

REPORT
OF
THE COMMITTEE
OF THE
BENGAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
FOR THE YEAR 1921

VOL. I.



BENGAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Bengal Chamber was held at the Royal Exchange, 2 Olive Street, Calcutta, on Tuesday the 28th February, at 3 p.m., Sir Robert Watson Smyth, President of the Chamber, in the Chair.

The following members of the Chamber were present:—

Sir Robert Watson Smyth		
Mr. W. S. J. Willson	...	
" H. C. Edmondson	...	
" E. G. Dixon, O.B.E.	...	
" W. Howes	...	
" D. H. Bates	...	
" C. E. L. Milne-Robertson	...	Messrs. Turner, Morrison & Co., Ltd.
" T. C. J. Davis	...	
" J. L. Shand	...	
" I. P. F. Campbell	...	
" G. V. Lloyd	...	
" F. H. French	...	
" C. F. Beadel	...	Becker, Gray & Co. (Calcutta), Ltd.
" H. St. V. Chancellor	...	
" R. Langford James	...	
" M.L.C.	...	
" J. Reid Kay	...	James Finlay & Co., Ltd.
" D. J. Leckie	...	
" T. C. Crawford	...	
Hon. Sir Alexander Murray	...	
" C.B.E.	...	Jardine, Skinner & Co.
Mr. J. Mein Austin	...	
" W. T. Hunter	...	
Lieut.-Col. H. A. Cameron	...	Agent, Eastern Bengal Railway.
" C.I.E., R.E.	...	
Mr. W. C. Currie, M.L.C.	...	Messrs. Mackinnon, Mackenzie & Co.
" J. H. Fyfe	...	Hoare, Miller & Co., Ltd.
" J. F. Barton	...	
" R. H. Muir	...	Andrew Yale & Co.
" R. S. Courtney	...	
" E. C. Demetriadi	...	
" P. Livathinopulo	...	Ralli Brothers.
Sir Archy Birkmyre, Bart.	...	
" C.B.E.	...	Messrs. Birkmyre Brothers.
Mr. Henry Birkmyre	...	
" R. O. Law	...	

Mr. W. R. Rae, M.L.C.	... Sun Insurance Office.
" E. R. Hartley	... Messrs. Pigott, Chapman & Co.
" G. E. Kingston	... National Bank of India, Ltd.
" C. Kennedy	... Messrs. Thos. Cook & Son.
" W. J. L. Webster	... William Jacks & Co.
" L. M. Medley	... Octavius Steel & Co.
" F. G. Clarke	... Shaw, Wallace & Co.
" K. Campbell	... Thomas Duff & Co., Ltd.
" E. N. Band	... Bengal Telephone Co., Ltd.
Capt. F. Rooney	... Messrs. Geo. Henderson & Co.
Mr. V. S. Edwards	... Mylton, Wallace & Co.
" H. F. Mylton	... P. E. Guzdar & Co.
" M. C. Guzdar	... Graham & Co.
" Nigel F. Paton	... Jambon & Cie.
" G. D. Lys	... W. S. Cresswell & Co.
" E. A. Mitchell	... Scottish Union & National Insurance Co.
" R. Ferguson	... Messrs. Alfred Herbert (India), Ltd.
" T. Ramsay Howell	... Calcutta Port Commissioners.
" C. G. Warren-Boulton	... Messrs. Kerr, Tarruck & Co.
" C. D. M. Hindley, M.L.C.	... E. D. Sassoon & Co., Ltd.
" S. N. Sircar	... Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation, Ltd.
" N. C. Sircar	... Messrs. D. Easton & Co.
" F. R. Davey	... A. Forbes & Co., Ltd.
" E. C. Simon	... Turnbull Brothers, Ltd.
	... Ellerman's Arracan Rice & Trading Co.
Norris L. MacDowell	... Bird & Co.
" W. J. Dredge	... F. W. Heilgers & Co.
" D. Mitchell	... Harrison & Crofield, Ltd.
" R. W. Turnbull	... R. Steel & Co., Ltd.
" Jas. W. Roger	... Gladstone, Wyllie & Co.
" T. B. Dods	... D. L. Millar & Co.
" J. Bell Robertson	... McLeod & Co.
" E. S. Tarlton	... Messrs. Stanley Oakes & Co.
" Cecil Simpson	... East Indian Railway.
" R. H. Child	... Messrs. Carritt, Moran & Co.
" R. Bazley	... Grindlay & Co.
" A. McD. Eddis	... Anderson, Wright & Co.
" William Dods	
" D. L. Millar	
Sir Charles McLeod	
Mr. W. S. Wallis	
Mr. E. Stanley Oakes	
" G. L. Colvin, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.	
" A. A. R. Cope	
" J. E. Vallance	
" J. Goodman	
" R. Dalglish	

