

Muslim League and the Question of 'Reforms' in the North West Frontier Province (1909-1932)

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Abstract

Pakistan came into being through a dialectic process. Failure in getting safety measures from the sister community i.e. Hindus, the Hindu-Muslim question finally culminated in the division of India and establishment of Pakistan for the Muslims of the subcontinent. Both Muslims and Hindus played a part in this process. The fear of annihilation on the part of Muslims sometimes forced them to give too much weight to the separatism between Hindus and Muslims in India. On the other hand certain actions of Hindus, who were in majority, accentuated the process of communal separatism in India. From 1857 the British Indian government took certain constitutional and administrative steps which the two communities i.e. Muslims and Hindus perceived differently. The reaction of Indians to these steps strengthened the divisiveness among Muslims and Hindus. The decision of the partition of Bengal (1905), the introduction of separate electorate (1909), the annulment of the partition of Bengal (1911), etc were some of the occasions on which Hindus reacted differently from the Muslims. The Muslims interpreted the reaction of Hindus as a threat to their broader interests. In the same manner when certain demands or proposals were put forward to the British, which could benefit the Muslims, these were opposed by the Hindus such as separation of Sindh from Bombay etc. The question of 'reforms' in NWFP was another issue which increased Hindu-Muslim divergence views on a purely constitutional problem, adding to the concept of Muslim separatism in Indo-Pak subcontinent.

Due to geo-strategic considerations the British Indian government split the Punjab province and, combining the five northern districts, announced a new province called NWFP in 1901. The same considerations compelled them to keep it away from all political reforms introduced in other parts of India till 1932. The (seven per cent) Hindu minority of the province always held the opinion of keeping NWFP as part of the Punjab, while the Muslims were satisfied with the formation

of NWFP as a separate province. Failing in their efforts to re-amalgamate NWFP in the Punjab, Hindus of the province exerted all their efforts to keep it away from any 'reforms' in the subsequent days. They thought that political reforms will make them subservient to the Muslims. The numerical weakness of Hindus and Sikhs forced them to get help from their co-religionists in Hindu majority provinces. Muslims of the province on the other hand found no other way except to ask help from their Muslim brethren outside NWFP in their campaign for reforms in the province. Reaction of the Indian politicians and media men, both Hindus and Muslims, to a minor local political issue made it a prominent point in the broader Hindu-Muslim context in the subcontinent. It ultimately led to the demand of the Muslims for a separate homeland in South Asia. Muslim League and other Muslim leadership raised the voice in support of the demand of 'reforms' in NWFP at every platform which finally became one of the famous Fourteen Points of Qauid-i-Azam in 1929. The following paper is an effort to highlight the Muslim demand of 'reforms' at various stages and opposition of the Hindus and Sikhs to these 'reforms' and the role of All India Muslim League and other Muslim leaders in supporting the plea of 'reforms' in the province.

I

In 1901, the NWFP was separated from Punjab purely on geo-strategic consideration of the British Indian government. This decision of the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, was not welcomed by the administration in the Punjab. William Mackworth Young (1840-1924) opposed the creation of a new province and even protested against this decision. The Secretary of State, Lord Morley (1838-1923) also did not like it.¹ Among the Indians Hindus opposed this decision. A statement of D.C. Obhrai, a prominent Hindu leader from NWFP, reflected the views of the Hindus at this event. He said: 'Lord Curzon's policy of separation of N.W.F.P. was reducing the cultured Hindus to a position of utter insignificance in this province mainly populated by the Pathan community with its characteristic mentality'.² It was commonly believed by the rest of communities in India that Pukhtuns were barbaric, savage and warlike people and thus had to be controlled by coercion.

¹ B. S. Najar, *Punjab Under the British Raj*, Vol. I (Lahore: n.p., n.d.), p. 87 cited by Sayyed Asaf Ali Rizwi, 'Suba-i-Sarhad main Aaini wa Siyasi Irtiqa ka Tajziyati Mutalia' *Tarikh wa Thaqafat-i-Pakistan*, April 1994, p. 51.

² Rai Bahadur Diwan Chand Obhrai, *The Evolution of North West Frontier Province* (Peshawar: Saeed Book Bank, 1983), p. 124.

The Muslim view regarding the formation of NWFP was different and remained different in the subsequent days. In the new province there were better opportunities in services and greater chances of material progress. Moreover the new province meant recognition of a separate social and political identity. They not only welcomed the decision of the British but also upheld that instead of a chief commissioner province, under the foreign department, the province should be brought at par with other provinces of India.

II

The question of 'reforms' in the province came to the surface after the introduction of major administrative changes in 1909. The first voice was raised in favour of reforms by the leadership of Muslim League in the NWFP. Mian Abdul Aziz³ along with Sir Ali Imam went to London in 1909 and met Lord Morley, the then Secretary of State, to present the Muslim case of bringing North West Frontier Province administratively in line with other provinces.⁴

In the third annual session of All India Muslim League, held on 29-30 January 1910 in Delhi, Sir Aga Khan in his inaugural speech expressed his views on the contemporary issues such as Hindu-Muslim cooperation, importance of education, agricultural and industrial development, Indians in Africa, the question of Muslim university, and the *Waqf 'alal Aulad* etc. He emphatically showed his concern over the non-representation of NWFP in the Imperial Council,⁵ because the 1909 reforms had not been extended to NWFP.

During the same period, the Hindu community of the province also showed their concern on the deteriorating law and order situation and moved the idea of its re-amalgamation with the province of Punjab. The base of their plea was 'bad' performance of the provincial administration in the first decade of the new province. According to them the decision did not contribute much to the objective for which it was

³ He is reported to be the general secretary of the NWFP Muslim League in 1912, Allah Bakhsh Yousafi, *Sarhad aur Jaddujuhd-i-Azadi* (Lahore: Markazi Urdu Board, 1968), p. 130.

⁴ Sayyed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan--All-India Muslim League Documents 1906-1947*, Vol. II (Karachi: National Publishing House, 1970), p. 200.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. I (Karachi: National Publishing House, n.d), pp. 96-105.

formed. They claimed that the existing situation created a sense of insecurity among the Hindus as crimes increased sharply.⁶

The question of reforms in the province was pushed back in the second decade of the 20th century due to the involvement of the Muslims in other issues confronting the Muslims of British India. The annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1911 made the Muslims skeptical about their dependence upon the British government. The Muslim League had to change their policy from loyalty towards the British to the demand of home rule. This was followed by the Kanpur incident which intensified the feelings against the British government. The Balkan wars of 1912-13, and the antagonistic designs of the European powers against the Ottomans, attracted the attention of the Muslims to help their Turkish brethren.⁷ The World War I brought the Muslims of India in a dilemma. Being subjects of the British government they were required to support the government in the war, but the opposing party, the Turks, were their co-religionists. The people of NWFP took active part in every move against the British empire particularly during the 'Silk Conspiracy Movement' inspired and launched by the ulama of Deoband seminary. Though Pukhtun soldiers in the British Indian army fought against their Turkish brethren but a considerable number of them deserted the British army.

The anti-Rowlett Act of 1919 and the subsequent Khilafat movement also overshadowed the question of 'reforms' in the province. The British tried their best to alienate the provincial Muslim political leaders from the Indian Muslim leadership. The Indian Muslim leaders were discouraged to enter the province. In 1914 some leaders like Qazi Mohammad Wali and Ali Abbas Bukhari showed their interest in holding the annual conference of the All India Educational Conference in Peshawar. The central office bearers of the Conference agreed but the British government refused permission and the Conference had to hold its meeting in Rawalpindi. Both these leaders went to Rawalpindi and met Indian Muslim leaders like Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar, who was allowed by the British government to enter the province for a very short time.⁸ On another occasion the Peshawar Khilafat Committee

⁶ Stephen Alan Rittenberg, *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Pukhtuns-The Independence Movement in Indian's North-West Frontier Province* (North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 1988), p. 47

⁷ Among the members of this mission one Abdur Rehman, an ex-student of Aligarh, belonged to the NWFP. He did not return to India and during the First World War he fought along the Turks. Later on he served the Turkish government as an ambassador in Kabul.

⁸ Allah Bakhsh Yousafi, *op.cit.*, pp. 431-32.

invited Bi Amma to visit Peshawar but government refused permission and workers had to welcome her across the Indus.⁹

III

In the Indian Council of States and Legislative Council debates the province attracted little attention. The matters discussed about the province in early 1920s revolved around law and order situation rather than socio-economic and political conditions of the province. Members usually asked questions regarding raids of the tribal upon the city dwellers (majority of the city dwellers were Hindus). Those who took part in these legislative bodies included Rai Jadu Nath Majumdar Bahadur, C.I.E., Sachchiananda Sinha, Dr. Nand Lal and Sir P.S. Sivaswamy Aiyer. These members usually represented the views and pleaded the case of the Hindu and Sikh communities of the province. For example question asked by Jadu Nath, focused on the frontier policy of the government, the expenditure incurred on frontier expedition, efforts by the government to establish a stable government among the frontier tribes in alliance with the British government, the number and strength of different tribes and their political structure, the steps taken by the government to stop almost chronic state of disorder there and the sources from where the frontier tribesman use to secure arms. The content of these questions showed that the focus was only on the interests of the Hindu community of the province. In the same period i.e. in 1920, a large population of the province (mainly Muslims) migrated to Afghanistan. The sufferings of the people of the province were greater as most of the migrants were from the NWFP.¹⁰ After three months this population started coming to British India. But none of the members raised the issue in the assembly. Mr. Sachchidenanda Sinha's main concern was the number of raids conducted by the tribes upon the settled districts. Dr. Nand Lal also raised the same issue in the province. However, he also touched upon the appointment of a committee to enquire about the internal and external causes of the raids in the province and the measures to be taken by the government to put an end to these raids.¹¹

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 432.

¹⁰ This decision was taken on the verdict of certain *ulema* who declared India as *dar ul harb* (abode of war) which made it mandatory for capable Muslims to leave India. The estimated numbers ranged from one lakh to 20 lakh.

¹¹ Questions in the Legislative Assembly regarding N.W.F.P. Vol. I., Chief Commissioner Office, N.W.F.P. Peshawar, Directorate of Archives, Peshawar (hereafter cited as DOA), p.8.

The British government responded to all these issues in the assembly with data collected from the Chief Commissioner's Office and defended themselves on the basis of specific geographical considerations. Because of these considerations they were hesitant to introduce representative government in the province.

