



SALTORA NETAJI CENTENARY COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

SEMESTER –IV

COURSE CODE: AHHST 403 C-10

COURSE TITLE: HISTORY OF INDIA (1757-1885)

TOPIC: GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT, 1935

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Introduction

The Government of India Act which received the Royal Assent in August 1935 was the last and the most bulky of the constitutional documents framed by the British Government to put India on the road to Dominion Status. It was the product of prolonged discussions carried on in the three Round Table conferences of which the last was held in 1932. On the basis of these discussions, the British Government published a White paper in 1933 and submitted it to a Joint Select committee of both Houses of Parliament with Lord Linlithgow in the chair. The Committee sat for 18 months and reported in favour of the proposals of the White Paper. Next a Bill embodying the recommendations of the Committee was introduced in Parliament and passed in 1935. The Bill thus enacted into law came to be known as the Government of India Act of 1935.

Features of the Act

The Act was based upon two principles: it provided for an all-India federation composed of British Indian provinces and of those Princely (Indian) states which would voluntarily join it. Secondly, it provided for Provincial autonomy based on the principle of popular responsible government. It abolished Dyarchy in the provinces but introduced it at the Centre. It retained communal representation which was first introduced in 1909, and extended the 'safeguards' and special responsibilities devised in the Act of 1919.

Creations of new provinces of Sind and Orissa

Certain administrative changes involving territorial redistribution were made. Two new Provinces were created, viz., Sind which was separated from Bombay Presidency, and Orissa, which was carved out from the old Province of Bihar and Orissa and enlarged by the addition of the adjacent portions of Madras and Central Provinces. These two, together with the north-west Frontier Province, formed Governor's provinces, making eleven in all. Burma was separated from India and a separate constitution enacted for it. Besides the Governor's provinces, there were others administered by the Governor-General through a Chief Commissioner. These were Delhi, Ajmer, Marwara, Coorg, the Adamans and British Baluchistan.

Criticism

The Government of India Act of 1935 was declared unsatisfactory by almost all the political parties in India. The Congress condemned it outright and Nehru characterised it as a new charter of slavery. The Muslim League condemned the Federal part of the Act but declared that the scheme of Provincial Autonomy was to be utilized for what it was worth. The fact was that the roused political aspiration of the people resented the checks and restrictions by which the Act sought to safe guard British supremacy. The Act was no doubt an important step towards Dominion Status: but it felt far short of it. Bristling as it did with safeguards and restrictions, and with Dyarchy at the centre, the Act was looked upon by the nationalists as a serious impediment to the attainment of Dominion Status, not to speak of independence.

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THANK YOU