Mr. H. E. Skinner, M.L.C.	... Messrs. Jessop & Co., Ltd.
" S. A. Skinner	
" O. V. Asser	
" J. Smith	... J. C. Duffus & Co., Ltd.
" G. R. Thomson	
" A. N. Mackenzie	... Barry & Co.
" W. A. M. Walker	
" M. Campbell	... Parry & Co.
" G. H. Hodgson	
" H. W. Carr	... Balmer, Lawrie & Co.
" J. M. Chisholm	
" H. R. Bell	... Asbestos & Belting Co., Ltd.
" T. Law	... Messrs. Price, Waterhouse, Peat & Co.
" W. D. Woellwarth	... Cox & Co.
" E. J. Oakley	... Kilburn & Co.
" F. S. Little	... Blackwood, Blackwood & Co.
" Norman R. Luke	... James Luke & Sons.
" B. E. G. Eddis	... Gillanders, Arbuthnot & Co.
" A. C. Gladstone	... Smith, Forrester & Co.
" J. Campbell Forrester, M.L.C.	
" Nathmull Rampersad	... Hazareemall Heeralall
" W. J. Sykes	... Lyall, Marshall & Co.
" A. Scott Smith	... Mercantile Bank of India, Ltd.
" A. W. Baxter	... Messrs. R. Sim & Co., Ltd.
" G. Morgan, M.L.C.	... Morgan, Walker & Co.
" Pat Lovett	... W. H. Targett & Co. (Capital).
" T. Ishitani	... Nippon Yusen Kaisha.
Rajah Reshee Case Law, C.I.E., M.L.C.	... Prawn Kissen Law & Co.
Mr. Millar M. King	... John King & Co., Ltd.
" E. Prophet	... Allen Brothers & Co. (India), Ltd.
" F. Blick	... Martin & Co.
" Chas. W. Bewley	... London & Lancashire Insurance Co., Ltd.

The following were also present by invitation.

Mr. C. G. Freke, I.C.S. ... Director-General of Commercial Intelligence.

" A. H. Lloyd, I.C.S. ... Collector of Customs, Calcutta.

The notice convening the meeting having been taken as read,

The PRESIDENT said—Gentlemen,—I have the honour to present to you the report of your Committee, and the accounts for the year 1921. As regards the accounts, I think you will all agree that they are very satisfactory. The Bengal Chamber's surplus amounts to Rs. 82,533, to which must be added the Royal Exchange surplus of over Rs. 4,000 so that an addition of Rs. 86,615 is made to the capital of the Chamber in 1921. What an excellent result this can be seen from a comparison with the previous year when the

surplus was at Rs. 29,000. The income of your Chamber has gone up, and the expenditure has gone down, and I am sure we all wish that we could say the same of our respective offices. One item of interest on the income side is the receipts from Arbitration fees, which have gone up by no less than Rs. 34,000. We all know that in bad times people become peevish and quarrelsome, and it is a good thing to think that your Chamber's finances are improved thereby. Our Arbitration fees have now reached the handsome figure of Rs. 1,38,000 and you can hardly wonder that our tribunal is not popular amongst the Calcutta lawyers. So much for the accounts.

In turning to the report you will, I know, all wish me to place in the very front of my remarks our hearty thanks to the members of the Royal Exchange Committee, and of the various Sub-Committees whose reports are submitted to you with ours. I also wish to pay my tribute to the work done during the year by the Chamber's staff, headed by Mr. Haywood (whom it is no exaggeration to call a prince of secretaries) supported by that stalwart henchman of his, Mr. Cunison. (*Applause*). I can assure you, gentlemen, that one has to pass through a year of office as President before one can appreciate in any degree the value of Mr. Haywood's work for the Bengal Chamber, nay, for the whole of the British commercial community in Calcutta. He is, as we all know, a man whose great ability is only equalled by his intense modesty, and, therefore, I feel sure that he is suffering severely at the moment, and wishing that I would stop talking about him and get on with my speech. I will, therefore, say no more except to thank him from the bottom of my heart for the great assistance that he has given me during my terms of office, both as Vice-President and as President. (*Applause*).

In reviewing the happenings of the past year, I think, it will be perhaps best to divide this subject into two, namely, political and non-political, and I will deal with non-political subjects first. If any of you, gentlemen, have time to read the report of your Committee, you will see what an immense amount of subjects, many of the highest importance, have been dealt with during the past year. It is, of course, quite impossible for me to do anything but touch on a very few of them, and I have, therefore, selected only those which are likely to be of interest to the majority.

