Gandhi's ideals and efforts towards Hindu-Muslim unity were mostly looked upon by the British as a challenge to their authority since they could not feel secure in India in the event of unity between the two communities. Consequently, Gandhi's success in uniting them in opposition to the Government over the issue of Khilafat generated a sense of fear in official circles. The Khilafat and the Non-co-operation movements had created for them an unprecedented situation. According to a contemporary Hindu observer, Mahatma Gandhi, during this period had attained in the eyes of the Muslims "the same position as the Prophet had and every word that he uttered was supposed to be his command." So the British bureaucracy made counter-moves

to tarnish Gandhi's image and shatter his plans and programmes of bringing the two communities to a common platform. Efforts were made by the officials to obtain "Fatwas" from the Ulemas forbidding the Muslims from participating in movements led by Gandhi. A Fatwa was obtained as a result of the efforts of the Raja of Jahangirabad in December 1921. His confidential letter dated 16 December 1921 to Sir William Vincent shows the difficulties that he encountered in getting the Fatwa. He wrote, "I did obtain the signatures of the most renowned and influential Ulemas and Mujtahids of the Mohammedans, both Sunnis and Shias on the Fatwas in question, and you can well imagine the difficulties .... I had to surmount in doing so .... These personages whose signatures and seals are down on the documents, are at the head of the community and are considered the best promulgators and exponents of religious laws and chicaneries and Fatwas under their signatures would carry world of good in turning the current of present opinions...." Similarly, the 'Fatwa' issued by Abul Barkat, editor "Iffaq" was obtained by Political Secretary, Government of India on 28 February 1922. It said, "Do not beg Khilafat (Califship) from the Europeans."

2. Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 669/1922.
"God's promise in Holy Koran C. 8, 9, 13 Those who put faith unto me, I would make them Khalifa (Calif) just like the former ones ...(7)C. 20a.I "He makes Khalifa on the earth...."

"The condition, regulation and philosophy of making Khalifa is also given in our Holy Koran. "Each one is given ranks according to his deeds, your God is not unaware, he can turn you out, and make another one Khalifa instead. (ii) C-12a-15 your God would make Khalifa out of the other tribe, you cannot hurt him (though you make agitation Non-co-operation or Civil Disobedience)."

"The above quotations (Ayats) of the Holy Koran clearly and distinctly show that no agitation, no quarrel, no Non-co-operation battle was ever fought to gain Khalifat: nothing is needed, but good deeds to make one Khalifa (Spiritual guide)". 3

Besides, the Government tried to seek the help of the Muslim elite to foil the efforts of Gandhi and Ali Brothers to keep the two communities united over the issue of Non-co-operation. For instance when Ali Brothers and Gandhi succeeded in persuading a number of

3. Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 669/1922.
Muslim students to join Non-co-operation movement on their visit to Lahore in December 1920, the Local Government sought the services of some Muslim leaders opposed to Non-co-operation movement in order to separate Muslims from the Non-co-operation movement. An important Muslim leader, M.Shafi, claimed to have succeeded in persuading the leaders of Islamia College, Lahore to refrain from joining the Non-co-operation movement. According to the Intelligence Report, the Muslim leader impressed upon the lecturers of the college the adverse effects on Mohammedan education of their participation in Non-co-operation movement. He also persuaded the Lahore trustees of Aligarh College that they were not in favour of Non-co-operation. According to his own account "A telegram and a letter in greater detail were written at my direction at once and those of the Aligarh trustees who were present signed the letter as well as the telegram and I sent Fazal-i-Husain in a motor car to obtain the signatures of other local trustees to the telegram and the letter and to despatch these at once. A copy of the telegram has been sent to the local press and will appear in the Civil and Military Gazette etc. this afternoon." He also took steps to make it known to the people that Mohammed Iqbal had not given any consent to work for National Muslim University in accordance with the programme of Non-co-operation movement.  

4. Home (Pol.) A, December 1920, 210 to 216 and K.W.  
5. Ibid.  
7. Ibid.
In addition, the Government of India advised the Secretary of State to take steps to revise peace terms with Turkey in order to separate the Muslims from the Non-co-operation movement. In a telegram dated 9 February 1922, to the Secretary of State, the Viceroy wrote, "We believe that the appeasement of 70 millions Mohammedans of India, and consequent relief to a situation of real danger to tranquillity of India is of the utmost importance." 8.

