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Assembly Can Now Go Ahead

The London conference failed to achieve agreement between the Indian parties, but it brought a remarkably clear and concise statement on procedure for the Constituent Assembly from the British Government. In view of that statement, masterly in form and content, all parties can now co-operate in the Constituent Assembly secure in the knowledge that their views have been respected and their rights safeguarded. So definite an enunciation of policy by the British Cabinet was long overdue; the pity is that it was not made at the time the Interim Government was formed when it might have saved much of the squabbling which has since taken place. The Congress has been told once again—and this time with 'a decisiveness lacking in earlier statements—that its interpretation of the grouping clause in the State Paper of May 16 is not that of the Cabinet Mission or of His Majesty's Government, and that the British view is supported by legal opinion. India's major party is therefore urged to accept the Cabinet Mission's view so that the Muslim League may participate in the Constituent Assembly, but with this important proviso from the Congress standpoint—if the Assembly, in which the Congress has a large majority, wishes to refer the grouping clause to the Indian Federal Court for decision, then it can do so. That concedes the main Congress claim. Mr. Jinnah, on his part, is reassured by the British Government's statement that they would be no party to the forcing of a constitution framed against their will "on any unwilling parts of "the country," a policy similar to that of repeated Congress resolutions. The views of all parties having been met, the country is entitled to expect these parties to co-operate in the Constituent Assembly. If they refuse, they may take upon themselves the responsibility for a period of internal disorder, the final result of which no man can foresee.