The first subject on which I would like to say a few words is connected with the dear old Howrah Bridge. This controversy, which I feel sure if it were really tackled, could be settled in a month, has made one or two feeble wriggles during the course of the last year, which have certainly caused it to advance somewhat on its onward path, but not very far. A year ago the position was that the great question of a floating bridge *versus* a fixed bridge had been postponed in order that a new avenue of thought might be explored, *viz.*, as to whether a movable centre span was necessary or not. That was reported to you a year ago, but nothing was done till June when a Committee was appointed to enquire whether the

interests of the port in general would be adversely effected by not having an opening span, and, if not, whether any individual interests located north of the bridge, would be adversely affected. Then the Committee reported in due course that a movable centre span was not necessary to the efficient working of the port, and that provided the bridge had a fixed headway, permitting the passage of inland craft, that was all that was necessary. In November another Committee was called together to advise on the kind of bridge, most suitable from an engineering point of view, starting on the basis that no opening centre span was necessary. I believe the report of that Committee is now in the hands of Government, and that they have recommended a fixed bridge which is going to cost a great deal of money. Here, I suppose, we shall have to pause again, but I trust that the next Committee will urge Government to complete their investigations, and, starting from where the last two committees left off, they will now get their final recommendations, decide how the building of the bridge is going to be financed, and then call for tenders as soon as possible. All this will take a considerable time, even if they move a good deal faster than they have moved hitherto, but the old bridge will not last for ever, and the new bridge will take a long time to complete, even when the contract is placed.

Another item of considerable interest to your Chamber, which is now the subject of a Committee of Enquiry, is the method of recruitment of seamen at various Indian ports. This is a matter which unfortunately is not being dealt with on its merits, but which is being used for political purposes. Seamen have always been recruited through shipping brokers, and up to now they have done their work extremely well. It is a paying business, and those lawyer politicians who are stirring up discontent amongst labour, under the pretence of forming Trades Unions, look with a certain amount of envy to what they consider might be a profitable business for themselves. They have, therefore, raised a shout that the poor seamen are being badly used by these shipping brokers, who should be abolished and the recruitment of Indian seamen left in the hands of the Seamen's Trade Union. Your Committee have done their best to see that this enquiry shall be conducted on proper lines, but as I said before, politics are entering into it to a considerable extent, and the people who will eventually suffer will of course be the poor Indian seamen. All said and done, the shipping brokers did the business for years and know their job well, but Heaven help the poor seamen if they are handed over to the tender mercies of what is known as the Seamen's Union. This is only a preliminary enquiry that is going on at present, and a further and larger committee will be called into being later, and this is one of the subjects which I ask your new Committee to watch very carefully. If one of these mushroom unions once gets the control of the supply of one class of labour, the other unions connected with tea and jute labour will not be content until they get the same privileges. The matter must not, therefore, be dismissed as only of interest to shipping men.

There is a matter which is pressing hard on us, no matter what business we may be in, especially in these bad times, and that is the cost of cables. No one could expect the cables to run smoothly after the war, because a great deal of damage had to be repaired, demobilization was taking place, and the various officials had become very extravagant in their use of the cables, for what might just as well have gone by post. I have, however, always thought that the introduction of the treble rates for urgent telegrams was more or less a swindle. Either the cables were congested, or they were not, and the amount of urgent messages that got through quickly, the moment treble rates were paid, was sure evidence that the cables were not as congested as had been made out. A year ago at the Associated Chambers, we urged that it was time to take off these treble rates, but they are still there, and we are bluffed into the acceptance of them by being told that if India does not pay, China, Ceylon and the Far East will get preference, because they will go on paying. I do not believe it for a moment, and I believe if India refused to pay these rates, the rest of the Far East would be only too glad to fall into line. It is a case where members must help themselves more than your Committee can help them, and I urge you seriously to consider the possibility of cutting down these urgent telegrams as much as possible. I feel sure that, if it could be managed that all urgent telegrams were stopped at the same moment, our cables would go through backward and forward just as well as they are going now. At the same time the charge is an iniquitous one, and I trust that you will continue to urge Government that it should be withdrawn.

