

## 19. Some Episodes of My Career As A Member Of Government (1921-26)

It is neither possible nor necessary to recall and record any systematic account of my work as a Member of the Bihar and Orissa Government, in my capacity as an Executive Councillor of the Governor of the Province, during the years 1921 to 1926, as it was, for the most part, carried in solemn and secret conclave, and it is not open to me to lift the veil, except to the extent that it obtained publicity in the press, or in the Legislative Council. Even here it is not necessary to offer a *rechauffe* of the proceedings of the latter during the period of more than five years that I served as an Executive Councillor. I shall, therefore, deal with but a few incidents that may even now possess interest for the reader, especially in Bihar and Orissa—since much of the work of an administrator is, in the nature of things, ephemeral. Among the events, which I may recall as matters of interest—during my tenure of office—were the visit of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales to Patna, in December 1921; the sensational Swaraj Flag incident at Bhagalpur in February 1922; the behaviour of the non-co-operation prisoners and their treatment by the jail authorities (which led to an acrimonious discussion in the press, and resulted in a controversy between Dr. Rajendra Prasad and myself), and, lastly, my dispute with the Income Tax Commissioner, ending with litigation in the High Court at Patna.

The visit of the Prince of Wales to Patna came about in December 1921, that is, after Lord Sinha had resigned the Governorship in the previous month, and Sir Havilland LeMesurier the then senior Member of the Executive Council had assumed office as the Acting Governor under the provisions of the then Government of India Act. Lord Sinha had looked forward to the Prince's visit with very great interest, and had been making preparations, therefore, ever since he assumed office, in December of the previous year, but he was not destined to receive His Royal Highness, and to accord him a welcome, on behalf of the people of Bihar and Orissa, Sir Havilland LeMesurier did his best to do the honours on behalf of the province. But the British Officer-in-charge (a Civilian) bungled, and there was one serious 'contretemps' and the treatment accorded to the two Ministers of the Governor at the time—the late Sir Mohammad Fakhruddin and the late Mr. Madhusudan Das—led to an unfortunate controversy, and provoked much ill-will and adverse comment. The following extracts from the Patna daily the 'Searchlight' from its issue of the 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1921, brings into relief the main aspects of that unfortunate incident; which was widely regretted; 'His Royal Highness emphasised while replying to the address of the Bombay Corporation just after landing at Bombay that he was here to know India and her aspirations. Judging, however, from the programme drawn up for him at Patna it can hardly be said that he has gone back with

any real idea of Indian aspirations and feelings. We realise that it was but a short visit but the fact nevertheless is that the Prince came and went without knowing much of life here. Did he meet any leading non-official Indian, with whom he could converse and know things? Indeed we have been astounded to learn that even the two Indian Ministers were not shown the courtesy of having been invited to the dinner at the Government House and they were found, to the wonder of all, jostling along with the crowd gathered for the after-dinner reception! As a matter of fact, they were among the very last batch to be introduced to the Prince. We are surprised that the Ministers at all went to the reception-their proper course should have been to abstain from attending the reception on the ground that if they were not good enough for invitation to the dinner they had no desire to be tossed about in the crowd gathered for the reception, many of whom were their subordinates. We do not imply that any deliberate insult was meant to be offered to them but the fact that no insult was meant reveals the inability to realise what is due to those whose feelings should be respected. While many of the commonest officials sat to dinner, the two Indian Ministers were kept cooling their heels till a late hour of the night, before they had the privilege of being introduced to His Royal Highness. After this treatment accorded to the Ministers, whose status and position are in no way inferior to those of the members of the Executive Council, one need hardly refer to the exclusion from the banquet of members of the Legislative Council. In short, while His Royal Highness was shown pageant and pomp, care was taken to see to it that he might not see either the Indian side of Patna, or meet in interview leading non-official Indians, even a few who could have enabled him to learn what he had come to India to do." As there was obviously much force in the criticism no attempt was made to issue an official communique contradicting or explaining away the statement on which the strictures on the official bungling were based.

