

The Present Political Situation in India

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World War, 1939-

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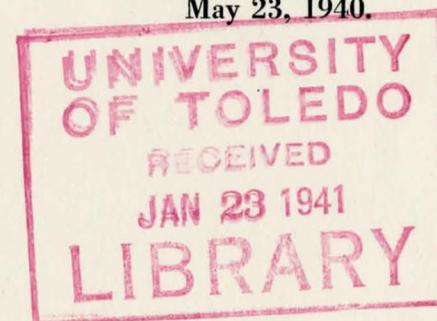
The Present Political Situation in India

*Statement by the
Secretary of State for India*

THE RT. HON. L. S. AMERY

House of Commons

May 23, 1940.



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I am glad to have this early opportunity of explaining so far as I can within the limits of an answer to a question, the attitude of the Government to the present regrettable political deadlock in India.

The attainment by India of Free and Equal Partnership in the British Commonwealth is the goal of our policy, as it was that of the late Government. We recognize, as my predecessor made clear in his speech of April 18th, that it is for the Indians themselves to play a vital part in devising the form of constitution best adapted to India's conditions and to India's outlook. The promise already given that the present scheme of the Act of 1935, and the policy and plans on which it is based, are to be open to reexamination at the end of the war, necessarily implies discussion and negotiation and not dictation.

We have no desire to delay any of the steps that may pave the way towards an agreed settlement that will take account of the legitimate claims of all communities and interests. On the contrary, we have been, and are, only too anxious to make our contribution towards such a settlement.

The difficulty at this moment lies in the acute cleavage of opinion, which has developed in India itself, affecting issues fundamental to the character of her future constitution, and even to the approach to the problem. I refuse to regard that cleavage as unbridgable. Even if no final agreement on the major issue is immediately in sight, I cannot think that it is beyond the resources of Indian statesmanship to find, at any rate, such a provisional accommodation, as would admit of the resumption of office with general consent by ministers in the provinces, and the appointment to the Governor General's Executive Council of representative public men on the basis already offered.

I believe that such a solution of the present deadlock, provisional no doubt, but still easing the way to eventual agreement, would be eagerly welcomed by the overwhelming body of Indian public opinion. India has, from the outset of the war, made manifest her sympathy and support for the Allied cause, and her anxiety to lend to that cause all the aid in her power. It is the sincere and earnest hope of His Majesty's Government that, in the situation which faces the whole civilized world today existing differences may be put aside and that the leaders of the great political parties in India will come together in agreement in support of the common effort.

The Viceroy, with the approval of His Majesty's Government, has spared no effort to bring the parties together, and to endeavour to find a basis for progress which would be generally acceptable. His own readiness to help, in any way he can, remains unabated.