During the past year the Committee have given a good deal of attention to the administrative provisions of the Income-tax and Super-tax laws. As you are aware, many assesses have never taken kindly to section 19 of the Indian Income-tax Act of 1918, under which the provisional assessment made on the income of the preceding year is subject to adjustment when the actual income of the current year has been ascertained. In order to obtain the views of the business community on this and other points the Government of India arranged for the appointment of local committees who heard evidence at the principal centres of commerce and industry, and whose recommendations were afterwards carefully considered by the All-India Income-tax Committee that sat in Simla last July. As the result of these deliberations a Bill was introduced in the Legislative Assembly in September, designed to take the place of the existing Income-tax Act 1918 and the Super-tax Act 1920, and was referred to a Joint Committee of both Houses. This Committee submitted its report last month, and since then the Bill has passed through both Houses and no doubt will become law under the name of the Indian Income-tax Act, 1922, with effect from the beginning of the new financial year on 1st April next.

Very soon you will know all about the new Act but meantime I may mention a few of the changes it entails in the existing practice.

In the first place this Act repeals all Indian Income-tax and Super-tax Acts, and within its four corners are now contained the administrative provisions of the law of Income-tax and Super-tax in this country. Any person wishing to know about the basis, the methods and the machinery of assessment will find all that information consolidated in this Act. But he will not find there the actual rates at which Income-tax and Super-tax are to be charged. These rates are to be specified in the annual Finance Bill which will be introduced along with the Budget and passed through the Indian Legislature in March. This is in accordance with the practice at home where the administrative provisions are contained in the Income Tax Consolidation Act of 1918, and the rates in Finance Acts passed annually.

Now as regards actual changes in the administrative provisions. The most important is the abolition of the adjustment system. All assessment actually made within the financial year ending 31st March 1922 will be subject to adjustment when the actual profits are ascertained, but this particular adjustment will be the last, and in future there will be no refunds except in the case of business closing down. All fresh assessments after 1st April 1922, will be made on the profits of the preceding year. That is to say, your assessment on the financial year 1922-23 will be on the profits of the last period of twelve months for which you closed your books prior to 1st April 1922, although your receipt of course will be for the tax chargeable in respect of the financial year 1922-23, and so on. Other important alterations have also been made. For instance, any business will be entitled to claim the customary allowances for depreciation of buildings, machinery and plant without even debiting such allowances in its accounts. On the other hand the Act makes it obligatory on all private employers as well as other employers to deduct Income-tax from salaries at time of payment, and also makes it obligatory upon all persons deducting Income-tax from interest on securities, and upon all companies distributing dividends, to issue at the same time certificates to the effect that Income-tax has been deducted and has been or will be paid to the Income-tax Officer. But to all who look after the interests of home investors in this country, and to those of us who look forward to spending the evening of our days in the old Country, perhaps the most interesting feature of the Act is the new provision for relief from double taxation. Effect has been given to the principle that where the same income is liable to taxation, both in India and in the United Kingdom, it should pay only at the highest rate leviable in either country. Put shortly any person whose income has been assessed to Income-tax or Super-tax in India when he is called upon to pay again in the United Kingdom is, under present conditions, entitled to claim from the authorities there a rebate of the rate levied in India up to one-half of the English rate. Knowing this, the non-resident partner or shareholder in an Indian concern, whose share or dividend from the year's trading exceeds Rs. 50,000, will accept with equanimity the

new provision that renders the excess over that amount liable to Super-tax here in the hands of his resident partner or of the principal officer of the concern.

As I have already said, you will soon know all about the new Act for it no doubt will come into force on 1st April, and it will further interest you to know that the Government of India are to frame Rules that will be as far as possible uniform throughout the whole country, and these rules and any orders issued under them will be available to the public at all times.

The subject that has given your Committee possibly more work during the past year than anything else is that of labour—labour legislation and labour troubles. Labour has been, as you are all aware, freely exploited by every form of political agitation, and at the same time Government have been pressed by many politicians to adopt various forms of western labour legislation. Sir Alexander Murray and myself spent many days on a Committee enquiring into labour unrest, the result of which was to form a panel of leading men, out of which panel conciliation boards could be selected in cases of labour troubles. This has only been brought into operation once, and then it was a great success. This form of conciliation can of course only be used in the case of genuine labour disputes, and is useless with regard to the usual strike which is manoeuvred for political purposes. I do not propose to say anything about labour legislation. For one reason the subject is a very lengthy one, and would carry my speech beyond the bounds of your time and patience. The other reason is that only last month, at the meeting of the Associated Chambers of Commerce, our labour expert, Sir Alexander Murray, made a long and interesting speech in which he dealt fully with labour legislation in every aspect. A full report of this meeting will be very shortly in your hands and those that are interested in the subject, if they will read Sir Alexander Murray's speech, will learn a good deal of what they do not know at present.