IV

The inertia on the question of reforms in NWFP was suddenly broken in the second decade of the 20th century. A debate took place in the Indian Legislative Council on the initiative of a Hindu member which resulted in the formation of a committee headed by Mr. Dynes Bray to enquire about the situation in NWFP. The most important resolution was moved by Sir P. S. Sivaswamy on 3 September 1921 in the assembly. He also raised questions depicting the views of the non-Muslim population of the province, e.g. the *jirga* system, if it was applicable to the non-Pathans, should be restricted only to the Pathans; a question about the number of raids for the years 1919-20 and 1920-21; Indians kidnapped by the trans-frontier tribes were not ransomed while certain British were ransomed when captured by the tribals and the amount paid to different trans-frontier tribes for the year 1900-01 and 1920-21 respectively.¹² The same member i.e. Sir Sivaswamy, moved the floor in favour of a resolution. The first part of resolution asked for the transfer of the judicial power vested in the Judicial Commissioner and the Chief Commissioner to the High Court of the Punjab. The second part of the resolution asked to appoint a committee including certain elected members of the Indian legislature for the purpose of considering and reporting.¹³ The government responded by constituting a committee headed by Mr. Dynes Bray, officiating Foreign Secretary of British Indian government.¹⁴

¹² Extract from Notice no 16, Legislative Assembly [Central Legislative Assembly], Chief Commissioner Office, DOA, Peshawar, p.73.

¹³ The Deputy Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department to the honourable Sir John Maffey, Chief Commissioner and Agent to the Governor General in North West Frontier Province dated 9 August 1921, Chief Commissioner Office, DOA, p.49..

¹⁴ Other members of the Committee include, Saiyid Raza Ali, member of the Council of State, Rao Bahadur Tiruvenkata Ranagachariar, M.L.A., Choudhri Shahabuddin, M.L.A., Narayan Madhav Samarth, M.L.A., A.H. Parkar, District and Sessions Judge, Punjab, Khan Bahadur Abdul Rahim Khan, M.L.A., and H.N. Bolton, Revenue Commissioner, NWFP. Dr. Mohammad Anwar Khan, *The Role of N.W.F.P. in the Freedom Struggle* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 2000), p. 312.

The committee started working in May 1921 and met officials and non-officials in Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan and Abbottabad. These members also visited Lahore and Simla and consulted the concerned persons. The evidences were recorded in print. Muslims and Hindus were provided equal opportunities, though the population of Muslims was greater. Secondly, urban population was interviewed more, particularly members of the bar.

V

Proceedings and report of the Bray Committee provided another occasion of divergence between Hindus and Muslims in their perception to problems even if its nature was purely administrative. The committee failed to produce a consensus report and Hindu members recorded their note of dissent to the final report.

The plea of Hindu leadership was to protect the interests of minority Hindus in a Muslim majority territory. The committee dealt in detail the question of re-amalgamation of NWFP with the Punjab. In order to control crimes and raids of trans-frontier tribes it was proposed by some elements that the districts and tracts (tribal areas) should be separated from each other. The committee referring to the time of Akbar the Great, and keeping in view the opinion of such British experts as Mackworth Young and Lord Lytton on the Frontier, concluded:

In existing conditions it is not merely inexpedient for all practical purposes it is impossible to separate the districts and tracts. Under two conditions and two conditions only, can we conceive the possibility of a complete divorce between the administration of the districts and the control of the tracts. And these two conditions cover the two extremes of possible frontier policy. First, a rigid Close Border Policy, under which all trans-frontier tribes would be absolutely excluded, as by a China wall, from all intercourse with the districts whatsoever; second, a thorough-going Forward Policy under which the trans-frontier tracts would be completely dominated and the whole area upto the Afghan frontier brought under our definite administration.¹⁵

Hindu members then forwarded the proposal to place the chief commissioner of the five districts for internal administration under the Punjab government while for the external affairs, due to its proximity with Afghanistan, under the central Indian government. The committee

¹⁵ Report of the North West Frontier Province Committee reproduced in Dr. Mohammad Anwar Khan, *ibid.*, p.333 (hereafter cited as Report of NWFP Committee).

decided with consensus that external affairs should be placed under the central Indian government but rejected the first part of the proposal. The committee saw it practically impossible as:

The delay the uncertainty, the friction and the confusion that would result from the referring of questions to the government of India, some through the Punjab government, some direct, and some through both channels at one and the same time; the obvious embarrassment of an officer serving two masters; and the danger of placing anybody, even a selected officer of the rank of a Chief Commissioner, in a position to act as arbiter – for this is what it would in practice amount to – between the supreme and a subordinate government, and even to play one government off against another.¹⁶

Another proposal forwarded by the minority community was to hand over districts and ‘such trans-frontier as are today’ under the control of the various deputy commissioners to the Punjab government and let the Government of India exercise direct control over the remainder, namely the existing trans-frontier agencies. The proposal was dropped by majority of the members. If it was workable, Sir Mackworth Young and Lord Curzon would have adopted it. Secondly, any person who knew the area and people came to the conclusion that the districts and tracts were inseparable and same was the case of trans-frontier as a whole. The committee thus concluded that,

Frontier districts and trans-frontier tracts, whether regarded from the point of view of the security of the districts or from the point of view of the security of India, form an inseparable whole; that the all-India control must vest directly in the Central Government, and that it is therefore inexpedient – we make bold to say impossible – to transfer the administration of the districts from the government of India to any major Local Government.¹⁷

The Hindu members then pleaded for the re-amalgamation of the province with Punjab on the following grounds:

- a) the separate frontier province is an experiment that has proved a failure;
- b) its continuance would constitute a political danger;
- c) it involves a financial drain on India,
- d) the defects in the administration of the districts are so grave that they cannot be remedied except by re-amalgamation with the Punjab.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.336.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.342.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 342-43.

VI

In response to the above points, it was pointed out that the formation of the province was experimental. However, it was only so for civil administration e.g. combining the duties of revenue in the office of revenue commissioner, and financial secretary with those of divisional commissioner.¹⁹ The scheme proved to be a success as the number of expeditions that took place after 1901, i.e in the first thirteen years, were only three while in the previous 52 years there were 55 expeditions, culminating in the general uprising of the tribal territories in 1897.²⁰ The committee tried to remove the perception that the main sufferers in the raids were Hindus. It established, by quoting various statistics,²¹ the fact that both Hindus and Muslims were victimized. While the Hindus suffered more loss of property, Muslims suffered more loss of life.²² The Hindu members of the committee pleaded that the existence of a Pathan province on the frontier would be a political danger for the whole of India. It was stated that the fear of the Hindus was misplaced. Reference in this connection was to the role of NWFP in the First World War.²³

In the next portion the committee evaluated the Pukhtuns, their nature, their capabilities and thirst for reforms in the following words:

And if self-determination is to be allowed any play at all in India, it should surely be allowed to the Pathan race whom providence has interposed between India and foreign aggression. The danger from outside is there, as all past history shows; the mere administrative division of the warlike Pathan race --- were this practicable --- would not eliminate or even diminish it. Indeed the reverse is the more likely. For mistrust breeds mistrust. The Pathan of the districts is now keenly alive to the issues before us; and if mistrust of the Pathan is to override the Pathans' self-determination for self-development in a separate province, the danger of his turning westwards may become real. On the other hand, if liberal institutions are now granted to the frontier districts and the foundations of a Frontier Province are well and truly laid, it is not wholly visionary to hope that with the gradual march of civilization into the tribal tracts these too will eventually join their kindred of the districts in forming a

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.343.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.344.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.346.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ See for details *ibid.*, p.351.

strong and contented community at the danger-point of India's frontiers, a barrier against all possible enemies from the west. But if the Pathan race were not dismembered and one half merged against its will in the Punjab, the tendency would be for the other half to look elsewhere than to India, and one of the most warlike races of Central Asia might be lost to the Indian Empire.²⁴

The question of NWFP as a financial drain on India as pointed out in the resolution of Sir Sivaswamy was also dealt by the committee and inferred that the perception of Hindus was not correct. The apparent increase in the expenditure of the province was not due to expenditure on civil administration only, but due to the connection between tribal tracts and border defence. The revenue of tribal tracts was negligible. Thus the main increase in expenditure in the province was for the protection of India's north western frontier, and for this reason the whole India had to pay the price. It was not borne in the past by the Punjab. The political head was always imperial and there was no reason to suppose that the sum would be reduced if the districts were returned to the Punjab.²⁵ The committee also evaluated amalgamation of certain departments such as education, police and judiciary with the Punjab and saw no worth in this idea. It suggested certain measures to make these departments more effective.

The most important aspect of the committee was the evaluation of the Pukhtuns for political reforms. The opinion that Pukhtuns and NWFP were not suitable and not capable for political reforms because of peculiar characteristics was found baseless. This propaganda was done by the non-Pukhtun and non-Muslim communities of the province and elsewhere in India. The committee adopted the view that:

The frontier inhabitants are assuredly not behind the rest of India either in intelligence or capacity to manage their own affairs; their aspirations for reforms have been awakened into full consciousness, and will not be satisfied by anything short of the essentials of the reforms enjoyed elsewhere. Whatever the form of the council introduced into the province it must be something live and vigorous. The day for an advisory council is past. A legislative council is essential.²⁶

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.359.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.365.

VII

The Bray Committee recommended a 30-member legislative council for the province in which 60% should be elected²⁷ and the appointment of a minister to take charge of all subjects that are transferred subjects in the Punjab. The committee also recommended the principle of election system into municipal committee and districts boards wherever possible. However, the committee cautioned that care should be taken in the introduction of democratic institutions and it should not undermine the influence of the Khans.²⁸ In the same manner for the protection of the interests of non-Muslim minority they were allotted double number of seats to their numerical strength.

The recommendations of the committee were opposed by the Hindu members on the following grounds: (a) politically unwise; (b) constitutionally extravagant, incongruous, and anomalous; (c) financially objectionable, involving an increasing burden on the resources of the central government, and (d) administratively, as also for the purpose of real and effective political control of the trans-border tribes, unsuited, and insufficient to meet the imperative necessities of the case.²⁹ These points have been dealt with in details in the above pages. It was observed by the committee that the two Hindu members were,

Swayed – if we judge them right – not merely by sympathy with the frontier Hindus in their lot, but by a fear that a separate Muslims frontier province would constitute a political danger. We have endeavoured to show that their fear of a Muslim frontier province is unjustified. And we are convinced that the safeguarding of the Hindu minority can be adequately secured in the local Reforms Scheme we advocate.³⁰

The committee further said that 'the local Hindus shrink from the perpetual minority that confronts them in a frontier Province. The Hindus of the Punjab are anxious to come to the rescue of their frontier brethren and are confident of their power to cope with the Muslim influx which re-amalgamation would bring to the Punjab'.³¹

Among the witnesses who appeared before the committee, majority of Muslims opposed the re-amalgamation of the province in the Punjab. It is worth mentioning here that, among the Muslims who

²⁷ Sir John Maffey agreed on the condition that special representation should be given to the hereditary.