But besides the serious official mistake which justified the press criticism, there was another incident, which was the subject-matter of conversation for weeks mainly due to the great amusement it caused the public. At the evening party given by the Governor to His Royal Highness, a reception was arranged rather suddenly, at the Government House. Information was sent round that all persons would be accorded the privilege of being received by the Prince. The place fixed upon was a narrow arcade between the drawing and the dining rooms where a dais was temporised for the occasion. Sir Havilland asked me to take my stand right opposite His Royal Highness with a view to obviate tactfully any unnecessary overcrowding in the narrow passage, and to assist people in passing in front of the Prince in orderly file. A number of persons had not been able to bring their cards not knowing anything of the reception; and so blank cards were handed round to enable them to put down their names for being called out by the Secretaries in due form. Now it so happened that an Indian

landlord and a titleholder as a 'Rai Bahadur' (of which he was obviously proud) did not know English, and he wanted someone, who knew it, to put down not only his name but his title in full so that His Royal Highness may know all about him and his position in the official world! Accordingly he got hold of a rising young Barrister to write out his name and title in his card. Unfortunately it so happened that youth was given to perpetrating practical jokes; but in this particular instance he was probably led on to it by the Rai Bahadur himself. When asking him to write out his name and title the Rai Bahadur insisted that his title should be written even more prominently than this name and he emphasised it so much that the writer took it into his head at once to indulge in a practical joke, which he would not have possibly thought of otherwise. Well, he wrote out the card and handed it back to the Rai Bahadur, assuring him that he had carried out his instruction of giving even greater prominence to his title than to his name. The Rai Bahadur who was dressed in his full Darbar costume expressed his satisfaction and since -----asked the young man. Soon after the citation began I saw the Rai Bahadur standing up majestically looking quite self-satisfied as if at peace with the world. He came up to the first Secretary, bowed and presented his card. The poor man glanced at the card and looked quite apoplectic. He hastily passed it on the second officer without making any serious attempt to call out the name. The second officer did the same and looked even more miserable than the first. All this astounded and unnerved me, as I suspected that there was something wrong with the card. But before I could recover myself the third officer read aloud the name on the card as 'Mr. He-Ass'. I very nearly collapsed; but the Rai Bahadur, who was too much excited to notice how he was being introduced to His Royal Highness bowed very low, made his obeisances in right royal Indian style by almost sprawling himself on the ground and passed on. But even before the party had broken up this incident had become the subject-matter of conversation in that large gathering. The Acting Governor was naturally very much put out, and enquiries were instituted as to how such a practical joke came to be played. But the Rai Bahadur had gone down to Calcutta immediately after he had been received and it was not till some days later that the facts came to light; when it was too late to take any action.

The flag incident at Bhagalpur occurred during the cold weather of 1922 when I was on an official visit to that town in the course of a tour of inspection. An Indian Civilian was occupying the high position of the Commissioner of the Bhagalpur division and his wife was a highly talented and cultured lady, a daughter of a distinguished Indian member of the Civil Service who had occupied not only a high official position but was later Vice-President of the Council of the Secretary of State for India, in London. This lady had been approached by the leading citizens of Bhagalpur to open an exhibition of Indian arts and crafts, which had been organized by them in the interest of industrial

development irrespective of any considerations of political differences. Amongst the organizers of the exhibition, therefore, were members of both the co-operating and non-co-operating political parties. Thus, though the exhibition was entirely non-official, the committee which managed it included a number of local non-co-operators, amongst whom the most prominent was my friend, Mr. Deep Narayan Singh.<sup>72</sup> The Commissioner also took a great interest in its organization and, as mentioned above, his wife had agreed to open it. On the morning of the opening, however, the Commissioner was informed that the decorations of the exhibition pandal included what were then called 'Swaraj flags', and on objection being taken by him to their presence, he was assured by the non-co-operators that they would be removed before that opening ceremony came on. On being informed that the Swaraj flags had been removed, the Commissioner's wife opened the exhibition in the afternoon. I arrived at Bhagalpur the next morning both on an official visit and also to have a look at the exhibition. After the Commissioner had received me at the station and escorted me to the Circuit House, he went home, after making an appointment with me to take me over to the exhibition in the afternoon. He was then informed that the Swaraj flag, at a prominent place, had not been removed but had only been furled. The Commissioner immediately went to the exhibition grounds and insisted on its removal. By that time the extreme section amongst the non-co-operators had persuaded themselves to take up a defiant attitude on the question, and not only refused to yield, but even went the length of threatening to break up the exhibition by using force. The Commissioner thought it best in the circumstances, to come straight to me to seek my advice-though the main responsibility was his as the highest and chief local executive officer of Government. He was afraid that if the police were used to take down the Swaraj flag, the non-co-operators also would use force and there was thus a great probability of the occurrence of a riot, at the prospect of which he was naturally very much perturbed.

