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* Cripps Proposals

Text of Constitutional Proposals

MADE BY

The Right Honourable Sir Stafford Cripps

His Majesty's Government, having considered the anxieties expressed in this country and India, as to the fulfilment of promises made in regard to the future of India, have decided to lay down in precise and clear terms the steps which there-upon shall be taken for earliest possible realisation of Self-Government in India. The object is the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion associated with the United Kingdom and other Dominions by common allegiance to the Crown but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic and external affairs.

His Majesty's Government therefore make the following declaration:—

(a) Immediately upon cessation of hostilities steps shall be taken to set up in India in the manner described hereafter an elected body charged with the task of framing new constitution for India.

(b) Provision shall be made as set out below for participation of Indian States in the constitution making body.

(c) His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed subject only to :—

(1) Right of any province in British India that is not prepared to accept the new constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession, if it so decides with such non-acceeding provinces. Should they so desire, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to agree upon

* Report of Depressed Class Conferences, Nagpur Session, held on July 18, 19 and 20, 1942, pp. 98-99.

the new constitution giving them the same full status as Indian Union and arrived at by procedure analogous to that here laid down.

(2) Signing of treaty which shall be negotiated between His Majesty's Government and the constitution-making body. This treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands; it will make provision in acordance with the undertakings given by His Majesty's Government for protection of racial and religious minorities: But will not impose any restriction on power of Indian union to decide in future its relationship to other member states of British Comonwealth. Whether or not an Indian State elects to adhere to the constitution it will be necessary to negotiate revision of its treaty arrangements so far as they may be required in the new situation.

(d) Constitution making body shall be composed as follows unless leaders of Indian opinion in principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of hostilities. Immediately upon the result being known of provincial elections which will be necessary at the end of the hostilities, entire membership of lower houses of provincial legislatures shall as single electoral college proceed to the election of constitution making body by system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about one-tenth of the number of electoral colleges. Indian States shall be invited to appoint representatives in the same proportion to their total population as in the case of representatives of British India as a whole and with same powers as the British Indian members.

(e) During critical period which now faces India and until the new constitution can be framed, His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear responsibility for and retain control and direction of Defence of India as part of their world war effort, but the task to organise the full military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with co-operation of peoples of India. His Majesty's Government desire

and invite immediate and effective participation of leaders of principal sections of Indian people in counsel of their country, of Commonwealth and of united nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help in discharge of the task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India.

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