²⁸ Report of N.W.F.P. Committee, *op.cit.*, p.366.

²⁹ Rai Bahadur Chand Obhrai, *op.cit.*, p.107.

³⁰ Report of N.W.F.P. Committee, *op.cit.*, p.364.

³¹ *Ibid.*

appeared before the committee, Sardar Gul Mohammad Khan³² not only rejected the re-amalgamation idea but, in his interview on 23 May 1922 at Dera Ismail Khan,³³ put forward a proposal for the reconstitution of territories which carry the idea of a separate Muslim India. He said in his proposal that, 'we would much rather see the separation of Hindus and Mohammedans, 23 crore of Hindus to the south and 8 crore of Muslims to the north. Give the whole portion from Rashkumari to Agra to Hindus and from Agra to Peshawar to Mohammedans, I mean transmigration from one place to other. This is an idea of exchange.'³⁴

On the other hand, nearly all Hindus supported the merger of NWFP in the Punjab. One Hindu saw a pan-Islamic danger in the frontier and another Hindu said that the position of Hindus in NWFP is like a goat before the lion, while another asserted that if two lakh Pathans³⁵ could migrate then how could they be trusted not to run over India.³⁶ The Hindus started a campaign for their demands, not only in the province but they also contacted their co-religionists in the Punjab. The Hindus of the Punjab showed sympathy with them and extended every possible help in this regard. The issue was discussed in the Punjab legislative assembly. The content and result of the debate showed division of opinion on communal grounds. Voting held on the question of re-amalgamation of NWFP indicated a split in the Sikh votes among whom five supported while the same number of Sikh members opposed it. All Hindu members (16) favoured the re-amalgamation, while all Muslim members (27) voted against it. The Punjab government itself abstained from voting but opposed the amalgamation.³⁷

The report of the Bray Committee was hailed by the Muslims of the province³⁸ and it became a basic reference for the Muslim leaders in the province to quote in the favour of reforms in the subsequent days. It

³² Sayyed Sharifuddin Pirzada in a chapter 'The Lahore Resolution (1940)' not only gives his name incorrect but also misunderstood the date of his appearance before the committee. See *History of the Freedom Movement* Vol. IV (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1970), p. 79.

³³ Mohammad Anwar Khan, *op.cit.*, p.108.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.108-09.

³⁵ It refers to the migration of Pukhtuns to Afghanistan during the Hijrat movement (May-August 1920).

³⁶ Allah Bakhsh Yousafi, *op.cit.*, p.411.

³⁷ Report of N.W.F.P. Committee, *op.cit.*, p.391; Rai Bahadur Diwan Chand Obhrai, *op.cit.*, p.11.

³⁸ Sayyed Lal Badshah, 'Wafd-i-Sarhad Awr 'Adam-i-Ta'awun', *Sarhad* (monthly), Peshawar, October, 1925, pp. 48-52; Allah Bakhsh Yousafi, *op.cit.*, p.411.

was also referred by the Muslims of India who supported the demand of the frontier Muslims for reforms.

VIII

The success of the Muslims against the Hindus move for the re-amalgamation of NWFP in the Punjab was followed by another hectic struggle for the extension of all reforms introduced in other provinces, majority of whom were Hindu provinces. Muslims of the province expected practical steps in the introduction of reforms in the light of the recommendation of the Bray Committee but the government showed no interests and maintained the status quo in the province. The Muslim leadership, under the Peshawar Khilafat Committee raised the question in its meetings but bore no fruits. It needed a countrywide support. The Muslims then started contacting the Muslim leadership in other parts of India particularly the Muslims League for support. All India Muslim League at its fifteenth session, Lahore, 24-25 May 1924, moved a resolution which stated that, 'The All India Muslim League strongly urges upon the government the immediate and paramount necessity of introducing reforms in the N.W.F. province and placing this province in all respects in a position of equality with other major provinces of India.' The resolution was proposed by Mr. Abdul Aziz and seconded by Mr. Abdul Majid Quraishi.³⁹

Mian Jaffar Shah and Allah Bakhsh Yousafi reportedly contacted the leaders in Delhi and, for this purpose, they had to travel between Delhi and Peshawar many times. They met Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar, a very important prominent leader of the time. They also had close contact with Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum, who was a member of the Central Legislative Assembly from the NWFP. It is reported that another important leader from the province, Sayyed Lal Badshah, along with Hajji Abdur Rahim and Mohammad Khan, attended a special meeting of the Central Khilafat Committee at Lucknow on 28 August 1928. In that meeting the issue of 'reforms' and the proposed movement of civil disobedience, in case of the failure of the government to introduce reforms, were discussed. Sayyed Lal Badshah also visited the Lahore Khilafat Committee for getting support of the Punjab Muslims on the question. In Simla he met a Muslim member of the legislative assembly to raise the question of reforms in the assembly and to remind the government that failure in this regard will result in a civil disobedience movement in the province. In another occasion the Muslims of the Punjab responded with a public support to the demand of

³⁹ Sayyed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *op.cit.*, Vol. I, p.580.

the Muslims of NWFP. It is reported that a meeting held for this purpose was attended by about twenty-five thousand people in Lahore, including representatives of all the districts of Punjab. After discussing the issue of reforms they expressed their full sympathy with the people of NWFP and supported the demand of reforms and assured them that 'the Punjab people will never refrain from giving any just help in their cause.'⁴⁰

The question of 'reforms' was echoed in the annual meetings of the All India Muslim League. In the 16th session, held in Bombay in December 1924, Sayed Riza Ali in his presidential address expressed the hope that the government would establish a legislative council in the NWFP. He appealed to the government to lose no time in granting this province the reforms recommended by the north west frontier enquiry committee.⁴¹ In order to remove the fear of the Hindus, he referred to another aspect i.e. a provision of the 1916 pact between Muslim League and Indian Congress. This provision runs 'No Bill, nor any clause thereof, nor a resolution introduced by a non-official member affecting one or the other community, which question to be determined by the members of that community in the Legislative Council concerned, shall be proceeded with, if three-fourths of the members of that community in the particular Council, Imperial or Provincial, oppose the Bill or any clause thereof or the resolution.'⁴² It was a satisfactory provision to safeguard the rights and interests of the Hindus in the province. At the end of the session a resolution, proposed by Sahibzada Aftab Ahmad Khan, seconded by Mr. Abdul Aziz of Peshawar and supported by Maulana Mohammad Ali, was passed. It stated that, 'The All India Muslim League strongly urges upon the government the immediate and paramount necessity of introducing reforms in the NWF Province, and of placing that Province, in all respects, in a position of equality with the other major provinces of India.'⁴³ Since the appearance of the recommendations of Bray Committee on NWFP, Quaid-i-Azam repeatedly reminded the government to implement the recommendations. In all the subsequent meetings of Indian Legislative Assembly, whenever he got the opportunity, he expressed himself in support of reforms in the province. The budget debates were usually held in the months of February and March every year, in which each member had the

⁴⁰ *Sarhad* (Weekly), Peshawar, 2 August 1928, I.B. Diary No. 2441 dated 27 August 1928; Diary No. 2498 dated 10 September 1928. Deputy Commissioner Office, S. No 11, B. No.1, DOA, Peshawar, pp. 55, 135.

⁴¹ Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *op.cit.*, Vol. II, p.22.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.26.

opportunity to express his views. Jinnah in his speeches (28 January, 2, 18 February 1926; 10, 14 March 1928; 15 March 1929; 8, 11 March 1930 and 19 January 1931) in the legislature pleaded the case of NWFP. He asked when the government was going to introduce reforms in the NWFP and install a responsible government there.⁴⁴

When the Muslims of NWFP were conducting a movement for reforms, the Hindus of the province were marching in the opposite direction. Hindus in each part of the province opposed the introduction of elective bodies in the province as it would strengthen the position of the Muslims in the political administration. The thinking and feelings of the Hindus were better depicted in the following resolution passed by the Hindu Sabha, D. I. Khan, on February 1, 1926

Hindus of Dera Ismail Khan assembled in Public Meeting, protest respectfully but strongly against attempt being made by a clique for introduction of so-called Reforms and of Election in Local Bodies in the North West Frontier Province. Owing to the peculiar conditions obtaining in the North West Frontier Province, its contiguity to the border and the facilities with which raids, dacoities, kidnapping, murder, and other serious crimes, against Hindus are committed with impunity or connivance of local Pathans; the fanatic and unruly temperament of the illiterate masses easily misled by bigoted educated agitators; the recent incendiarism and loot in Kohat, fires in Nawanshehr, D.I. Khan and other places; the existence of secret Muslim revolutionary societies, the open advocacy of Muslim Press of the Muslim Raj with the help of Afghanistan; and the dream of Pan-Islamism engendered by recent events in other Muslim lands, this meeting is of the opinion that it is absolutely necessary for the safety of Hindus that the hands of the executive should not be weakened by transferring authority to the class already dominant in the administration. This meeting further puts on record its firm conviction that the introduction of elective system is sure to aggravate factious feeling and promote riots and disturbances.⁴⁵

In another resolution the same body resolved further that 'this meeting is of the opinion that the experiment of putting members of the dominant majority in charge of high appointments in the executive line

⁴⁴ Sharif Al Mujahid, *Quaid-e-Azam and His Time—A Compendium* (Karachi: Quaid-e-Azam Academy, 1990), pp. 79-80, 87, 103-4, 114, 129-30.