Let us now turn from the non-political to politics. I have always felt that the business man in Calcutta should, as far as possible, withhold himself from dabbling in politics. It has been my opinion that a business man should stick to his business, and confine his political activities to questions which immediately affect or threaten commerce. Of recent years, however, the march of events has been so rapid, that it has not been possible for us to stand on one side. Reform and agitation, side by side, have affected the Government of this country to such an extent that the whole fabric not only of Government, but of society also, is shaken and threatened, and it, therefore, behoves every man to take a hand in the game, so that he may be prepared to resist aggression and defend his rights. In this connection I would say once more what has often been said on occasions like this, that the old-fashioned idea that some firms have of restraining their senior men from taking

any part in public life, must be abandoned if we are not going to run a great risk during the next few years of critical change. The business community of Calcutta are being attacked, and they will be attacked still more in the future, and it requires the very best men that they can produce to put up an adequate defence. The time when it was sufficient for one or two leading men to take all upon their shoulders has gone. The responsibilities which must be borne by the leaders of the mercantile community are so great that it is impossible for one or two men to undertake them all, and they must be widely spread over a larger number than has been the case hitherto. There still exists a prejudice amongst some of the great firms against allowing their seniors to do anything but their own business, but I solemnly warn the members of this Chamber that this cannot continue, and that all must take their share of the burden. It is a selfish and a wicked act for any one firm to be willing enough to take advantage of all the Chamber does for it, but unwilling to allow the attention of their Senior to be distracted for a moment by any thoughts outside making money for the home partners. If I had my way such a firm should be ostracised, and if they would deliberately take no share in the labours of the Chamber, they should have no share in the benefits which membership of the Chamber confers.

We have now had one year's experience in the working of the new Councils under the Reform Scheme, and I am afraid that the best that can be said on the subject is that the results might have been worse. The Council of State have given us a fairly dignified lead, as might be expected from men of that standing, but their powers are small, and though the sentiments which they have expressed from time to time are moderate in view and in expression, they have not been of any great assistance towards governing India during the past year. The Legislative Assembly, from which so much was expected, and by which so much must be done if the reforms are to be anything but a farce, have been a disappointment. The bulk of their time has been taken up in discussing resolutions, many of a highly controversial and racial character, and the time and ability of the best men in the Assembly, both unofficial and official, have been utilized, not in trying to solve the problems of Government, but in trying to keep extremists within limits, and the wording of resolutions from passing the ordinary bounds of prudence. Weighty legislation, such as the Income-Tax Act which would have taken the House of Commons weeks of debate, are passed with comparatively no discussion at all. Government by resolution is a hopeless task, and the length to which this has been carried during the past year, makes one's heart sink at the thought of these Assemblies and Councils ever being fit to govern this country. But the Legislative Assembly seem to be extremely pleased with their efforts, for with only a few months of experience, during which time their actual achievements were nil, they stoutly passed a resolution to the effect that in their opinion they have become so efficient, that their ten years of probation should be

waived, and that they were now ready to proceed with the next step towards complete self-Government. Can any resolution be conceived that is more fatuous than that? Can any better proof be shown than that the Legislative Assembly have not even begun to learn the lessons which the Government of India Act considered ten years was necessary for them to master.

The Bengal Legislative Council has been possibly a shade better than the Legislative Assembly. They had a severe lesson in the early part of their existence when they rejected the Police vote and found that His Excellency would not restore the grant. It was their first taste of finding themselves responsible for their own actions, and they did not like it. They put the grant back on their own petition, and since then have been much more sensible with regard to votes which carry responsibilities with them. But still for them also the charm of passing resolutions has its fascination, and this culminated in an absurdity at the last session when on one day the Legislative Council passed without difficulty a vote for extra money for the Police, in order to carry out the Government policy of law and order, and the next day passed a resolution condemning that policy and asking Government to abandon it. And so, gentlemen, the review of the first year's working of our new Assembly and Councils does not give scope for much gratification, but if that had been all we could have looked forward with hope that in years to come, wisdom would be learnt by degrees, if but slowly. But there is unfortunately something a good deal worse than the passing of foolish resolutions and the like. The Councils, and especially the Assembly, are beginning to realize their power, and are beginning to look about to see how they can by legislation work off some of their racial jealousies which have rankled for many years. They have raised that thorny question usually known as the Ilbert Bill controversy.