I sent for Mr. Deep Narayan Singh and talked over the matter with him. He agreed with me that it was unfortunate that after the assurance had been given to the Commissioner that all the Swaraj flags would be removed, before the Commissioner's wife would open the exhibition, one of the flags had been left furled through oversight. But he said that the view of the extreme section of the non-co-operation was that its being taken down now by the police would

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<sup>72</sup> Singh, Deep Narayan (1875-1935); belonged to a zamindar Marwari family of Bhagalpur; educated at Bhagalpur, Calcutta and Cambridge; Bar-at-law, 1898; President, Bengal Provincial Conference, 1901 and 1907; took part in the Swadeshi movement, 1905; Secretary, BPCC, 1909; member AICC; elected to the Bengal Legislative Council in 1910; attended the Delhi Durbar of 1911; toured extensively around the world; participated in the Non Cooperation Movement 1920-21 and mobilized specially students and Marwaris; Chairman, Bhagalpur Municipality, 1922; President, BPCC, 1928; took active part in the Civil Disobedience Movement, 1930-31 and was imprisoned; elected to the Central Legislative Assembly in 1934.

be regarded by them as a great insult to the Congress party, and in view of it, he asked me to suggest, if I could use some 'via media', which would solve the difficulty while at the same time pacifying both the official and the non-official parties, especially the non-co-operators amongst the latter. I asked Mr. Deep Narayan Singh whether it was not the position of the non-co-operators that they wanted to achieve Dominion Status for India as a member of the British Commonwealth, and he said in reply that it was so. I then put it to him whether it would not serve their purpose equally well if the Swaraj flag was left intact (that is, furled as it was) and the Union Jack was put up unfurled and flown higher than the Swaraj flag. He said that he thought that would be a reasonable compromise in the circumstances. I discussed the matter then with the Commissioner, and he entirely agreed with me that that would be the best solution, as clearly indicating the then ideal of Swaraj within the British Commonwealth.

Accordingly, I requested Mr. Deep Narayan Singh to talk over matters with his friends of the non-co-operation party, and after doing so he gave me the assurance that they had no objection to the Union Jack being put up and flown higher than the Swaraj flag, the latter to be kept furled all the time. This having been done, I visited the exhibition with the Commissioner in the afternoon. The non-officials of all the parties in the town, seemed to be completely satisfied with this solution of the difficulty, but not the local British officials. As the Commissioner was an Indian it was regarded by them as a weakness, on his part, to have at all yielded to the non-co-operators; and as he happened to be a Bengali by race, they imputed to him an inherent sympathy with the non-cooperation movement, for which there was not the least justification. They, however, though numerically at a handful in the town, set up such a violent agitation that the jail exhibits were withdrawn some days later by the Superintendent of the Central Jail at Bhagalpur. On my return to Patna, I explained the position to the Acting Governor Sir Havilland LeMesurier, who agreed with me that the action taken, in the circumstances, was tactful and expedient.

But the British officials at Bhagalpur, inspired a persistent agitation in the Anglo-Indian press which kept up a crusade against the Commissioner for weeks afterwards. As a result of it, a question was asked on the subject in the House of Commons and on the 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1922, Lord Winterton, the then Under-Secretary of State for India, gave a long reply recounting, in his own way, the facts mentioned above. After doing so he added :- The Governor-in-Council of Bihar and Orissa, on being informed, decided that no further action was possible, though they would have preferred a more severe treatment of the impertinence of non-co-operators. (Hear, hear). The Commissioner was warned to be more vigilant in future, and to take care not to afford sympathy to a movement which might be turned against the Government. The incident was

much resented by the local European community and the gaol exhibits were withdrawn. The Government of India have informed the local Government that they share the regret that some drastic action was not taken, and have indicated clearly their decision that in no circumstances should a Swaraj flag be flown in conjunction with the Union Jack, even if placed below it. My noble friend, the Secretary of State, realises the importance of the prevention of such incidents in future. (Hear, hear)". In making these observations Earl Winterton clearly tried to placate the handful of the British officials at Bhagalpur, and to soothe their ruffled feelings, rather than take a dispassionate view of a difficult situation. They had felt aggrieved with the Governor-in-Council, who as stated by Lord Winterton, had decided that no further action was possible," but the over-sensitiveness of British officialdom at Bhagalpur, in particular, and in the province, in general, carried the matter further, with the result that the Government of India had to intervene, and the poor Commissioner was sacrificed at the altar of British official clamour. Thus this episode, which I have briefly recounted, points a moral to politically-minded Indians, even if it does not adorn a tale.