⁴⁵ Syed Waqar Ali Shah, *Muslim League in N.W.F.P.* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1992), p.10.

and political agencies has proved a failure in this province; it has accentuated the evils from which the province has suffered'.⁴⁶

IX

Failure on the part of the British government in the implementation of recommendations of the Bray Committee, the Muslims of the province finally decided to raise the question of reforms in the legislature.⁴⁷ It is reported that Sayyed Murtaza Bahadur, a Muslim member from Madras was approached by Maulana Mohammad Ali for help. He was a member of Khilafat Committee, Muslim League as well as member of the Swaraj Party. He moved the following resolution in the assembly, 'this assembly recommends to the Governor General in Council that he be please to extend to the North West Frontier Province the Provisions of the Government of India Act which relate to Legislative Councils and the appointment of Ministers, etc. with protection to the minorities.'⁴⁸

The introduction of the resolution by Sayyed Murtaza Bahadur was welcomed by the Muslims of the province and elsewhere in India. The people, particularly the intelligentsia expressed their favourable sentiments throughout the province. They supported the mover and resented all the misgiving of Hindus regarding the people and the province. The sentiments of Muslims can be judged in the following resolutions passed by the Muslim Association of D.I. Khan in one of its meeting presided by Nawab Saifullah Khan on 4 February 1926. It stated:

The Muslims Association D I Khan whole-heartedly supports the resolution shortly to be moved in the legislative assembly urging the extension of the government of India act to the North West Frontier Province and immediate introduction of election in the Local Bodies as recommended by the majority report of the Frontier Enquiry Committee; deprecates the tendency visible in certain quarters to picture this question as Hindu-Muslim problem; and express its readiness to accept reasonable provisions for the safeguard of the interest of the minorities.⁴⁹

And secondly,

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.10.

⁴⁷ Allah Bakhsh Yousafi, *op.cit.*, p.413.

⁴⁸ Allah Bakhsh Yousafi, *Mawlana Muhammad Ali Jauhar* (Karachi: Muhammad Ali Education Society, 1984), p. 310; Jamal ud Din Ahmed, *Middle Phase of Muslim Political Movement* (Karachi: Publishers United Ltd, 1969), p.58.

⁴⁹ Syed Waqar Ali Shah, *op.cit.*, pp.11-12

...this Association strongly condemns the maliciously false allegations, made indiscriminately against all the Muslim inhabitants of the Frontier Province, by a section of the Hindu community, and embodied in a deliberately misleading resolution of the D. I. Khan Hindu Sabha dated 1st, Feb 1926. The association considers this act of the Sabha to be one of a series of mischievous activities systematically carried on by a section of the Hindu residents of this province, with a view to totally obstruct or at least delay the introduction of reforms. This is corroborated by the fact that this propaganda was started soon after the publication of the minority report of Bray's Enquiry Committee, which caused them great disappointment, in so far as it frustrated their hopes of re-amalgamation with the Punjab and still greater disappointment by recommending internal reforms instead, in a province where they find themselves in a hopelessly small minority of five percent.⁵⁰

And thirdly

...this Association is of the opinion that the charge of incompetence brought by the D. I. Khan Hindu Sabha resolution against Muslim officers holding high executive posts in settled districts or agencies of this Province is utterly baseless and has been brought in a spirit of revenge by a few local Hindus who, disappointed in their efforts for re-amalgamation with the Punjab, find solace in running down the whole administration of the Province.⁵¹

Before, the debate took place in the Central Legislative Assembly a book entitled *Secret Societies in the Frontier* without mentioning the author, the publisher and place of publication etc was secretly distributed among the Hindu members of the assembly. This booklet carried malicious propaganda against those elements resisting the British on the frontier hinterland such as Hajji Sahib Turangzai and the later followers of Sayyed Ahmed Shahid called *Mujahidin* stationed in different colonies stretched from Makeen to Tahkot.⁵² Debate was differed till 18 March 1926. Allah Bakhsh Yousafi claimed that after acquiring a copy of the above cited pamphlet, he and Mian Jaffar Shah

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² For a detail study of the activities of these *Mujahidin* in the beginning of 20th century see Abdul Rauf, 'The British Empire and the Mujahidin Movement in the NWFP of India 1914-1934', *Islamic Studies*, 44:3 (Autumn 2005), pp.409-39.

wrote a reply to the charges levelled against the Muslims of the province in a booklet entitled *Give Us Our Due*. They also strongly pleaded for the extension of reforms in the province. This booklet was distributed among the members of the assembly before the start of debate on Murtaza's resolution on 18 March 1926.⁵³

X

Another method adopted for the demand of 'reforms' was to design a card, carrying various sentences in favour of reforms in the province and send it by post to the government officials and members of the assembly. According to Allah Bakhsh Yousafi some 200 hundred of such forms were distributed among people in various parts of the province who after filling, posted these forms to the government of British India. Some of these forms were in individual capacity while others claimed to have expressing the views of Muslims who gathered in mosques after *Juma* prayer. As a result of this campaign 179 telegrams reached the Foreign Office at Delhi.⁵⁴

Meanwhile when Muslim League presented a resolution in favour of reforms in the Central Legislative Assembly in 1926, the Hindus and Sikhs of NWFP started a movement against it in collaboration with All India Hindu Mahasabha, Indian National Congress and Sing Sabha throughout India. They exploited Kohat communal riot (1924)⁵⁵ in their favour by sending telegram to each member of the House of Lords and House of Commons in favour of their demands.

XI

The Swarajis played a dubious rule on the motion of Sayyed Murtaza. Moti Lal Nehru, leader of the Swaraj Party in the assembly was approached by Jawahar Lal. He stated that they were demanding Swaraj from the British, therefore, there was no need of asking for reforms from them. It is reported that he had in his mind the coming elections, in which he needed the support of Hindu Mahasabha, and Mahasabha was deadly against the extension of reforms to the NWFP. However, for him a sweeping opposition to the resolution was also very difficult, because

⁵³ Allah Bakhsh Yousafi, *Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar*, *op.cit.*, pp.310-12.

⁵⁴ Allah Bakhsh Yousafi, *op.cit.*, pp.218-19.

⁵⁵ In September 1924, communal riots occurred in Kohat between Hindus and Muslims. The incident started after publication of an objectionable pamphlet by Jivan Das, secretary of the local Sangaton Dhrama Sabha against the Muslims religious feelings. The riots were worst in the history of NWFP. See Gail Manault, *Khilafat Movement*, New York, 1982, pp.196-97.

in that case he would be dubbed as communalist. So making an excuse of another point, he and other Swarajis staged a walkout from the assembly and thus avoided to take part in the debate allocated to the discussion on the resolution. Sayyed Murtaza who was also a member of the Swaraj Party stood firmly and did not hesitate even if resignation was demanded from the party for the cause of reforms in NWFP.

The question of 'reforms' in the NWFP was supported in the assembly by some other Muslim leaders such as Shafi Dawudi, Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Khan and Raja Ghazanfar Ali. The most outstanding support came from Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. On the other hand, the Hindus such as Sir Sivaswamy, Pandith Madan Mohan Malwia opposed the resolution. These Hindu leaders said that because of the geo-strategic location it would create political problems for India; increase the burden on the exchequer, and, as the people and area were not suitable for electoral politics, it would result in communal strife between Hindus and Muslims. It was also stated that if reforms were inevitable then the province should be re-amalgamated with the Punjab, which was already enjoying the process of political reforms.

The Muslim members pleaded the case on purely democratic political norms cherished by the British in other parts of India. During this debate, it was pointed out that a purely administrative and political issue if opposed by the Hindus would disseminate a message that the Hindus were opposing the reforms scheme because the Muslims were the beneficiary party and that all those areas enjoying these reforms have not been opposed because they were Hindu majority provinces.

Regarding his resolution, the mover, Sayyed Murtaza in the beginning asserted that he was presenting the resolution not as a member of Swaraj Party but as an independent member of the assembly having affiliation with the Muslim League. Secondly, the resolution was not based on communal consideration i.e. NWFP was a Muslim majority area, if it was dominated by people other than the Muslims he would have also proposed the same resolution.⁵⁶ He ridiculed the impression that Pathans were not suitable for political reforms and cited the view of the Bray Committee about the Pathans which declared them at par with the rest of the people of India in intelligence and capabilities.⁵⁷ Regarding the Hindu-Muslim relations in terms of majority and minority he said that in those provinces where the population was vice versa e.g. the Hindu-Muslim composition in his own province i.e. Madras was

⁵⁶ Aziz Javid, *Sarhad Ka Aini Irtiqa* (Peshawar: Idara-i-Tahqiq-wa-Tasnif, 1975), pp.105-7.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 110-11.

about 92% and 7% respectively even then they were living in harmony.⁵⁸ He appealed to the Hindu brethren that 'if we are not raising any Hindu-Muslim question, then they should also not get frightened from the 'reforms' in the N.W.F.P. If their fears are genuine, he is ready to visit the province and hold a roundtable conference of Hindus and Muslims to know the actual situation'.⁵⁹ He lamented certain newspapers for an irresponsible behaviour on the question of 'reforms'.⁶⁰ The acquisition of Murtaza could be substantiated with evidences taken from the Hindu press. The *Milap* from Lahore, in one of its articles, advised the Hindus first to set aside their difference only then, it said, they could successfully oppose extension of reforms in the NWFP. The Hindus were advised to take measures to safeguard their rights and also request the Hindus of other parts of India to extend support to their co-religionists in the province.

XII

The case of reforms in the NWFP was well pleaded by Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who was a leader of the All India Muslim League and represented independent group in the legislature. Jinnah started his speech clarifying his position that he was not dealing with the question from the communal point of view. Madan Mohan Malwia who raised the issue of communal riots in the assembly was then addressed and, after admiring his services for the national cause, invited him to treat the question in the same spirit as he would treat the question of any other province in British India. He said that 'India is not the only country which is facing a problem of this character'. This problem exists in other parts of the world also such as Canada but it did not stop the establishment of responsible government.⁶¹

Jinnah then referred to the situation in India which he stated was not as deplorable as in Canada. He responded to the allegation of Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer that a province could claim self government if its people had certain requisite qualification. Jinnah cited Dynes Bray report which described the people as virile and a manly race, but made it quite clear that the frontier people were not behind the rest of India either in intelligence or capacity to manage their own affairs. And that 'their aspiration for reforms have been awakened into full consciousness and

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁶¹ See for details Sayyed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Collected Works*, Vol II, *op.cit.*, p.481.

will not be satisfied by anything short of the essentials of the reforms enjoyed elsewhere'.⁶² Jinnah also dealt with the view of re-amalgamation of the province with the Punjab. The underlying reason for this proposal was to provide a better position to the Hindu minority in the NWFP with a relatively larger minority of their coreligionists in the Punjab. However, Jinnah said that 'the people of the North West Frontier Province linguistically, ethnologically, geographically and in every other sense are different from the Punjab people, and why are you going to force these people, against their will and against the will of the Punjab itself, to be amalgamated with the Punjab?'⁶³

Some quarters objected that it is a very small province and thus should be amalgamated to the Punjab. Jinnah stated that even Australia has only 4 million population and that in Europe some independent states have only 2 million population. Jinnah then questioned 'what benefit would you get if reforms are not given to this province, what harm will be caused to the Hindus if the reforms are given to this province?'⁶⁴ He then asked 'is there one principle for the people in India and another for the people in the North West Frontier Province of India? You say they are not fit; you say they are incompetent; so the rest of India will keep the North West Frontier Province under your heels and under your subjection'.⁶⁵

Jinnah asked a Hindu member, Diwan Bahadur T. Rangachariar, 'well I ask, what is your answer to two millions of people who say we don't want to go to the Punjab, why must you force them?'⁶⁶ Rangachariar asked: '...when did they say that?' Jinnah replied: 'I have got the authority; I have got telegrams and letters, from almost every important town....'⁶⁷ Furthermore, he referred to the reports of witnesses who appeared before the Bray Committee where practically none of the Muslims was reported to have opposed the 'reforms'. It was the Hindus and the Hindu Mahasabha who opposed it, even Nawab Akbar Khan Hoti⁶⁸, who once opposed it, changed his views when he went back to the NWFP. Jinnah also quoted a newspaper which depicted in a befitting manner the administration of NWFP.⁶⁹ It said 'while fighting the battle

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 482.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 483.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ A notable landlord from Mardan who remained loyal to the British in their administration of the province.