This policy supports the suspicion of an Indian nationalist that British administrators had a hand in creating conditions of communal tension and communal riots in India. According to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, "If the history of communal riots during the last thirty years or so, is studied without prejudice, it will be found that these riots show a knack of appearing at critical moments in the political history of the country." He further observed that riots usually occurred "whenever the demand for transfer of power from British to Indian hands has become insistent and strong, and whenever the two major communities of India have shown unity of purpose and action." In support of his argument he stated that the "concordant between the Congress and the League in December 1916,

8. Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 678/1922.
followed by an intensive agitation for Home Rule" took place in 1917 and there occurred serious riots in the district of Shahbad in Bihar towards the latter part of 1917. Similarly "the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs had brought about an almost complete unity between the two communities between 1919-1922, but Hindu Muslim riots re-appeared in 1922 and continued for some years." The policy during that period added to the embitterment of relations between the two communities by carrying on investigations into the riots for years that kept up tension. He, therefore, concluded that these riots had a political background although they appeared to be the result of religious fanaticism.

No doubt, the British felt concerned whenever the two communities were united since it was difficult for them to carry on their rule against the united opposition of the two communities of India. It was equally not in their interest to engineer communal riots, for any outbreak of violence on a large scale exploded the rationale of the British presence in India since it demonstrated the failure of the 'raj', to maintain law and order. It is this dilemmatic situation determining British policy towards Hindu-Muslim problem that baffled British administrators dealing

with communal riots and created contradictions in their aims and conduct. For instance, the Government of India favoured some of the suggestions of the Unity Conference of 1924 and besides drawing the attention of the Local Governments to these recommendations expressed the opinion that "it would be advantageous to non-official efforts directed towards the execution of the measures proposed at the Conference, to co-ordinate and consolidate all good influences at work, to assist any genuine non-official movement of Hindu-Muslim relations by official sympathy and support, and to enlist the confidence of all non-official leaders in this direction."\(^{10}\) It also advised that "in certain areas where actions towards the restoration of more amicable communal relations has already been intimated by those interested because of Unity Conference of Delhi then it is obviously undesirable to set up rival organisations which might convey a mistrust of others."\(^{11}\) One of the recommendations of the Unity Conference was the formation of non-official Conciliation Committees for arriving at amicable settlements of communal disputes. These committees were advantageous to both the people and the Government as these would "afford the public an opportunity for the ventilation of their grievances and the Government the means of acquiring information as well as the trend of educated opinion."\(^{12}\)

11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
The Government of India sought the opinions of Provincial Governments with regard to the setting up of these Conciliation Committees. The latter objected to their formation on the ground "that the greater the need of conciliation, the less hope there is of finding persons fitted and willing to take share in bringing it about and that creation of Standing Boards would accentuate differences." The Provincial Governments even suggested that the Government might be accused of fostering communal disturbances and thus defeating one of the objects of this reference and that some apprehension seems to be felt that such Boards if they functioned at all might interfere at suitable moments and prove embarrassing to local affairs."

Consequently, it was decided to have only ad hoc Conciliation Committees especially appointed and constituted to deal with each particular dispute rather than permanent Conciliation Committees on the ground that "immediate occasions for communal disputes and disorders varied according to local conditions".

There may be some weight in the objections raised by the Provincial Governments to the setting up of permanent Boards of Conciliation but one cannot

13. Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 140/1925.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
rule out the possibility that in rejecting this kind of proposal the bureaucracy was equally anxious to avoid the implementation of any programme that would give credit to Gandhi or for that matter to any nationalist leader whose claim for self-government or Swaraj could be sustained by his ability to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity. The Local Governments were apprehensive that the existence of the permanent Boards might limit their authority in such situations as it was argued that their functioning would interfere in their work and would prove "embarrassing to local affairs." It was not difficult to imagine that if the initiative of setting up of these Boards came from the Congress or any party or group joining hands with the Congress, the composition of the Boards would be mostly determined by them and, consequently, the members of the Boards would be less amenable to the control and influence of the local British administrators who could hardly reconcile themselves to the situation in view of their assumption of the role of the British in India. Consequently, no concrete measures were taken by the Government of India for the amicable settlement of communal disputes on the lines suggested by the Unity Conference. Only some vague and general guide lines were issued to the Provincial Governments to the effect that "No measure,
legislative or executive, can be expected to produce any immediate effect on the ancient and deep-rooted causes of these troubles, which can only be removed by the growth of spirit of toleration and enlightenment. But they are deeply impressed by the necessity of taking all possible action to relieve the atmosphere of tension and to avert or mitigate the disorders which it generates. The Provincial Governments were further advised that "Intelligence arrangements, both official and non-official, should be strengthened and improved in order that prompt notice of any impending trouble or its developments may be obtained and that as communal animosity is most frequently aroused by inflammatory speeches and writings, prompt resort should be had in appropriate cases to the provisions of section 108(b), Criminal Procedure Code, Section 153-A, Indian Penal Code."  

Such instructions left with the local administration the initiative to deal with communal riots and thereby to assume the position of a central figure in any troubled situation.

The policy and the conduct of the Government with regard to the Kohat riots which we have already noted reveals the same anxiety of the Government to

16. Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 140/1925.
17. Ibid.
prevent the extension of the influence of Gandhi through his successful mediation between the two communities in the event of a conflict.\textsuperscript{18} Undoubtedly, the Government wanted to maintain peace in the area but they never wanted Gandhi or his associates to take the credit of helping the parties to the dispute arrive at an amicable settlement.

In fact, the apathy or hostility of the Government to Gandhi's efforts towards peaceful settlement of communal differences complicated the task for the Indian leader. Undoubtedly, the Government commanded dominant position in matters relating to the settlement of communal differences. We have already noted how the judicious selection of its own nominees for the Round Table Conference foiled all attempts of Gandhi to arrive at any settlement with those who had been selected by the Government to represent their sectional interests at the Round Table Conference.\textsuperscript{19} Gandhi could not get even Dr. Ansari, who was the president of All-Parties Conference in 1928 and who could effectively represent the nationalist Muslims' point of view, selected as a delegate to the Round Table Conference. Ali Imam was selected but he was too old and infirm to represent the nationalist Muslims.

\textsuperscript{18} Supra. Chapter IV, pp. 99-100.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. Chapter VI, pp. 176-7.
effectively. On the other hand, the Government nominated some powerful Muslim leaders such as Mohammed Shafi, Shaukat Ali, Mohammed Daudi and Mohammed Iqbal who could form a powerful bloc against Gandhi and his friends at the Round Table Conference. According to W.C. Smith only those Muslims were chosen as delegates to the Round Table Conference who were noted as "ardent communalists."20

Similarly, among the Hindu delegates were included a number of those who could not reconcile themselves to the politics of the Congress. Consequently, the Congress leaders including Gandhi felt that the Government had no intention of solving the Indian problem. According to J.L. Nehru, the "real trouble was not communal, although the communal issue loomed large before the Conference. It was political reaction that barred all progress and sheltered itself behind the communal issue. By careful selection of its nominees for the Conference, the British Government had collected these reactionary elements, and by controlling the procedure, they had made the communal issue the major issue, on which no agreement was possible between the irreconcilables gathered there."21

In the same vein Gandhi said in his speech in the meeting of the Federal Structure Committee on 17 September 1931: "I should like, with your permission, to disburden myself of an oppressive feeling that has been growing on me ever since Monday.... I have endeavoured to study, as I have not done before, the list of the Delegates; and the first feeling of oppression that has been coming upon me is that we are not the chosen ones of the nation which we should be representing, but we are the chosen ones of the Government. I see, as I study the list and as I know the different parties and groups in India from experience, some very noticeable gaps also; and so I am oppressed with a sense of unreality in connection with our composition."\(^2^2^\)

However, defending the selection of the delegates by the Government, J. Cotman argued that the choice of the delegates was the best in view of Indian situation and the objectives of the Conference which according to him were:

(1) It had to try to unite all the communities and interests of British India on the basis of mutual agreements and compromises, so that British India could be treated as one political entity for which constitutional arrangements could be devised appropriate to the place which it was to occupy in the scheme for All-India Federation.