There are possibly none of us here who remember the Ilbert Bill uproar in the early eighties, but there are some of us who came to India, not long afterwards, when the echoes of that trouble were still ringing in the air. That the Legislative Assembly should have roused all these old passions again within the first year of its existence, is, to say the least of it, a great error in tactics. At the back of our minds, those of us I mean who openly declared for the reforms, and promised to make them as much of a success as we could, there was always an uneasy feeling that we might be prejudicing our own rights, but I do not think that any of us ever thought that the attack would come at once within the first few months of the constitution of the Reformed Assembly. It shows us that the danger is real, and it shows us that we have got to stick together, as it may be a fight for our very existence. I will not go at any length into this subject as the matter is being considered by a very strong Committee. If this Committee can come to a compromise that is likely to last, and which will be acceptable to us, nobody will be more pleased than I; but we must be prepared for the worst, although we hope for the best. There is,

I feel convinced, a certain amount of bluff on the part of many Indians over this matter. It is a question of twisting the Lion's tail, as has been done so often by the Continental powers, and the usual process is to go on twisting, keeping a sharp eye on the other end of the lion to see how far it is safe to go before he begins to bite. My advice to you, therefore, when the result of this Committee comes out, unless it is favourable, is to show your teeth as soon as possible. I have been asked what we can do, or what we are going to do. My answer is that we are going to do everything that lies within our power. I am not of course going to give our plans away prematurely, nor am I going to indulge in threats, but I can assure the Legislative Assembly that if they pursue this course they are taking on a good deal more than they probably bargain for. In addition to what we can do out here, the public at home are at last rousing themselves to some interest in India, and they are beginning to see that law and order here is not as certain as it should be, and the lives and liberties of their kith and kin are not as safe as they ought to be. Now will be the time to rouse British public opinion against any attack on our legal rights, and I feel convinced that our case is good enough to raise a storm that will sweep any proposed legislation before it, even if the reforms have to go too. But this thing I say unhesitatingly, that no matter what may happen at Delhi, the Europeans of India will not stand any encroachment on the legal rights that we have found necessary in years past, and which we are convinced will be still more necessary in the future. This is not a question of reform or reaction. It is not a question of justice or injustice. It is a far greater question than that. It is a question of right and liberty. It is a question of life and death. Let but this safeguard be taken from us, and not one of us will be safe from a charge of any foul crime up to murder, with the certainty of a conviction.

We will await the report of the Committee in the hopes that they will recommend some acceptable compromise, but if that hope is not realized, then action must be taken at once. I shall not be here to offer you my services as a leader which I would otherwise gladly do, but I would like to make this suggestion which, if the occasion arises, your new Committee may consider for what it is worth. In my opinion, the matter should be dealt with, not by the Chamber, but by the European Association, and they should appoint a special Committee to deal with this matter, and this matter only, and to this special Committee the Chamber should give the services of the very best men they have got. I beg of you, gentlemen, to take this matter seriously. The activities of many classes of Indians, some acting constitutionally, and many acting unconstitutionally, seem to me to be aiming at one thing, and one thing only, which is to make matters so impossible for us Britishers in India, that we will get out. But let them be well assured that we will not get out. The spirit of the old merchant adventurers, the ancestors of many of us here to-day, is by no means dead. Are we going to be juggled

out of our birth-right by a parcel of lawyer politicians? Are we going to relinquish the heritage which our fathers won with the blood of some of the best men that ever came out of Britain? Are we going to sit quietly and submissively by to accept from any Legislative Assembly, or from any organization of Mr. Ghandi, what is vulgarly known as the order of the boot? I think not. Or, if we do, I shall be entirely mistaken in my countrymen.

Let us not, however, dwell too long on the dark side of things. There is, thank God, a brighter side. Indians are not all like that: indeed there is a large number, probably a large majority, who have the sense to recognize that India for Indians alone is quite an impossible ideal. They are, as a rule, somewhat timid in coming forward and proclaiming their opinions, but the spread of civil disobedience and the threatening of anarchy are driving them to take action, and new leaders who are sound men of common sense are appearing, and are willing to join hands with us. One of the outcomes of this is the formation of a new League, the chief purpose of which is to fight Non-co-operation, anarchy and revolution. We are well advanced in this scheme, and we will, for the time being, place our political opinions on one side, and work wholeheartedly together to fight this imminent danger preached by the Khilafat and Mr. Ghandi. The work which will be mostly propaganda work, will be done entirely by Indians, but funds will be required, and we shall all have to subscribe freely. We have a powerful combination against us, amply supplied with money, and we must be ready also to supply our agents with the requisite funds to carry on the campaign. This is not a charity, gentlemen, it is an insurance premium. If prudent men insure their premises and their property against damage or destruction by riots and civil commotion, it is surely prudent also to pay another small premium in an endeavour to prevent such riots from breaking out. I will ask you to bear this in mind when Sir Alexander Murray and Mr. Langford James come round to ask you for your subscription to this League.

Besides this immediate work, I look to this League to serve an even more useful purpose in the future. We have set out to work together against the disturbers of law and order, but I feel sure that when that purpose is effected, we shall find that we have got used to working together, and we shall succeed then in finding some common ground on which these racial questions can be settled.