Perhaps the most difficult problem I had to deal with, as a member of Government, was the treatment of the political prisoners, that is, all those who were mainly convicted for committing offences in furtherance of the objects of the non-co-operation movement, inaugurated by the Congress in 1920. As a member of Government, having in his portfolio the administration of jails in the province, I was responsible for the exercise of proper control over the prisoners, consistently with their humane treatment, particularly so in the case of the political prisoners. When I assumed office in May, 1921, the Inspector-General of Prisons under me was a British Officer of the Indian Medical Service, but in 1922 he went on leave, and his successor (the late) Sir Hormusji Banatwala-was a distinguished but retired member of the same service, who had acquired great distinction as an administrator of jails in other provinces. He came, however, with a reputation for being hostile to political prisoners, in particular, and this naturally induced some prejudice in public mind against him. The result was as could be expected, in the circumstances. The leaders of the non-co-operation movement, at the time, were not willing to accept, even in the case of political prisoners, the inevitable jail limitations attaching to them, with the result that the vast bulk of such prisoners were always determined to defy the jail authorities, and to be creating trouble frequently all which made the carrying on of everyday routine, consistently with the maintenance of jail discipline, a task of some difficulty for the jailors, and the higher jail authorities. The matter having been brought to his notice Sir Hormusji directed that in one particular jail some of the young men, who had persistently defied the authority of the jail, should be put to grinding corn and some other similar work of hard labour.

A debate was raised on this question in the Provincial Legislative Council, in the course of which the defenders of the conduct of the political prisoners used extravagant languages, which provoked some of the speakers on the official benches to indulge in strong language. My Civilian colleague, the Hon'ble Mr. McPherson (later Sir Hugh), Member in charge of police administration-who had joined in the debate was charged with having said something which was resented by the non-co-operators, who were clamouring for the head of Sir Hormusji who had called them 'liars'. Thus tempers were frayed on both sides, and feelings roused to a high pitch. As the member in charge of jails, I summed up the position on behalf of Government, as tactfully as I could do, in the circumstances, maintaining that the treatment meted out to the non-co-operation prisoners had been, on the whole very much more lenient than they deserved by their conduct as prisoners. The non-official motion was ----- thereon led to an acrimonious discussion in the press, which led to a controversy- the only one so far in an otherwise unclouded friendship of forty years-between Dr. Rajendra Prasad and myself. His communication, dated the 5<sup>th</sup> September, 1922, appeared in the local press. He took strong exception to the terms which had been applied to the vast bulk of the political prisoners by Sir Hormusji Banatwala, and stated his view for the information of the authorities, that some of the young men, who are being put to grain grinding, and other kinds of labour, are not only educated and cultured men, but also possessed of property, if possession of property were any criterion for judging a man's worth. It would be noticed that Dr. Rajendra Prasad himself made his statement in defence of only 'some of the young men', and not with reference to all those who had been put to hard labour, by the orders of the Inspector-General. His statement may be accepted as absolutely correct, but when a large number of political prisoners are to be punished for defiance of the jail rules and regulations, it is very likely that 'some' of them would be those who would be not only 'educated', and 'cultured,' but also possessed of property. But the mistake, which seems to me to have vitiated his criticism, was the assumption that an executive officer, like an Inspector-General of Prisons, is to hold a judicial trial in jail, in the case of each political prisoner, and to adjudicate his offence separately from that of the others, when all of them, or a large number of them, had been persistently defiant of jail authority.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad further stated that the fact is that a systematic attempt is being made to break and crush the high spirit of our youth in the name of jail discipline. It is a repetition on a large scale, and all over the country, of what happened in Bengal some years ago". If so, evidently almost all the Inspectors-General of Prisons, were tarred with the same brush, and the securing of an angelic type of officers could be but the dream of the ideal state. Having expressed these views, he went on to make a direct attack not only on the Indian Inspector-General of Prisons, but also on me as the Government