⁶⁹ Sayyed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Collected Works*, Vol II, *op.cit.*, p.485.

of freedom day by day these Hindu organizations yet had it in their hearts to advocate a continuance of the obscurantist, mediaeval principles of government, bureaucratic high-handedness and policy of *zoolum* [zulum] for which the Frontier Government has been so often criticized’.

The next objection was the financial cost of running of a full fledged province. After discussing various heads of expenditure, Jinnah concluded that the actual cost would be Rs. 68000 while the province faced a 20 lakh deficit and, according to the Bray Committee report, it was not expenditure of the internal administration.⁷⁰ Jinnah then turned to the government which rejected the idea of re-amalgamation but failed to proceed further to extend the ‘reforms’ to the NWFP.⁷¹ He stated the rulers of the provinces i.e the British should also realize the need of reforms.⁷² According to him:

The delay in the reforms in the province is likely to make the Mohammadans feel that it is the Hindu opposition based on the sole plea of Hindu Muslim strife in that province that is coming in the way of their getting any advance, and the Hindus will be encouraged to feel that, as they are going on with this agitation and passing resolutions after resolutions, the Government are changing their attitude (Awr Honourable Member: ‘Afraid’) and are afraid and will not grant any reforms to the Frontier.⁷³

One of the contemporary personalities Dr. Abdul Rahim from the NWFP recalled about meeting with Jinnah in Delhi during this period. Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum, another leader from the NWFP, was also present in this meeting. He said that

The whole talk was about the Frontier Reforms and the hostility of Pandith Motilal Nehru’s Swaraj Party to the proposed resolution to be moved in the Indian Legislative Assembly. Even then he was considered the best political tactician in India. He explained with a mathematical precision how he was going to manoeuvre his Independent Party into a position where it could hold the balance between a luke warm Government and a hostile Hindu dominant opposition and get resolution through, but he told his friends to bide for the opportune moment, and it took

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.486.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, Vol II, p. 488.

him nearly a year of hard work to get resolution passed without a division.⁷⁴

Eloquent pleading of Mohammad Ali Jinnah for the case of NWFP finally moved the house in its favour and the resolution was passed by the assembly. The policy of Moti Lal Nehru on this occasion caused a rift between him and Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar, which remained unabridged in the subsequent days. Jauhar stated that, 'I differed with Motilal Nehru on two counts, firstly he revolted against Gandhi when he was in jail and thus torn the Congress into two parts; and secondly with the presumption to secure help from another disloyal Lala Lajpat Rai, he tumbled over the rights of Muslim Swarajists by refusing to support the extension of reforms to the North West Frontier Province in the Central Legislative Assembly.'⁷⁵

XIII

After the passage of resolution in the Indian Legislative Assembly, in the eighteen session of All India Muslim League, held in Delhi in December 1926, the issue was discussed in detail. Mr. Abdul Aziz from Peshawar explained certain misconceptions of the non-Pukhtuns about Pukhtuns, e.g. Aziz said that he removed the conception of Lord Minto that all inhabitants of the frontier were Afridis.⁷⁶ In this meeting representatives from other parts supported the initiative for reforms in the NWFP. Sayyed Kaim Shah expressed that the inhabitants of Kashmir would not remain satisfied if reforms were not introduced forthwith.⁷⁷ Mr. L. K Hyder rejected not only the idea of amalgamation with the Punjab but said that, 'if ever there was a province in which there was homogeneity of language, religion and race, it was in the North West Frontier Province. Therefore, from all points of view, it was the only province [suitable] for reforms'.⁷⁸ Malik Barkat Ali and Mirza Ali Mohammad from the provinces of Punjab and Bombay respectively emphasized the necessity of giving reforms to the NWFP immediately.⁷⁹ Thus a

⁷⁴ Dr. Abdul Rahim, 'Quaid-i-Azam and the Pathans', paper presented at the International Congress on Quaid-i-Azam 19-25 December 1976, Vol. III, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, pp.211-12.

⁷⁵ Allah Bakhsh Yousafi, *Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar*, *op.cit.*, p.314.

⁷⁶ Afridi tribe reside on the main route of Afghanistan. They resisted the British on their drive beyond the administrative division of the settled districts.

⁷⁷ Sayyed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, *op.cit.*, p.100.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.101.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

resolution moved by Abdul Aziz was presented in the session which runs as,

The All India Muslim League regrets that the government have not as yet taken any action regarding the question of reforms to be introduced in the North Western Frontier Province, in spite of repeated demands of the Musalmans of India for several years, and the considered opinion of the Legislative Assembly embodied in its resolution which was carried in March 1926 without a division. The League urges once more that it is now high time that the government gave effect to the recommendation of the majority report of the Bray Committee, and thus allay the feelings and misapprehensions of the Musalmans, not only of N.W.F.P, but of all India, regarding this matter.⁸⁰

In the next year, Jinnah again raised the issue of 'reforms' in the session of Indian Legislative Assembly on 16 February 1927 and thus reminded the government that Muslims did not forget the resolution passed on the same floor one year back.⁸¹ S. Srinivasa Iyengar, deputy leader of the Swaraj Party in the legislature, became president of Indian National Congress in 1927. Being a south Indian, he saw the Hindu-Muslims differences exaggerated and took the task of bringing these two communities on one platform to struggle against the British. He knew Jinnah in the Central Legislative Assembly and thought to be a proper person to address the question of Hindu-Muslim unity. In his meeting with Jinnah, he expressed the willingness to accept the Muslim demands if the Muslims withdrew from the separate electorate.

XIV

Mohammad Ali Jinnah called a meeting of Muslim leaders on 20 March 1927 representing various shades of opinion among the Muslims. It was attended by Maulana Mohammad Ali (a revolutionary), Sir Mohammad Shafi (co-operator), Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum (co-operator), Dr. M.A. Ansari (Congress), M Abdul Matin Choudhury (Muslim League), Gazanfar Ali (Muslim League), Maharaja of Mahmudabad (nationalist), Sayyed Murtaza (Khilafatists), Nawab Ismail Khan (Khilafatists), Mohammad Yaqub (conservative), and religious leaders like Shafi Daudi and Imam Sayed Ahmad of Jamia Mosque, Delhi.⁸² They agreed after

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.100.

⁸¹ Sharif Al Mujahid, *op.cit.*, p.87.

⁸² Saad R. Khairi, *Jinnah—Reinterpreted* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 204-5

discussion to accept the provision of joint electorate if certain demands were accepted. Among the five demands made in the meeting, one was the introduction of reforms in the NWFP and Balochistan on the same footings as in any other province in British India. It shows the concern of the Indian Muslim leaders with the interests of Muslims in the NWFP. These proposals later on became known as Delhi Proposals. The feelings of Hindus regarding the Delhi proposals were better expressed by the *Hindustan Times* as cited by Abdul Hamid. It states,

In what way is the establishment of joint electorates connected with the separation of Sind, and the introduction of Reforms in North West Frontier Province...? Muslims feel that in conceding to Hindus the principle of joint electorate they are entitled to expect as a price of this concession more power in Sind...and North West Frontier Province where they constitute an immense majority...The object Muslims have in view is to obtain as much as they can while conceding as little as possible.⁸³

When the 1919 Act was introduced in India, it was decided to look after the functioning of these reforms in the next ten years by a statutory commission. In the Indian Legislative Assembly, since 1924, a demand was made by some members to appoint an enquiry committee to evaluate the diarchy rule in the provinces and suggest measures for reformation. The committee failed to produce a consensus report. Meanwhile the British government appointed a commission headed by Sir John Simon, to look into the desirability of establishing responsible government and extension, modification or restriction of the degree of responsible government than existing under the Act of 1919. All members of this commission were British and none of the Indians was included in it. It faced a strong resentment from the native politicians. Nearly all major political parties boycotted the proceedings of the commission. However, a faction of the Muslim League came into being on the question of cooperation with the commission and presented the views of the Muslims before the commission. The commission planned to visit various parts of the country including Peshawar.

In the NWFP there was a split in the opinion of the Muslims regarding cooperating with the Simon Commission. A number of influentials, headed by the landlords mostly from rural areas, were of the opinion to cooperate with the commission, while the political activists and leaders dominated by the Khilafatists and mostly from the urban areas were deadly against cooperation with the commission. The first

⁸³ Abdul Hamid, *Muslim Separatism in India* (Lahore: Oxford University Press, 1971), p.194.

category while having good reputation among the government circles, lacked support of the common people. Legitimizing themselves and their policy of cooperation, they tried to gather support for their policy. In such a move a meeting was convened by a leading Khan, Nawab Dost Mohammad Khan, in Peshawar which was presided by K.B Abdul Ghaffur Khan of Zaida and attended by a number of Khans.⁸⁴ Cooperation with the commission was pleaded and it was opined that no useful purpose would be served if the commission was boycotted. When a resolution was moved for cooperation, the Khilafatists present on the occasion apprehended it. The Khilafatists staged a walkout but soon joined the proceedings. They failed to convince the *Khawanin* (landlords). The meeting decided in favour of cooperation and constituted a seven member committee to meet the Simon Commission on their arrival in the province⁸⁵

The Khilafatists who were against the commission took out a procession on the day of arrival of the commission, i.e. on 18 November 1928 from Qisa Khwani Bazaar (the hub of all political activities in Peshawar city). They also brought Khilafatists from other parts of the province. e.g. Mawlavi Ahmed Gul from Kohat, Habib Ullah Khan from Bannu, Malik Khuda Bakhsh from D. I. Khan and some others from Hazara and Mardan to protest against the commission.⁸⁶ The procession reached the present Jinnah Park, where they received members of the commission having black flags in their hands and shouting slogans, 'Simon Go Back'.⁸⁷ A complete *hartal* was observed by the Khilafatists on the same day.

