

Indian National movement

ACHIEVEMENT OF INDEPENDENCE (1935-47)

The British Government prepared a White Paper in March, 1933. On the basis of this White Paper, a Bill was prepared and introduced in parliament in December, 1934. The Bill was finally passed as the Government of India Act on August 2, 1935. The most conspicuous feature of the Act of 1935 was the concept of an All India Federation comprising the Provinces of British India and the Princely States. It was compulsory for the Provinces to join the proposed federation. For the Princely States it was voluntary. The members from the provinces were to be elected, while the representatives of the States were to be nominated by the rulers. Only 14 percent of the population in British India had the right to vote. The powers of the Legislature were confined and restricted. It had no control over defense and foreign relations. The Act protected British vested interests, discouraging the emergence of national unity, rather encouraging separation and communalism. All nationalists, including Nehru and Jinnah, condemned the Act.

The Congress session met in Lucknow on 25th April, 1935. Though the Act was condemned, it was decided to contest the elections to resist British imperialism and to end the various regulations, ordinances and Acts, which were initiated against Indian Nationalism. In the 1937 elections the Congress swept the poll. Congress Ministries were formed in seven out of the eleven provinces. On March 18, 1937, the All India Congress Committee adopted a resolution on Congress policies in the legislatures. It

claimed that the Congress had contested the elections “with its objective of independence and its total rejection of the new constitution, and the demand for a Constituent Assembly to frame India’s constitution. The declared Congress policy was to combat the New Act and end it”. The immediate effect of the coming of the Congress Ministries was a feeling of relief. Political prisoners were released and a large measure of civil liberty was established. Agrarian legislation was also passed and this provided considerable relief to the peasantry. Basic education was intended to be made free and compulsory for every child.

National Movement during the Second World War

When the Second World War broke out in 1939, the Congress attitude was one of sympathy, though it refused unconditional cooperation. The Congress demanded that “India must be declared an independent union, and present application must be given to this status to the largest possible extent”. The British did not agree and as a result all the ministries resigned in protest in 1939. A demand for Provisional National Government at the Centre was made at the instance of C. Rajagopalachari in 1940. It was turned down by the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow. In October, 1940 was launched the Civil Disobedience Campaign. Acharya Vinoba Bhave was the first to offer individual Satyagraha.