Member responsible for the administration of the jails. To avoid doing any injustice to his statement or argument, I quote in full the passage dealing with his criticisms of the Inspector-General and myself:-“The worst of it is that all this is happening when an Indian member-a publicist, of no mean eminence-is supposed to be in charge of the department of jails, and another Indian is the actual administrator of it. If one hundred and fifty years of British rule has shown anything, beyond all controversy and doubt, it is its capacity to use Indians as its instruments. I say so not in anger, but in sorrow. I can see no other explanation of the hypnotism which makes the best amongst us forget and forswear our past. How else can you explain the Hon’ble Mr. Sinha who fought so valiantly before the Leatham Committee for the transfer of jails to popular control on the ground of ill treatment of political prisoners, sanctioning or condoning action which he condemned in no uncertain voice when free from trammels of office-and that when he must know that the real object was not jail discipline but to smother by sheer physical force the fire of love and service of the country, which is his motherland no less than of the sufferers!’

Naturally, Dr. Rajendra Prasad’s criticisms attracted wide attention at the time. But having said my say in the Council, it was not open to me then, as a Member of Government, to enter into a controversy with him, either in the press or on the platform, and so I was unable to reply to the criticisms made against me personally in Dr. Rajendra Prasad’s communication, quoted above. An occasion occurred, however, about a year later, when a non-official elected member of the Council raised a debate, on the same subject, in the Legislative Council. Without making any special reference to Dr. Rajendra Prasad’s criticisms of my alleged misdemeanour, I then tried to make the position as clear as I could: but the summary of my speech sent out by an incompetent press agency was wrong and defective in conveying what I had said, and so it brought on my devoted head many further criticisms of the same type as had been indulged in by Dr. Rajendra Prasad. On the appearance, however, of the text of my speech in the report of the proceedings of the Legislative Council, one of my critics, the ‘Tribune’ of Lahore, (then edited by that foremost Indian Journalist, Mr. Kali Nath Roy) had the fairness to reconsider its verdict, and I make no apology for reproducing its comments under heading ‘Flogging in Jail’, from its issue of October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1923. Wrote that paper-It will be remembered that while commenting upon the recent debate in the Bihar Legislative Council, on a resolution recommending that whipping should be abolished as a punishment in jails, and in particular the speech of the Hon. Mr. Sinha, on the occasion, we wrote:-‘Mr. Sinha said that he would abolish whipping if he could, but there was one class of prisoners who could not be otherwise kept in a state of discipline. We are not sure that the resources of civilization are not equal to devising a suitable substitute for whipping, which would be free from the particular charge or charges brought against it, but assuming that whipping is

necessary for this class of prisoners, why retain it, for all prisoners generally? Why retain it, in particular, for political prisoners, who obviously do not belong to the class that Mr. Sinha had in view. To this question one finds no reply in Mr. Sinha's speech as reported by the press agency.

'We have now before us-continued the 'Tribune'-the official report of the debate, and it must be said in fairness to Mr. Sinha that his speech did contain a reply to the question which we specifically put to him, and as to which, as we said the press summary of it was entirely silent. He said:-'We have managed so far to avoid whipping, but if we have done so, I want the Council to understand most distinctly that it has not been due to the good conduct of the vast bulk of the non co-operation prisoners; on the contrary, having visited all the central and district jails, some of them more than once, I can safely assert that the conduct of most no-co-operation prisoners, I am sorry to say, has been extremely trying to the authorities. It has very frequently been contumacious, recalcitrant, defiant, recusant and grossly disorderly. I am not speaking of a few men of honour and sincerity, but of the vast bulk of non-co-operation prisoners, and I speak with authority, as I have seen their records. I have known them personally and I have talked to them. I can assure the House that it has put a great strain upon me, sometimes, to refuse the order of whipping.

The position taken up by Mr. Sinha is that but for a punishment like whipping being held over the heads of no-co-operation prisoners of this class 'in terrorem', it will not be possible to maintain discipline in jails, considering the conduct of the bulk of them, which he describes in the passage quoted. This does not, indeed, meet our general objection to whipping as a dehumanising and brutalising punishment, but it must be confessed that it does partially weaken our further plea for a differentiation between the ordinary and political prisoners. If the conduct of many of the non-co-operation prisoners was, indeed, such as Mr. Sinha describe it, we have no hesitation in saying that instead of serving their country they have brought a disgrace upon its good name, and the good name of the great movement with which they happen to be associated. It is not through the sufferings of such men that Mahatma Gandhi expected the speedy fulfilment of his dream of Swaraj. As regards our second objection, that the Government too readily granted permission to jail officials to inflict the punishment of whipping, Mr. Sinha seems to meet it by an appeal to his own experience. We quite believe that he has successfully resisted the measure brought to bear upon by jail officials, but does not this very fact show the danger of having such weapon in your armoury? After -----the pressure which one man may be -----to withstand may prove too much for ----- and a weaker man in his place." ----- reason of conventions and traditions a Member of Government, on the ----- side, stood then on a wholly different footing from that of a Minister who, under the Government of India Act, was specifically declared to be a non-official, in spite of his drawing the