A delegation of the Muslims, mostly the landlords headed by the K. B. Abdul Ghaffur Khan met with the commission on 19 November 1928 in Peshawar. In a written statement they demanded a council for the province having the same powers as in other provinces. Due to specific conditions and customs of the people it was stated that the council should consist of two third nominated and one third elected members. They asked for four seats in the Central Legislative Assembly and three in the Council of State. Along with special conditions the Khans also argued on

⁸⁴ Confidential Diary No. 2498 - I. B. Peshawar, dated 20.10.28. Deputy Commissioner Office, Peshawar. No. 11, B. No.1, DOA, Peshawar.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Abdul Rauf, 'Muslim Politics in N.W.F.P (1919-30) with Special Reference to Pan Islamic Ideas', M. Phil. Thesis, National Institute of Pakistan Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, 1992, p.65.

⁸⁷ Allah Bakhsh Yousafi, *Sarhad our Jaddujuhd—Azadi*, *op.cit.*, p.481; Abdul Khaliq Khaliq, *Da Azadi Jang* (Peshawar: Idara-i-Ashaat-i-Sarhad, 1972), p.48.

the subject of military services rendered to the British Indian Government. The delegation did not object to joint electorate. If the Hindus wanted the provision of separate electorate then it can also be extended to them. The *Khawanin* also demanded the power of nomination in the local bodies.⁸⁸ These demands showed the quest for reforms in the province in the shape of a council but their aspirations were not representing the popular view regarding the 'reforms'. The council which they visualized comprised members nominated by the Khans. Nawab Akbar Khan Hoti of Mardan had already pleaded strongly for the nomination of members by the chieftain of each tribe in the province. However, it was a positive sign that these people who were closely attached with British administration in the province also demanded change in the status quo.

The non-Muslims of the province had no reason to boycott the Simon Commission. While the Indian National Congress appealed to boycott the commission, before the arrival of the Simon Commission, the Hindu leaders advised the Hindus to fully cooperate with the commission and secure their interests in the Muslim majority province. Amir Chand Bomwal who was also active in the 'national' politics in the province expressed in his newspaper, *The Frontier Advocate*

Not only should they wholeheartedly welcome the Simon Commission on its arrival in Peshawar, but they should make this point clear to it, that bearing in mind this province's geographic, economic, and social position, it is extremely inappropriate, and will be dangerous and deadly to government if any kind of democratic arrangement current in various western countries or in other Indian provinces be started here.⁸⁹

Simon Commission also heard the views of the minority communities i.e. Hindu and Sikh. A Hindu delegation headed by Rai Bahadur Thakur Datta presented a draft prepared by D. C. Obhrai. The document stated:

The Hindu opposition to the extension of reforms and of the elective system to the Province was based on strategic and political reasons against the change which proposed to place the Hindus in a hopeless minority, after separating them from the Punjab, for no fault of their own. There was also insurmountable financial difficulties in a miniature Province which was always bound to be a deficit province. The Hindus considered that any

⁸⁸ Rai Bahadur Diwan Chand Obhrai, p. 125.

⁸⁹ *The Frontier Advocate*, Peshawar, 30 October 1928, cited by Stephen Alan Rithenberg, *op.cit.*, pp.77-8.

constitutional changes which weakened the executive authority would be dangerous to the peace of the empire, by reason of its contiguity to Afghanistan and the tribal territory populated by 'fanatical' Pathans who held the infidel Hindus in contempt and hatred. The Hindus considered that the influence of the *Khans* had been a bulwark, and important safeguard against the unruly elements in the province.⁹⁰

The paper said that if 'reforms' were introduced in the province as some of the 'advanced Hindus' were in favour of, then one-third representation of the council be given to the non-Muslim minorities.⁹¹ The Commission interviewed a Sikh delegation led by Sardar Raja Singh. They claimed as the most important minority of the province, because they were educationally more advanced and they paid a huge amount of tax. Moreover, they were the last rulers of the Punjab. The Sikh delegation supported the provision of joint electorate but with a reservation of twenty five percent seats for the Sikhs as they considered themselves distinct from both Hindus and Muslims. It is interesting that the Sikh constituted only one percent of the total population.⁹² The commission also heard the views of certain Muslim intellectuals who demanded reforms and the implementation of recommendation of Bray Committee Report.

The commission left the province and its recommendations were only speculated as its report was not published earlier than 1930. Its recommendations included end to diarchy in the province; to entrust provincial administration to ministers responsible to their legislature; expansion in franchise; a constitutional framework for the whole of India based on the concept of federation; both the houses of the central legislature (Central Legislative Assembly and Council of States) to consist of representatives of the provinces elected and nominated by the provincial councils respectively. Though the commission recommended responsible government in the provinces but treated the NWFP differently due to its geo-strategic location and peculiar conditions.

The Simon Commission rejected the separation of settled areas and tribal areas because of the security of the north western frontier of India. The Commission agreed with the principle of constitutional advance of the NWFP but it also recommended 'special arrangements' as required due to the situation in the province and problems of Indian defence. It proposed a provincial legislative council consisting of 40

⁹⁰ Rai Bahadur Diwan Chand Obhrai, *op.cit.*, p.125.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.126.

⁹² *Ibid.*

members, an equal number of which should be elected and nominated. The elected members should be composed of representatives of the Khans elected from a special constituency, by the municipalities and district boards and of ex-soldiers. The nominated members should be selected by the chief commissioner representing both official and non-official segments of the society. Arrangement was made for the representation of minorities including Hindus and Sikhs.⁹³ The council had the power of legislation, imposition of certain taxes, discussion of resolutions but no power over executive.

For representation in the Central Legislative Assembly the NWFP was empowered to send three Muslims and one Hindu member, having full rights to take part in discussions on an equal footing with other members.⁹⁴ Thus the commission recommended the establishment of representative institutions in the provinces, but it did not favour the provision of responsible government in the NWFP as proposed for the rest of British Indian provinces. This policy was defended on the plea that 'the inherent right of man to smoke a cigarette must necessarily be curtailed if he lives in a powder magazine.'⁹⁵

Expectations attached with the Simon Commission regarding reforms in the NWFP failed because of the geo-strategic consideration of the British and the opposition of Hindus. Report of the commission, when published was severely opposed by the Indian Muslim leaders. All Indian Muslim Conference Executive Board, in one of the meetings adopted the following resolution:

While realizing that the commission concede the grant of reforms in the North West Frontier Province, we are strongly of the opinion that these proposals are entirely inadequate and the reasoning employed by the commission is unsound. We are emphatically of the opinion that the North West Frontier Province should have the same measure of reforms as is granted to other provinces of India.⁹⁶

XV

The question of 'reforms' in the NWFP became prominent in the Indian political scene in the 1920s. The Muslims in the province and elsewhere in India followed the question of 'reforms' in the NWFP with the

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.138.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.138-39.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.137.

⁹⁶ K.K Aziz, *The All India Muslim Conference 1928-35—A Documentary Record* (Karachi: National Publishing House Ltd, 1972), p. 62.

government and other communities. Nehru proposals in 1928 which were resented by the Muslim leadership carried a provision of extension of reforms to the NWFP. Moti Lal Nehru, who did not take interest in the issue when it was raised in the Central Legislative Assembly in 1926, had to concede to the idea in his constitutional proposals. The proposal of reforms in the NWFP and Balochistan and the separation of Sindh from Bombay in Nehru Report was not opposed by the Muslim leadership. However, Mr. Jinnah stated in his speech to the All Parties National Convention, held on 22 December 1928, that these Muslim demands should not be conditioned with the acceptance of adult suffrage, one of the proposals of Nehru Report. In Mr. Jinnah's word, 'Muslims feel that it is shelving the issue and postponing their insistent demand till doomsday and cannot agree to it. I, therefore, appeal to the convention to take all these matters into their careful consideration'.⁹⁷ The demands of the Muslims were not met by the Indian National Congress. In response to Nehru proposals, the Muslim leadership called a meeting of All India Muslim Conference, under the leadership of Sir Aga Khan, attended by nearly all shades of opinion, i.e. the Khilafat committee, All India Muslim League, Jamiat ul Ulama-i-Hind and the elected members of the central and provincial legislatures. The conference in its meetings held on 31 December 1928 and 1 January 1929 at Delhi, made certain demands revolving around the point that no constitution for India would be acceptable if it ignored the rights and interests of the Muslims of India. The conference stuck to the demand of reforms in the NWFP, which were later on adopted by Jinnah in his Fourteen Points. In the coming session of the executive board of the conference on December 30-31, 1929 at Delhi, the 'reforms' in NWFP were again focused and it was expressed that 'the executive board of the All India Muslim Conference is amazed that while recognizing the fitness of the North West Frontier Province for introduction of a reformed legislative and administrative system, the majority of the Indian central committee have recommended the introduction only of the Minto-Morely Reforms in the province.'⁹⁸

In the subsequent meeting the subject of NWFP reforms was discussed at length, and the conference continued to demand the extension of reforms in the province. Another response to the Nehru Report came out in the shape of a pamphlet from Sath Haji Abdullah

⁹⁷ Sayyed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Collected Works*, Vol. III, *op.cit.*, pp.319-20.

⁹⁸ K.K Aziz, *The All India Muslim Conference*, *op.cit.*, pp.55,59.