My last word, therefore, to you, gentlemen, is to form a solid defence. Hit back, and hit back hard when attacked. Join hands with those Indians of moderate principles who are willing and wishful to work with you, and be sympathetic with their legitimate aspirations as regards the Government of their own country. If an alliance on these lines can be brought about, I feel confident that we shall then go forward side by side, the best of us Britishers and the best of Indians, working wholeheartedly for the

good of this land in which we live. And when this fungus growth has been brushed away, this poisonous fungus growth of hatred, anarchy and revolution which now dims her lustre, India will shine out again in all her brightness, and prove that she is still, as she ever was, the fairest jewel in Britain's Imperial crown. (*Applause.*)

I now invite members to comment upon the Report, and to express their views on subjects of interest to the mercantile community.

There being no response, the PRESIDENT proposed the first resolution:—

That the Report be accepted and the accounts passed.

MR. R. LANGFORD JAMES, M.L.C. seconded the resolution which, on being put to the meeting, was carried unanimously.

The PRESIDENT then proposed the second resolution:—

Resolution II.—That the election by the Committee, under article 14 of the Articles of Association, of the following firms and companies be, and is hereby, confirmed:—

CHAMBER MEMBERS.

Messrs. G. A. Achard & Co., Ld. Mr. Herbert Harland (representing Messrs. A. W. Sudworth & Co., Ld.)

"Armstrongs & Main, Ld. Imperial Bank of India.
The Associated British Engineers, Messrs. J. D. Jones & Co. Ld.

Messrs. Brooke Bond & Co. The Orient Co., (India) Ld.
(India), Ld.

Messrs. Cox's Shipping Agency, Messrs. Price Waterhouse, Peat & Co. Ld.

Messrs. Forbes, Forbes, Campbell Messrs. James Taylor & Co. & Co., Ld. (Merchants), Ld.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS.

Messrs. B. Dieden & Co., Ld. The Nederland Steam Navigation Co.

The Ludlow Jute Co., Ld. Messrs. Roger-Pyatt Shellac Co. (Inc.)

Messrs. Enrico N. Stein.

LIEUT.-COL. H. A. CAMERON, C.I.E., R.E. seconded, and on being put to the meeting, the resolution was carried unanimously.

THE PRESIDENT next reported the result of the election for the Committee of the Chamber for the year 1922-23, held under articles 40, 41 and 42 of the Articles of Association, as follows:—

President:

MR. C. W. RHODES, C.B.E., M.L.A.

Vice-President:

MR. W. L. CAREY, M.L.C.

Members:

MR. K. CAMPBELL.	MR. R. LANGFORD JAMES, M.L.C.
MR. G. L. COLVIN, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.	MR. R. H. MUIR.
MR. W. C. CURRIE, M.L.C.	MR. NIGEL F. PATON.
	MR. A. SCOTT SMITH.

MR. C. D. M. HINDLEY, M.L.C.—Gentlemen,—I have much pleasure in proposing a vote of thanks to the outgoing Committee for the work they have put in during the past year on behalf of the Chamber.

The duties and responsibilities of the Committee grow heavier every year and with the increase in the number and complexity of the problems with which the Chamber as representing the mercantile community have to deal in these complex times a seat on the Chamber Committee is no sinecure.

The change which has taken place in the Government of this country, and the still more remarkable change which has taken place in the outlook of a very large number of the inhabitants of this country and which is somewhat obscurely labelled "an awakening of political consciousness" have added to the burdens that it should be composed of men who can deal with large problems and come to wise and speedy decisions.

The ordinary matters of general commercial interest which come within the purview of the Chamber, in themselves demand continued and consistent effort, especially in a period of general trade depression such as the present, but in addition the Committee have to keep in close touch with legislation in the large number of different legislatures which have jurisdiction over the territories of special interest to this Chamber and to see that the Chamber's interests are properly protected.

The past year has been perhaps one of the most difficult through which the Chamber has had to pass hitherto and I think I shall be supported by everyone here in saying that the retiring Committee have met these difficulties with marked success, and

have carried through a volume of constructive work of great benefit to the members of the Chamber and to the country.

In particular, I would refer to the services rendered to the Chamber and to the mercantile community generally by Sir Robert Watson Smyth. The duties of President of the Chamber are particularly onerous and Sir Robert has not spared himself in working early and late in the interests of the Chamber.

Members of the Chamber have every reason to be proud of the high reputation which has been established and the growing influence which the Chamber is able to exert; and for the maintenance of this position during the past year the Committee is responsible. (*Applause*).