same salary and exercising in his departments the same powers and authority as an Executive Councillor, his colleague on the reserved side and as such the Minister had much greater freedom. It was, therefore, not possible for Mr. Sinha to reply to the criticisms either of Dr. Rajendra Prasad or of the 'Tribune.' But it is now open to me to state-after an interval of a quarter of a century-the fact that during the five years and more that I held charge of the administration of jails not one single prisoner-political or non-political-was ever flogged, though the conduct of not only of some, but of many of the former class, in particular, was highly provocative- because of their studied recusancy and determined recalcitrance-and Inspector-General of Jails and Superintendents of Central Jails, pressed upon me not once, twice, or three times, but time after time that they would be unable to carry on the administration unless they were authorised to inflict corporal punishment on some of the political prisoners whose conduct merited in their view such condign punishment. I may mention, therefore, the views expressed by me in the course of a note prepared by me for the text of a discussion on the subject. I stated in it that while in the case of a prisoner, who was contumacious and recalcitrant, I would not shrink from sanctioning his being whipped, provided there was no alternative to such a course, and if it was found essential in the interest of maintaining' discipline in jails. I felt ----- two important considerations should ----- be kept in view. These we ----- I had managed to carry on jail administration without whipping any prisoner, and that there was a strong feeling in the country, which I myself fully shared, which was against, whipping prisoners of any kind-political or non-political-on the reasonable ground that the infliction of such punishment was dehumanising and, in fact, brutalising, not so much to the delinquent as to the directing authorities. For these reasons, I felt that I should not agree to have any prisoner flogged, but I suggested that, if necessary, he might be prosecuted under the Prisons Act, for specific offences.

In regard to this method of dealing with the matter, I went on to say that it had been pointed out to me that no prosecution for jail offences could lie, unless the Superintendent had exhausted all the penalties he could inflict including, of course, that of whipping. This was not, however, the view of the law which I could accept as correct. I held on the contrary that the section, allowing prosecution for prison offences nowhere laid down that the Superintendent must have first resorted to whipping, and exhausted his rightly exercising it, before he could place a prisoner on trial for a prison offence. All that the section laid down was that before placing the prisoner on trial, the Superintendent should be of opinion that no punishment which he had the power to award, would be adequate to meet the situation, and not that every punishment, including that of whipping, which he had the power to inflict, should have actually been awarded and carried into effect, before the prisoner's prosecution, for prison offences ----- be launched. In the circumstances,

----- that there was and could be no ----- any prisoner's prosecution under the Prisons Act. His Excellency Sir Henry Wheeler, the then Governor, having accepted my view of the law as correct, agreed that instead of flogging being inflicted, an offending political prisoner should be prosecuted, if that was found essential to the administration of jail discipline. In the result, it happened that no prisoner, during my term of office for more than five years, was subjected to being flogged.

As this is the first opportunity I have got of stating the correct fact, I have done so at some length not only in relation to my own conduct as Jails Member, but also because the subject matter of the controversy is one of great public interest even now when national Governments have been installed at the Centre and in the provinces. In fact, the establishment of national Governments in a country is no guarantee against riots, civil disobedience or passive resistance. When the Congress Ministry was in power for the first time in the Western province, serious riots broke out in Bombay, which if not put down by means of physical force immediately, would have assumed dangerous proportions. Fortunately the then Home Member-though pledged as a Congressman to the theory of Gandhian non-violence-had the good sense to direct that fire be opened on the rioters. Wherever it might be absolutely necessary, with the result that the riot was nipped in the bud and peace restored much sooner than would have been otherwise. It is only when persons have worked the machinery of Government in a responsible position, that they learn that ruling human beings successfully - that is, humanely but firmly-is the most difficult art to acquire in carrying on state affairs.

