 277-78, 283-85.
Jayakar and Jinnah said that the two-thirds majority provision would practically make the Ministry irremovable.

Both Jayakar and Jinnah told the conference that a further enquiry should be made with the object of ascertaining whether there were not parts of what were called Defence and External Relations which were capable of transfer immediately. 'Defence' was a blanket term and while it included many military questions, like the use and mobilisation of troops and their technical equipment, it embraced many other departments like Volunteer Organisation, the Territorial Force and Indianisation, which were not purely military. All these important questions, that were not tied up clearly with military aspects of the Army, should be held up as Reserved subjects during the period of transition. So further investigation should take place with a view of ascertaining whether there were not topics or questions included under "Defence and External Relations" which could be transferred without in any way impairing the safety and tranquility of the country. In Jayakar's view it should be further investigated whether certain questions coming under External Relations should remain within the power of the Governor-General. Jayakar and Moonje also pointed out that Minister-in-charge of Defence and External Relations should be an elected member of the Legislature responsible to

75. Ibid., p. 256.
76. Ibid., p. 297.
77. Ibid., p. 270.
the Viceroy during the transition period. They were anxious that he should be a non-official working in complete collaboration and harmony with the Commander-in-Chief and with Military Department under him and in this way the period of transition should be got over and Chintamani pointed out that in this respect too an effort should be made to specify the duration of the period of transition. The Labour representatives (Joshi and Shiva Rao) expressed their dissatisfaction in the conference that adult franchise had not been adopted.

When the report of the Sub-committee on the Provincial Constitution was presented before the whole conference, the provision regarding the Governor's special powers created a serious difference of opinion among the Liberals. Both Chintamani and Setalvad vehemently opposed it. Sapru held that once it had been contemplated that the Governor should be the depository of certain duties, he should not, the obligation having been cast on him, be deprived of the power to implement that policy. Once it was agreed that obligation should rest on him, he could not be deprived of the power to carry out those obligations. But the fact was that the duties of the

78. Ibid., p. 272-74.
79. Ibid., pp. 273-74.
80. Ibid., p. 433.
81. Ibid., p. 252.
82. Ibid., pp. 220-21.
Governor and the conditions and circumstances under which the Governor's special powers would be exercised would have to be carefully defined.

The Sub-committee on the Minorities failed to reach a just settlement of the claims of various minorities, and the problem was complicated, by the new demand of Dr. Ambedkar on behalf of his community for proper representation. The Untouchables had found able leaders and had advanced their claims in a determined fashion whilst the Sikhs in the Punjab laid down certain demands to which they adhered with their 'traditional stubbornness'.

Sapru however, was anxious to compromise and to avoid needless irritation on all these points. Sastri was hopeful about the future. So was Sapru. He thought it necessary to convince the members. Sapru pointed out that so far as general principle of the responsibility of the Central Government was concerned, they had been able to achieve success. It was true that the responsibility which was recommended for the Central Government did not come up to the standard which some people would prescribe for themselves. But the problem was of immense difficulty and in some respects of an unparalleled character. A constitution had to be framed in which not only British-India but also the Indian states were to be incorporated.

83. Ibid., pp. 226-27.
84. Ibid., Report of Sub-committee No. III (Minorities), (Calcutta, 1931), pp. 73-80.
85. Ibid., pp. 87-91.
87. Ibid., pp. 261-65.
and for that reason they had to adjust their ideas and there-
fore it was inevitable that some formula had to be devised 88
for ensuring stability. He further pointed out that a study
of the post war constitutions would show that, notwithstanding
the anxiety of the several states in Europe to establish res-
ponsible Government, they had not overlooked the urgent nece-
ssity of securing stability at the Centre. As regards the
safeguards he said that it was felt by every section in the
Sub-committee that having regard to the peculiar condition of
India and certainly during the period of transition, it would
be necessary to invest the Governor-General with certain
special powers to meet cases of grave emergency; and the Sub-
committee had done nothing more than that. As regards the safe-
guards about Finance his opinion was that in regard to external
loans the position assigned to India was not lower than that
of any of the Dominions under the statutes of Parliament. As
regards Currency and Exchange his view was that as soon as
the Reserve Bank would be established it would have control of
Currency and Exchange and that safeguards would automatically
expire. He did not regard that the recommendations in regards
to Finance were of such character that they were called upon
to sacrifice the broad principle of responsibility for the
90
sake of those safeguards.

88. Ibid.
89. Ibid., p. 262.
90. Ibid., p. 263.
With regard to the question of a minimum majority of two thirds which gave rise to objection in some quarters Sapru clarified the position by saying that the underlying principle of the recommendation was that the Government should not be thrown out by a bare majority. Similarly the provision for joint session of the two Houses in the constitution was nothing new. That was to be found in every Dominion Constitution.