I now have much pleasure in proposing the following Resolution:—

That a cordial vote of thanks be accorded to the gentlemen forming the outgoing Committee for their successful management of the affairs of the Chamber during the past year.

MR. R. H. MUIR seconded the resolution which, on being put to the meeting, was carried unanimously.

The PRESIDENT—Mr. Hindley, Mr. Muir, and gentlemen—On behalf of the Committee I thank you very heartily for what you have said about us, and for the kind way in which you have adopted the resolution. The past year has been, as Mr. Hindley said, a very strenuous year, and it was only by the absolute loyalty and co-operation of all the members of your Committee that the volume of work could be undertaken. I can assure you that no President ever had a more hard-working loyal Committee than I have had; and had they not shouldered so much of the work it would have been quite impossible for me to have carried on. On their behalf, and on my own behalf, I thank you very much for this resolution, and for the way in which it has been accepted. (*Applause*).

SIR CHARLES McLEOD said—Gentlemen,—I think it is very kind of the Committee to give me the privilege of proposing a vote of thanks to our retiring President, Sir Robert Watson Smyth; a privilege which I greatly appreciate. He has done during the past twelve months, and indeed before then, yeoman service for this Chamber, and the prophecy, which Sir Alexander Murray made last year at this meeting, that the conduct of affairs of the Chamber would be in very safe hands has been I think amply fulfilled. (*Applause*). He has to-day in a most interesting speech unfolded to us an account of his stewardship of the past year, and when one listens to what he has told us one begins to think of the enormous amount of care and trouble he must have taken during the period under review to attend to all these matters. I think that I can assure him, on behalf of all of you here, how fully we appreciate the work that he has done for us. I would also like to take this opportunity of congratulating him upon the well-deserved honour conferred upon him by the King Emperor. I noticed in reading a Calcutta

paper at home shortly before I left, that Sir Robert had made a very strong appeal to Government to preserve life and to protect property; and I also observed that about the same time the Associated Chambers passed a very strong resolution to the same effect. As Sir Robert has told us to-day—and we do not need to be reminded about it—the reforms were introduced by the Government of India to meet the aspirations of Indians who desire to take a hand in the conduct of the affairs of their own country, and not to encourage lawlessness, bloodshed, anarchy and revolution. I think it is the duty not only of this Chamber but of the Associated Chambers to urge all members to support the Government in their declaration that law and order must be upheld and anything else must be rigorously suppressed. That is I think the only sure way of enlisting the support of those Indians who have the interests of their country at heart. Gentlemen, the work of the President of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce is, as you know and as you have heard to-day, very onerous, but I think we can safely go home and reflect that he, who is to-day relinquishing that post, has carried it through with an efficiency which worthily upholds all that has been done by his predecessors. I therefore propose that we return to him very hearty thanks for the eminent services that he has rendered to the Bengal Chamber of Commerce. (*Applause*).

MR. NIGEL F. PATON said.—It gives me very great pleasure, as one of Sir Robert's oldest friends in India, to second the resolution which has been proposed by Sir Charles McLeod, and to offer on your behalf another word of thanks to our President for the manner in which he has conducted our affairs during the past twelve months—possibly the most critical and most anxious twelve months so far in our history. It is only those who have filled a like position who can form any conception of the amount of work and the great responsibility that attach to the duties of your President and I have no fear of contradiction when I say that never have those duties been carried out by any of Sir Robert's distinguished predecessors with greater satisfaction to the members of this Chamber than in the past year. Sir Robert has shown to us to-day how politics have touched our activities during the year and I feel sure you will, one and all, agree that the manner in which Sir Robert has conducted the affairs of the Chamber, the way in which he has represented our interests, and defended our rights under circumstances of great delicacy and difficulty, have been characterised by an ability, vigour and, I should like to add, a courage deserving of the warm thanks of the mercantile community of Calcutta. (*Applause*).

The vote of thanks was carried by acclamation.

The PRESIDENT.—Sir Charles McLeod, Mr. Paton and gentlemen,—It is not often that I find myself at a loss for what to say, but I must confess that I can hardly find words to thank you for the kind way in which you have proposed this

resolution, and for the enthusiastic manner in which it has been received by you all. The work of the Chamber, as has often been said, is really so heavy that you have to go through the Chair before you can realise what it means; and it falls especially heavily on a man who like myself, is physically none too robust. I am now going home for the rest that I badly need, but I go with the feeling that I have done my best, and with grateful thanks to you for your kind appreciation of my efforts. (*Loud applause.*)

The proceedings then terminated.

H. M. HAYWOOD, ROBERT WATSON SMYTH,

Secretary.

President.