Haroon, a notable of Sindh.⁹⁹ These proposals were a milestone in the direction of acquiring a free and independent state for the Muslims in British India. He emphatically stated in clause 5 'that the provinces of N.W.F.P and Baluchistan shall enjoy the same form of government as is at present enjoyed by other provinces of India and further that whatever reforms may be introduced hereafter in other provinces shall also be introduced in N.W.F.P and Baluchistan at the same time.'¹⁰⁰

Another very important Muslim organization, Central Khilafat Committee, always showed its concern with the events and issues related to the province, particularly the question of reforms. Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar, the most prominent leader of the Khilafat movement, gave due attention to the problems of the province. He lamented the British over their autocratic rule in the province, and aptly described the province as *Sarzamin-i-Ba Aain* (land without law).¹⁰¹ He supported the proposed reforms whether it came out from the platform of the Khilafat Committee, Jamiat ul Ulama-i-Hind, All India Muslim League, or All India Muslim Conference. In one of his meetings with Lord Irwin, in May 1930, he ascribed the Muslim discontent in Peshawar to two factors: the use of force by the government on 23 April 1930 and general dissatisfaction of the people about the reluctance of government to grant political reforms.¹⁰²

The Allahabad address of Allama Iqbal gave considerable space to the issue of reforms in the NWFP. Iqbal after rebutting certain remarks of the Simon Commission declared the recommendation unsatisfactory. He stated:

As to the North West Frontier Province, it is painful to note that the Royal Commissioners have practically denied that the people of this province have any right to reform. They fall far short of the Bray Committee, and the council recommended by them is merely a screen to hide the autocracy of the Chief Commissioner. The inherent right of the Afghan to light a cigarette, Royal commissioners' epigrammatic argument is pleasant enough, but far from convincing. Political reform is light, not fire; and to light, every human being is entitled, whether he happens to live in a powder house or a coal mine.

⁹⁹ It was '*The Constitution of the Future Commonwealth of India and the Rights of the Muslim Minority*', published from Karachi.

¹⁰⁰ K. K. Aziz, *Prelude to Partition*, Vol. I (Lahore: Vanguard, 1992), pp.58-9.

¹⁰¹ Allah Bakhsh Yousafi, *op.cit.*, p.63.

¹⁰² Afzal Iqbal, *Life and Times of Mohammad Ali* (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1979), pp.384-85.

Brave, shrewd and determined to suffer for his legitimate aspirations, the Afghan is sure to resent any attempt to deprive him of opportunities of full self-development. To keep such a people contented is in the best interest of both England and India. What has recently happened in that unfortunate province is the result of a step-motherly treatment shown to the people since the introduction of the principle of self-government in the rest of India. I only hope that British statesmanship will not obscure its view of the situation by hoodwinking itself into the belief that the present unrest of the province is due to any extraneous causes.

The recommendation for the introduction of a measure of reform in the N.W.F.P made in the Government of India's Dispatch is also unsatisfactory. No doubt the dispatch goes further than the Simon Report in recommending a sort of representative Council and a semi-representative Cabinet, but it fails to treat this important Muslim province on an equal footing with other Indian provinces. Indeed, the Afghan is by instinct more fitted for democratic institutions than any other people in India.¹⁰³

XVI

At the end of 1920s, the politics of the Khilafat Committee was on decline due to external and internal factors. Externally the *khilafat* as an institution was abolished in Turkey in 1924 and the reestablishment of *khilafat* in the Arabian peninsula by Al-Saud family who replaced Sharif of Makkah had also failed. The conflicts and differences inside the Khilafat Committee was another factor which paved the way to its decline. It was felt necessary by some leaders to have a body for the socio-economic uplift of Pukhtun society. In 1929, Afghan *jirga* was formed for the reformation of Pukhtun society which later on transformed into *Khudai Khidmatgar*. In 1930, Congress held its annual conference in Lahore and a number of Khilafatists also attended this meeting including Abdul Ghaffar Khan better known as Bacha Khan. On their return the Khilafatists divided into different groups. Some of them joined the local organisation of the Indian National Congress while other remained inactive for one reason or the other. The Muslim League could not attract leaders who were earlier active in the Khilafat movement. It failed to muster public support in this crucial period. The elements which

¹⁰³ Sayyed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan, op.cit.*, Vol. II, pp.167-68.

were active in the freedom struggle during the Khilafat movement were brought under the umbrella of *Khudai Khidmatgar* and Congress Committee in the beginning of 1930s. The decision of the civil disobedience of Congress was responded fully in the NWFP under the banner of *Khudai Khidmatgar*.

The situation in the province become worst when on 23 April 1930, the British forces opened fire on the people in the Qisa Khwani Bazaar in Peshawar which resulted in casualties in hundreds. The atrocities committed by the forces on the public had no parallel in the history of the province. It was followed by the arrest of political activists throughout the province. After conducting inquiries for Qisa Khwani tragedy, among other causes of the discontent of the people one was the issue of the reforms in the province. Deputy commissioner Peshawar in his memorandum to the chief commissioner elaborated the grievances of the people such as lack of administration, failure in the settlement of the Peshawar district, the F.C.R (Frontier Crimes Regulations) and corruption. He emphasized up on the question of 'reform' and placed it on the top of all the grievances. He stated that 'one of the matter undoubtedly formed a focus of discontent was failure to grant any measures of reforms in this province. This failure was felt by members of the bar in different places by the saner elements of the educated classes. It is however doubtful how much it affected the irreconcilable agitators in any degree'.¹⁰⁴

The deputy commissioner of Bannu also reported discontent of the people regarding the delay in the extension of reforms in the province. He stated that 'since the inquiry of the Bray Committee, the demand on the part of the urban Mohammadan intelligentsia has become increasingly insistent for the grant of reforms and *pari passu* with it has grown up an increasing antagonism between this element and the *Khans*'.¹⁰⁵

The provincial government while analyzing the causes of the historic incident of Qisa Khwani of 23 April 1930 stated in its report, that 'The urban and educated classes on the other hand were discontented at the withholding of the political reforms introduced in the major provinces of India, the inhabitants of whom were regarded by Pathan

¹⁰⁴ Memorandum from the Deputy Commissioner Peshawar No. 976, T, dated 9 September 1930, Deputy Commissioner Office, DOA, Peshawar, p.5.

¹⁰⁵ Memorandum No. 187-S.T. dated 4 October 1930 from Deputy Commissioner Bannu, Deputy Commissioner Office, DOA, Peshawar, p.11.

population as by nature less competent than themselves to manage their own affairs.¹⁰⁶

The government officials comprising mostly British did not support the extension of reforms to the province despite the fact that the discontent of people of the province have been reported by them. In one of the important meetings attended, besides the Officiating Chief Commissioner (Mr. Latimer), by the Foreign Secretary, the General Officer Commander-in-Chief, Northern Command, the General Officer Commanding Peshawar District, Inspector General of Police, the Political Agent, Khyber Agency, Deputy Commissioner, Peshawar, Joint Deputy Commissioner Peshawar, Superintendent of Police, Peshawar, Officer in charge Intelligence department and the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner discussed the question of reforms in the context of the recent disturbances (i.e. 1930 Qisa Khwani incident). The Deputy Commissioner Peshawar was of the opinion that at 'the present juncture little good would be done by making any announcement in respect of Reforms. He is agreed that the province so far as it held an opinion, did not consent to treatment less liberal than that given to the rest of India, but that no good would result from any announcement at present juncture.'¹⁰⁷

XVII

The echo of this terrible incident of Qisa Khwani was heard on the platform of nearly all political parties in other parts of British India. In his presidential address in the Muslim Conference held in November 1930 at Lucknow, Nawab Mohammad Ismail Khan, demanded that an inquiry committee should be set up consisting of officials and non-officials not only to investigate solitary incidents, but to inquire into the causes of the whole trouble and suggest remedies for removing disaffection prevailing in the NWFP.¹⁰⁸ Regarding the reforms, he warned the government that,

If they continue to disregard the wishes of India by denying to the Frontier Province the same constitutional status and form of government with which other provinces are to be invested in

¹⁰⁶ Confidential letter from the Chief Commissioner N.W.F.P to the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign and Political Department New Delhi, No. 602-P.C, 13th February 1931. Deputy Commissioner Office, DOA, Peshawar.

¹⁰⁷ Minutes of a conference held at Government House Peshawar, on 30 April 1930, pp.4, 226-398. Disturbances in Peshawar District, Chief Commissioner Office N.W.F.P. DOA, Peshawar, p. 226.

¹⁰⁸ K.K Aziz, *The All India Muslim Conference 1928-35, op.cit.*, p.66.

pursuance of same imperial policy, they will be only inflaming the Musalmans and putting too great strain on their loyalty. The policy to subjugate the tribes on the border has earned disapprobation of many Musalman. It was desire of Indian Musalmans that their brethren in the Frontier Province should not resort to any precipitate action, but disappointments disillusionments, which it has been their lot to suffer, hence undoubtedly goaded them to desperation.¹⁰⁹

The struggle for reforms in the NWFP reached its highest point at the Round Table Conferences held during 1930-33 in London. Indians including the Muslims were invited to London for deliberation on the Indian problem particularly the proposed constitution for British India. Muslim leaders included M.A. Jinnah, Sir Aga Khan, Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar, Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto, Sir Muhammad Shafi and Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum from the NWFP. Indian National Congress did not attend the first session of the Round Table Conference in 1930 due to the civil disobedience movement.

At the First Round Table Conference a committee of the whole conference was constituted which set up nine sub-committees to consider various issues including the issue of 'reforms' in the NWFP. It was supposed to consider modification, if any, to be made in the general provincial constitution to meet special circumstances of the North West Frontier Province.¹¹⁰

Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum, being the only member from the province, presented the case in favour of political reforms in the province. He tried to remove the misconception that Pukhtuns were not qualified for reforms. He substantiated the case with the views presented by the Bray Committee in 1924.¹¹¹ Muhammad Ali Jauhar, a critically ailing person, one day before his death, i.e. on 3 January 1931, discussed for an hour the case of NWFP with Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum.¹¹² Another advantage for the pro-reformers was the absence of Indian National Congress and M. K. Gandhi. The Hindus who participated in the conference including Tej Bahadur Sapru were considered liberal and they were persuaded not to oppose concession to the province.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Dr. Mohammad Ali (ed.), *Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah Speeches – Round Table Conferences 1930-1932* (Karachi: Quaid-i-Azam Academy, 1996), pp.1-2.

¹¹¹ Summary of Events for the Year ending 1932, Civil Secretariat, N.W.F.P. Peshawar DOA, Peshawar (hereafter cited as *Summery of Events 1932*) p.14.

¹¹² Afzal Iqbal, *Life and Times of Mohammad Ali*, op.cit., p.395.