(2) It had to come to some arrangement between British India and the States, so as to provide a sure foundation for whatever scheme might be devised for All-India Federation.

(3) It had to settle the relation between India as a whole and Great Britain and the position of All-India Federation in the British Commonwealth. 23

According to him Gandhi's challenge to the representative character of the composition of the Indian delegates was "killed by the devastating and swift argument of Mohammed Shafi and Ambedkar." 24

It cannot be denied that the task of selecting the candidates was no easy as conflicting interests of various communities and of elite in India pressed for recognition and representation. It is quite difficult to say that another composition would have arrived at the settlement or the inclusion of Ansari as demanded by the Congress would have changed the course of events at the Round Table Conference. One can argue that no satisfactory solution could emerge even at various All-India Unity Conferences for which the selection was not made by the Government. Nevertheless, any conference or committee composed of delegates holding

24. Ibid.
diametrically opposite views could not produce a lasting settlement. There was no other gain of bringing together "the irreconcilables" but of demonstrating the utter futility of the nationalists' demand for the elimination of the British rule. Any government having earnest intention of bringing about settlement could produce better results by choosing those persons who had not taken upon rigid positions over the rights and claims of their respective communities. But this is what any government having no desire to abandon their hold over any territory would not do. They would rather lay bare and magnify the differences in the ranks of their opponents. Dr. Moonje, a delegate to the Round Table Conference, noted that the British Government was trying to make the most of Hindu-Muslim differences. Citing an instance in a letter to Ganpat Rai on 16 December 1931, he stated that the Prime Minister in his speech at Round Table Conference said, "Here is Sir Abdual Quyam in front of me and there is Gandhi, Muslim and Hindu" to which Gandhi replied "No Muslim, no Hindu Here".

It was not an unusual phenomenon in Indian politics that whenever the leaders of any community found the Government sympathetic or responsive to their demands, they became less flexible in their approach to the settlement of communal differences. Any offer of special

25. Letter from Dr. B.S. Moonje to Ganpat Rai, 16 December 1931, File No. 356, S.No. 31, Chronological Correspondence, Jayakar Papers, N.A.I.
privileges to a community was sure to carry it closer to the Government. Thus Gandhi remarked at the Round Table Conference: "Dangle special privileges before the eye of any community, and chances are ninety nine to one that it will jump at it and swallow the bait. And once it has tasted the sweets (poisoned though these are) of special representations and reservations, the chances are again ninety nine to one that it will refuse to part with them and oppose any attempt, however, wise and well-intentioned, to induce it to do so. It would be more than human if it did not do so."  

The Government certainly was in a position to scuttle all plans of the Indian leaders towards settlement by offering greater share of power to any important minority, that was ready to co-operate with it. There is definitely a weight in the argument of a Muslim writer of the Punjab that there were several occasions in the Punjab when the Muslim majority of the province was willing to accept less percentage of seats in the provincial legislature in order to solve the communal tangle in the province. But the Government caused confusion in the ranks of the Muslims and scuttled all such plans by offering more to them. Thus though in majority, some Muslim leaders were willing to accept

45% at a meeting held at the residence of Lajpat Rai in November 1921 and they stuck to this position in 1923 in a meeting held in the presence of A.K. Azad and C.R. Das. Similarly, the Muslim leaders could be satisfied with 50% plus one representation in 1929 and 1930 signifying their symbolic majority. In 1931 they demanded 51% seats but the Government offered them 52% for reasons best known to it alone.  

Indian nationalists are inclined to blame the British for putting hurdles in the way of the settlement of communal differences. This may be true to some extent but they sometimes forget that the British were here to rule over India and not to compose communal differences. Their policies were determined by their position as rulers and the communal situation in India. Whenever a policy was framed, they had no choice but to seek all measures for the success of that policy. It was natural for them to seek allies from among the Indians to strengthen their hands in carrying out any programme. They could not afford to be the impartial mediators in search of a common ground amidst the warring claims of Indian communities. Political compulsions quite often led British administrators to frame policies that resulted in accentuating communal differences.