Next in explaining the reason for not adopting adult franchise as the basis of franchise, he said that when the Nehru Committee adopted adult franchise, it was not accepted by certain communities in India as being a little too hasty; and now, though adult franchise was not adopted, the whole idea had been kept in forefront by the Franchise Sub-committee. Further he pointed out that a number of constitutions were working in Europe quite democratically though they had not adopted adult franchise; and in England itself adult franchise was adopted as the basis of representation quite recently. As regards the minority question he was in full sympathy with their demand that their interest would have to be effectively safeguarded before they could accept any final constitution for India and he believed that it was still possible to arrive at a reasonable settlement with regard to the minority question.

91. Ibid., pp. 263-64.
92. Ibid., p. 263.
Sapru saw that though he had tried his best to convert the dissentients the situation was grave indeed. The mood of the conference was not quite so sanguine at its end as it had been at its opening stages. The main structure stood but the stability of its foundation seemed uncertain. The princes' initial ardour for All India Federation had lost its edge and British India itself was divided and the communal breach had widened. The Liberals themselves were quarreling. The Financial safeguards with all their sinister implications had been wired out to India. In the midst of these accumulating difficulties Sapru saw that a great deal would depend upon the terms of the declaration by the Prime Minister. Lord Reading had made it clear in the very beginning that Dominion Status would not be granted at this stage on behalf of the British Liberal Party and on behalf of the whole British delegation. But Sapru knew that, whatever the technical view of the matter might be what India expected most was a recognition of her status as a Dominion, subject to such safeguards as had been agreed to in the conference. "I shall beg of you", he wrote to the Prime Minister, just before the closing of the conference, "to remember that the satisfaction of the Indian feeling on this question is far more important than any technical

93. Ibid., p. 122.
94. Sapru to Irwin, 12 June 1930, Halifax Collection, op. cit., Letters from persons in India, January to June 1930, p. 438a.
proprieties. Once it is recognised that India has status within the Empire which will be equal to that of the Dominions and that it will achieve full and complete Dominion Status as soon as these reservations and safeguards have worked themselves out, the whole outlook of Indian politician will change and there will be plenty of room for constructive work in India."

The second thing he urged the Prime Minister to do was to come to some conclusion as to political amnesty, the effect of which will be 'very good' and that this gesture would be taken as a positive proof of a change of policy.

Macdonald wound up the proceedings of the first session by saying that British Government accepted the proposal for the responsible Government in the Provinces and for responsible Government with some features of dualism at a federalised Centre. He added that any safeguard that might be imposed would be so framed and exercised as not to prejudice the advance to full responsibility. The Prime Minister thus evaded the issue of Dominion Status but, as regards Sapru's appeal for a general amnesty, he said that, if civil quiet was proclaimed and assured in India, His Majesty's Government would not be backward in responding to his plea.

95. Sapru to Ramsay Macdonald, 12 January 1931, Sapru Papers.
96. Ibid.
The Conference adjourned towards the end of January 1931 amidst mutual expression of goodwill. The prevailing atmosphere by this time was described in a letter from an officer of Reforms Department of the Government of India, who held a watching brief in London, to his Chief, the Reforms Commissioner in Delhi: "Even if the Conference (he wrote) were to break up now without deciding anything, its time would not have been wasted ... even the conservatives can no longer stand where they did; while the Liberals in some directions may even snatch the lead from the government ... you will have observed, the pace has quickened, and arrangements are already being regarded as practicable, which only a few months ago we would all have considered too advanced. The broad point which I am trying to convey to you is that there has grown up what may not unfairly be described as a very general acceptance of the notion of an entirely new relation between the two countries and all that implies. There is a much more widespread appreciation too of the dangers of delay ... it is becoming possible to see daylight in the Indian tangle. As regards individual, Sapru spoke extraordinarily well on the subject of responsibility of the Central Executive and his speech certainly made a good impression on all who heard it. I would say as an individual effort (Sapru's effort) it ranks second, in all the proceedings of the Conference only to Lord Reading's contribution on the same subject ..." Indeed so far as Nationalist India was

98. Lewis to Dunnett, 6 January 1931, G of I, Reforms Office, no. 173/30R.
concerned the first Round Table Conference was entirely the work of the Liberals. Though many points of details remained unsolved, the minorities questions remained unsettled and many loose ends had been left behind, nevertheless, they had faced the difficulties of making India a free nation more fully and frankly than they had faced before, and it had resulted in a wide 'measure of agreement or at least acquiescence' as to how they should be overcome. Firstly, the emergence of the idea of an All India Federation with the native states as a balance and with some form of protection for minorities was the conference's great accomplishment. The second important idea, which was most important from the point of view of British India was the idea of responsibility at the Centre, modified in the transitional stages by reservations in British interest. Thirdly, there was to be full autonomy in the Provinces. The fourth important idea was the recognition of the fact that India must be prepared in the years to come to defend herself. For years past the Indians had been clamouring for admission into the highest rank of the Army, and now the principle was conceded that they were entitled to have an Indian Sandhurst and that it must be established to qualify Indians ultimately to take the responsibility for the defence of their own country.

The Liberals had thus succeeded in bringing back a tentative scheme which was to embrace all the princes and peoples of India in a single federation and they could feel for the time being that their initiative had achieved at least a partial breakthrough.