

Tuesday, 29th March, 1921

THE  
**COUNCIL OF STATE DEBATES**  
(Official Report)

VOLUME I

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**FIRST SESSION**  
OF THE  
**COUNCIL OF STATE, 1921**



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# COUNCIL OF STATE.

*Tuesday, 29th March, 1921.*

## PROROGATION OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE AND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

His Excellency the Viceroy having arrived in procession with the Presidents of the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly took his seat on the dais at a quarter after nine of the Clock.

H. E. THE VICEROY : The first Session of the reformed Indian Legislature has come to an end, and I am here to prorogue it with the ceremony which is traditional in the Mother of Parliaments. Throughout the Session your distinguished Presidents have led you in the paths of Parliamentary practice, and I am confident that you all have wished to be so led and to conduct your business in a manner consonant with the highest traditions of Parliamentary procedure.

On you has fallen a very special responsibility—the responsibility of founding a tradition, and I congratulate you on the manner in which you have risen to the height of your great opportunity. Government and non-officials alike were unfamiliar with the new procedure, and if mistakes have been made they were due to that unfamiliarity. But after all it is not so much the letter which matters, but the spirit—the spirit which giveth life. And what of the spirit which has informed your deliberations? I make bold to say that the tone and temper of your deliberations have been the outstanding feature of the past Session. Non-officials have shown a sense of balance and responsibility in their treatment of great questions, and the Government have endeavoured to give the fullest possible effect, consistent with their own responsibility to Parliament, to the governing principles of the new Constitution. The working of a Constitution, believe me, is no easy task. Any Constitution can be reduced to an absurdity if its constituent parts are unmindful of their responsibility to work it with good-will and fair play. British Constitutional institutions have flourished because of the spirit which has informed those who work them. It may interest you to be reminded of what Mr. Gladstone wrote of the British Constitution—‘The British Constitution’ he said ‘leaves open doors which lead into blind alleys ; for it presumes more boldly than any other, the good sense and good faith of those who work it. If unhappily, these personages meet together, on the great arena of a nation’s fortunes, as jockeys meet upon a race-course, each to urge to the uttermost, as against the others, the power of the animal he rides, or as counsel in Court, each to procure the victory of his client, without respect to any other interest or right ; then this boasted Constitution of ours is neither more nor less than a heap of absurdities’. Mr. Gladstone then goes on to depict how each portion of the Constitution could wreck the working of the whole by a strict adherence to the letter of its powers. He proceeds however—‘But the assumption is that the depositaries of power will all respect one another ; will evince a consciousness that they are working in a common interest for a common aim ; that they will be possessed, together, with not less than an average intelligence, of not less than an average sense of equity and of public interest and rights.’

It is in the spirit of this passage that my Government have approached the new Constitution. It is in the spirit of this passage that members have

[ H. E. the Viceroy. ]

worked this Session. Even the British Constitution, as Mr. Gladstone has shown, may break down if it is worked in any way other than that of mutual respect and in a common interest for a common aim. It is, then, in the belief that it is with good sense and good-will that the new Constitution will be worked that I have faith in what I have set my hand to.

It is the first step which counts, and this first Session should go far to dispel the doubts of those who have looked upon our new constitutional departure with gloomy forebodings. It should go far to hearten those who are pledged to fight the constitutional cause against the forces of disorder and anarchy. But for those who have displayed such conspicuous wisdom and courage in launching the new Constitution on right lines, there still remains work to do. There is need for the spreading of the constitutional gospel in the country. You will then, I hope, in your recess make an organised effort to teach people what this reformed Constitution means ; that real powers—not sham—are vested in the Councils, and how surely through these Councils progress must come.

And now it falls to my lot to bid you farewell. Before you meet again another will stand in my place, one who is marked out by achievement, by experience and by character as offering the promise of a great Viceroyalty. I know I can assure him of a warm and hearty reception on the part of you all. He will find difficulties to meet him, but they are, I think, less than they appeared likely to be some six or seven weeks ago. My constant thought and endeavour has been to smooth his path, and in that, I believe, I have been in a large measure successful. But I would not in saying this be unmindful of the mission of healing in which His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught played so conspicuous and great a part. India has had on many occasions reason to be grateful to its British Emperors. This last visit of His Royal Highness, taken at the instance and by command of His Majesty, is one more proof of the constant solicitude of His Majesty for the well-being of his Indian subjects.

We have gone through troublous times during the past five years, but I ask you to look upon India's position in the Empire and at Home in 1916 and to-day. She has now an assured position in the Imperial Cabinet and her sons voice her views at its meetings. At home Indians occupy the highest posts in Government, are responsible for the policy in those subjects which go to promote a country's well-being and in the rest exercise a far-reaching influence. In the sphere of the Indian Legislature you know your powers and in the Provincial Councils the powers and responsibility are even greater.

And all this has been accomplished during a period disturbed by war and the aftermath of war ; nor was it at the expense of India's effort, for no one can gainsay that effort nor its decisive influence upon the war. My participation in your affairs is now at an end. It has been a high privilege to have been your Governor General during this great epoch. It is for you now to justify our great adventure. I have no fear that you will fall short of what is required of you. What is well begun is half done. Continue to exhibit the courage, the sobriety, the sense of responsibility of the first Session and there can be no doubt that your labours will not be in vain. I commend both you and them to the guidance of divine Providence.

I now declare this Session prorogued.

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