Consequently, the Indians who could not reconcile any of their differences in the sub-committees of the conference, agreed on the subject of reforms in the North West Frontier Province committee. The report of the sub-committee was then brought to the whole conference committee. M.A. Jinnah again pleaded the case of NWFP and demanded the extension of reforms to satisfy the people of NWFP.¹¹³ In the remaining part of the Round Table Conferences, M. A. Jinnah expressed his desire to stay in London to serve the case of the Muslims interests in a better way. Sir Aga Khan who was in France during these days wrote a letter (21 March 1931) to Jinnah and specifically pressed him to plead the case of NWFP reforms.¹¹⁴ It was, therefore, announced by the British Prime Minister at the close of the second session of the Round Table Conference on December 1, 1931, that 'necessary steps, would be taken as soon as may be to apply to the North West Frontier Province, until the new constitutions are established, the provision of the existing Government of India related to Governors' Provinces'.¹¹⁵

The news of pledge of reforms to the NWFP was communicated by Sahibzada Sir Abdul Qayyum via a telegram to Allah Bakhsh Yousafi, a reform activist. People of NWFP welcomed it and Peshawar Khilafat Committee announced to celebrate a day of jubilation.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, Congress showed no sigh of joy and rejected the scheme of reforms in the province. A meeting of the Peshawar city Indian National Congress committee, held on 4 December 1931, rejected the British Prime Minister's declaration about reforms in NWFP. It was asserted that the country would not be content with 'anything less than complete independence'.¹¹⁷ The stand of the Congress was reiterated in a very important meeting of the Provincial Congress Committee at Utmanzai on 20 December 1931. This meeting was also attended by prominent leaders of the *Khudai Khidmatgar*. The conference passed resolution expressing its dissatisfaction over the Prime Minister's announcement about NWFP

¹¹³ Sharif Al Mujahid, *op.cit.*, p.142.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.146.

¹¹⁵ *Summary of the Events 1932, op.cit.*, p.14.

¹¹⁶ Allah Bakhsh Yousafi, *Siyasiyat-i-Sarhad kay Irtiqai Manzil* (Karachi: Mohammad Ali Educational Society, 1972), p.13

¹¹⁷ Amit Kumar Gupta, *North West Frontier Province Legislative and Freedom Struggle 1932-47* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research, 1976), p. 27.

reforms and declared that the object of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* was to obtain complete independence.¹¹⁸

XVIII

In the subsequent days Abdul Ghaffar Khan did not express any reference to the Prime Minister's announcement in his speeches. It is reported that he showed no interest in the reforms; instead he intensified his efforts in organizing *Khudai Khidmatgar* in the province. The government extended an invitation to Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his brother Dr. Khan Sahib for the chief commissioner *darbar* on 22 December 1931 but they refused to attend. The Congress Committee wished Bacha Khan to proceed to Bombay to meet Gandhi for the resumption of civil disobedience movement.¹¹⁹

The Muslim leadership in India expressed a mixed response to the premier's announcement. In the twenty-second session of the All India Muslim League, on 26-27 December 1931, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the chairman of the reception committee, said that the announcement was merely an attempt to satisfy British loyalists and Indian Musalmans and the rest in the same breath. The North-West Frontier Province would be given the same status as other provinces, but its governor would have much extensive powers as would make responsible government a mere shadow.¹²⁰ In the same conference, Choudhury Zafarullah Khan, in his presidential address, after referring to the premier's announcement, stated that the requirement of the defence of the frontier would not be used for the delay in the implementation of political reforms to bring it at par with other parts of the country. He said the disturbed situation in the last two or three years also necessitated early implementation of the reform scheme. At the end he hoped 'that this consummation, so earnestly to be desired, shall not be delayed on the pretext that lengthy enquires may be necessary for the purpose of settling such matters as franchise qualification for municipal and district board elections and for election to the legislative council of the province.'¹²¹ At the end, three resolutions were passed on the subject. The first resolution stated that 'This meeting of the All-India Muslim League urges upon the

¹¹⁸ Summary of Events for the Year ending 1931, Civil Secretariat, N.W.F.P. Peshawar, DOA, Peshawar (hereafter cited as *Summery of Events 1931*), pp.29-30.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Sayyed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan, op.cit.*, Vol. II, p.178.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p.184.

British and Indian Governments the necessity of putting into immediate effect the Minister's announcement regarding the N.W.F.P. and placing it on the same footing as other Governor's provinces.'¹²² The second resolution said 'this meeting of the All-India Muslim League urges upon the Government the necessity of giving immediate and full effect to the recommendation contained in the Report of the Frontier Regulations Inquiry Committee.' Sir Muhammad Yakub, while moving the resolution, referred to the inhuman characteristics of various regulations, which had led to the appointment of that committee. He held that as long as these regulations remained on the statute book, no amount of reforms would be of any use to the people of the Frontier. The third resolution of the League stated:

...this meeting of the All-India Muslim League is of opinion that the Government would have acted wisely in giving the people of the N.W.F. Province a full opportunity to consider the recent announcement of the Chief Commissioner, regarding the introduction of reforms in the Frontier, and of shaping their future policy in view of that announcement, and that the Government has acted with undue haste in promulgating special ordinances in that Province, and urges upon the Government the desirability of withdrawing these ordinances in order to promote a suitable atmosphere of goodwill for the successful working of the new Constitution in the Province.¹²³

The local politics was dominated by Abdul Ghaffar Khan and *Khudai Khidmatgar* since the decline of the Khilafat Committee in the province. Bacha Khan emerged as the most prominent leader. He organised the people who were always at loggerheads on petty social issues with each other. His simplicity in speech and life and his devotion and commitment to the cause of freedom touched the feelings of the people, particularly among those living in the rural areas of the province. His understanding with the Indian National Congress also provided him an opportunity to comprehend the dynamics of Indian politics. When the government announced elections for the Provincial Legislative Council, Bacha Khan instead of joining the electoral process opted for the politics of agitation and resistance. He announced boycott of the coming elections on the plea of complete freedom. He was expecting much support from the people, and no doubt in some parts of the province, e.g. Charsaddah, Mardan and Nowshera, the response was quite well. However, in some places the boycott movement turned into a violent one

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p.190.

and discredited the image of *Khudai Khidmatgar*. It is reported that in Charsaddah, one candidate was locked in his house and police sub-inspector was stabbed. Those who tried to cast their votes were stoned. In the election of one non-Muslim rural constituency, attempts were made to break the polling station and only one vote was cast. In Mardan about thirty thousand persons took part in demonstrations against the election. Voters and police force was stoned on the occasion, injuring twenty-one policemen. The police had to open fire at Katlang, at Mayar, and Kalo Khan, killing one person.¹²⁴ In one of the places i.e. at Pabbi, 'stones were thrown at Lorries conveying voters to and from the polls and 200 to 300 women appeared on the scene with Qur'an on their heads to persuade voters not to record their votes'.¹²⁵ The British documents also recorded molestation of certain individuals who were in favour of elections.¹²⁶ The violent tactics adopted by the *Khudai Khidmatgar* during their anti-election campaign inflicted a set back to the movement.¹²⁷

XIX

The process of election was completed in the middle of April 1932 and Ralph Griffith, the Chief Commissioner, was made the first Governor of the NWFP on 18 April 1932.¹²⁸ Two days later, on 20 April 1932, the Viceroy inaugurated and addressed the new Provincial Legislative Council. The first session of the council was held on 18 May and ended on 27 May. The second session of the Legislative Council started on 9 October and terminated on 25 October. Proceedings of both these sessions of the Legislative Council proved that people of the province were not incapable to run the affairs of their province as it was opined by some of the people who were opposing 'reforms' there. The functioning of the Legislative Council provided ample proof that all such opinions were baseless and proved the opinion of Bray Committee 1922 that they were as capable as people of other provinces in British India. The British document, *Summary of Events for the Year 1932*, reported that, 'the proceedings of both sessions were orderly and dignified and the debates, on the whole, maintained a high level both in oratory and in common sense. The atmosphere was friendly throughout and the members of

¹²⁴ *Summary of Events 1932, op.cit.*, p.5.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.4.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.5.

¹²⁷ For details see *ibid.*, p.7.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.6.

Independent Party although they criticized the policy of the Government on every possible occasion, spoke with ability and restraint.¹²⁹

The first ministry headed by Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Khan started taking measure for the protection of Muslim interests in the province. One of the most important concerns of the Muslims was to save the Muslim landed properly. Muslims usually took money from the Hindu businessmen and traders to fulfil certain social and cultural activities and obligations. The loan had to be returned with compound interest otherwise Muslims had to transfer the ownership of land to the Hindu money lenders. Consequently, there arose a threat that the Muslims might lose their land to the minority Hindus.¹³⁰ The ministry imposed restriction on purchase of land by the non-agriculturalists. Secondly, all collateral land, the owner of which either had returned the actual amount or had to pay more than the actual amount in the shape of interest, was released. Thirdly, it was made obligatory to maintain record of all loans and the interest upon it. In all these acts there was no discrimination between Hindus and Muslims but it were the Hindus who resented more in the province and elsewhere in India. They termed these laws as an attack on their rights.¹³¹ They raised a hue and cry in every corner of the province and elsewhere in India against these measures. The anti-government movement of Hindus showed why they were opposing the extension of reforms in the NWFP since 1909. The opposition of Hindus in empowering the province was not on the bases of their economic or social deprivation but it was primarily to safeguard not only their monopoly in the business and trade but also in the services sector.

Conclusion

Geo-strategic consideration compelled the British not to recognise NWFP as a full fledged Indian province since its inception in 1901 till 1932. They thought that constitutional reforms and political freedom to the people would endanger their imperialist interests in the region (NWFP being contiguous to Afghanistan which had its border with Russia). The people of the province tried to prove that historically, psychologically, politically, and mentally they were eligible for political reforms as the rest of the provinces in British India. Their efforts would have been fruitless if they were not supported by the Indian Muslim

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.16.

¹³⁰ It also happened in Palestine where the poor Muslims lost their lands to the wealthy Jewish minority in the first half of the 20th century.

¹³¹ Allah Bakhsh Yousafi *Siyasiyat-i-Sarhad Kay Irtaqai... op.cit.*, pp.19-21.

leadership, particularly the All India Muslim League. The struggle for 'reforms' was opposed by the Hindus, on one pretext or another. Muslims could hardly understand the reason behind this opposition except the communal feelings of the Hindus. Their coreligionists in British India supported them on the same basis. Muslims believed that the Hindus were opposing because it would benefit the Muslims of the province. Where as the Hindus were not opposing the same British reforms in other provinces because of the benefits received by their own coreligionists i.e. the Hindus. The issue of 'reforms' should be looked in the backdrop of the greater Hindu-Muslim controversy in British India. It was one of the issues that accentuated the process of Muslim separatism in British India. The Hindu opposition to the 'reforms' expedited the inflamed communal scenario and Muslim League's stand on the issue raised its status as the custodian of Muslim interests in British India.¹³²

¹³² The failure of Muslim League to muster support in the NWFP in the subsequent days is another issue which is not within the domain of this paper.