

The Simon Commission's Report, Vol. 2, Recommendations.

By R. Page Arnot (London).

The Recommendations of the Simon Commission published today, as could be forecast from the imperialist propaganda of the Survey published two weeks ago, are designed not to relax, but to strengthen the grip of British Imperialism on its Indian colony.

The recommendations even sweep away some of the trifling concessions granted by the Montagu-Chelmsford "reforms" during the stress of the imperialist war and tighten up the centralised control of all things (army, finance etc.), essential to the maintenance of British rule. Above all, the military centralisation and the concentration on the North-West Frontier means a more rapid and effective preparation of India as the strategical base for war on the Soviet Union.

These and not the farcical provincial legislatures with their enlarged electorates are the essence of the recommendations.

By the terms of reference, set forth in the Government of India Act of 1919, the Commissioners had to report on the questions:

"Whether and to what extent it is desirable to establish the principle of responsible government, or to extend, modify or restrict the degree of responsible government existing therein."

The Commissioners—Liberal, Labour and Tory—have sought to "restrict the degree of responsible Government".

For this purpose they have elaborated a scheme which actually takes back more than it grants. In any case, of course nothing even of the apparent "grants" is of any value to the masses of India, who will simply be still more effectively exploited under these schemes than hitherto.

First of all, the question of the armed forces, whose budget was previously discussed in the Legislative Assembly, becomes now a matter for imperial authority alone, namely the Viceroy plus the Commander-in-Chief.

Secondly, even the sham of the Legislative Assembly, with its farcical electorate of less than two per cent, is abolished. In its place some shadowy federal body, appointed by the provinces, is to be set up in the future.

Thirdly, the method of choosing the bureaucracy is to remain directly under the control of the Secretary of State for India.

Fourthly, the Indian princes, the reactionary allies of British Imperialism, who have hitherto been a reserve in the background, are now to be brought into the future federal constitution.

Fifthly, Burma is to be split off from India altogether, and that for two reasons. Strategically it will serve as a buffer state against a Soviet China. Politically, the Burmese are a homogeneous race, amongst whom the British cannot exploit any religious differences, and therefore are a special danger to British rule in India.

Sixthly, the previous lying "promise" of "successive stages" towards self-government is now definitely withdrawn.

So much for the new direct restrictions which more than counterbalance any supposed "concessions" in the provinces.

But when the "concessions" in the provinces are looked into it becomes clear that they are so hedged about with "safeguards" as to lose even their small face value.

The new proposals are that in each province instead of the "Dyarchy" set up in 1919 there shall be ministers for every department chosen by the Governor and responsible to the legislatures.

But—first—if the ministry is defeated in the legislature it need not resign: Second, the Governor can override the decisions of his ministers: Third, the Governor can override the acts of the legislatures, can veto measures, or pass them over their heads by "certifying".

Finally, in any case the Governor can in an emergency, scrap the whole machinery and govern despotically!

It should be noted that the provincial autonomy granted to the North-West Frontier is to be specially restricted for military reasons (i. e., for reasons of the preparation of war on the Southern Frontier of the Soviet Union) and is therefore also more directly under Imperial control.

The other "concessions" are the increased size of the electorates. But when looked into this increase is one which does not admit the workers or the peasants to a direct vote: while the separate representation of Moslems, non-Brahmins and others perpetuates the communal divisions thanks to which the British maintain their domination under the slogan "Divide and Rule".

The recommendations are unanimously signed by the representatives of all three Parties—Liberal, Labour and Tory.

Why this unanimity? Because all three are directly interested in the maintenance of the system of Colonial exploitation and robbery. The Social-Fascists are guarding their plunder.

Contrast with the unanimous united front of the imperialist bourgeoisie the reception of the Simon Commission and its Report in India. There the Commission was boycotted, and its members greeted with hostile mass demonstrations.

Apart from imperialism's feudal reactionary allies, only those directly in the pay of the British Government dare say anything in favour of these recommendations.

Even the bourgeois "Bombay Chronicle" says:

"The recommendations are completely inspired by racial arrogance and greed for the power of exploitation."

In face of the universal hatred of the Indian peoples, Odhams' "Daily Herald" begins a cunning manoeuvre. It points out that the recommendations do not repeat the promise of "Dominion Status" made by the Viceroy seven months ago; and it goes on to urge that something more must be granted. It suggests that the Labour Party have no responsibility for these unanimous recommendations.

The intention of the "Daily Herald" is to suggest to the Indians that if they will renew their trust in MacDonald, MacDonald will see them through. Either at the Round Table Conference or elsewhere, it is hinted, they will get satisfaction.

Thus the manoeuvre of "promises", at which the Social-Fascists are past masters, begins to be tried on once more.

To sum up, the Simon Recommendations, signed by Hartshorn and Attlee, members of the Labour Government, are not only designed to tighten the grip of British Imperialism, but in so doing they are more reactionary than the present constitution.

Just as the Tsar Nicholas, by successive stages, strengthened the grip of the autocracy over his Grand Duchy of Finland in the years before the first Imperialist world war, so the British Labour Government is consolidating the grip of British Imperialism on its Indian colony in the period before the second Imperialist world war.