

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM.

WESTERN MODELS USELESS.

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

In reply to the oft-repeated challenge of British statesmen to produce a draft constitution for India which can safeguard the interests and rights of all the communities in India and have their common approval, some of the leaders of the boycott movement have prepared fancy drafts of their own which are more theatrical than practical. They are simply a copy of the up-to-date Western constitutions which in India in the present circumstances will retard progress and produce more discord. These gentlemen at one time said that Western institutions were not suitable for India, but, when repeatedly challenged to produce a scheme suitable to Indian conditions, they bring forward a scheme that is simply a copy of an up-to-date Western institution.

For instance, the ex-President of the Congress wants to adopt wholesale the Canadian constitution arguing that Canada has the same racial problems as India: This argument is misleading. There are only two races, the British and the French, in Canada and they have practically no difference in religion and social customs. They interdine and intermarry; they mingle with each other on equal terms: there is no Pariah class among them: they have no illiterate class, and all classes among them understand and take an interest in the political, economic, and other questions concerning the uplift and prosperity of their country and people. Can the ex-President of the Congress honestly say that the same is true of the different races of India? There is so much unlikeness between the two countries that even the subdivisions of the same community do not intermarry or even interdine. Then again barely 15 per cent. of the people in India are literate and even of that small percentage barely 50 per cent. understand political, economical and other questions, so much so that they do not understand even their common interests. A recent example may be cited. A few years ago the Indian piecegoods merchants came to the conclusion that in the interests of their import trade they should deal in rupee currency only. As soon as they began to act in that manner, some masterful European houses bribed some of them to deal as usual in sterling currency. They promised them a good discount. The dealers succumbed, and those who were resolute to deal in rupee currency only lost heavily in competition and were forced to return to the sterling currency.

Many such instances can be quoted. They don't understand the difference between a momentary gain and a lasting good. At the instance of the so-called leaders the different legislatures

in the country have passed resolutions calling upon the Government to deal in rupee currency only and yet strange to say they themselves deal in the other currency! The Government have agreed to deal as far as possible in the rupee currency and their purchase departments show every year an increase in their dealings in rupee currency. Can the so-called leaders show that they have been practising as they preach in this matter? Their talk of unity is all froth.

Under such circumstances it is idle to say that India is fit for Parliamentary Government on the model of Canada or any other dominion. The experience of the Montford scheme proves that a Western model is not suitable for India in its present stage. Joint electorates are useless: minority communities have no chance under them. An enlightened and important community like the Parsi has no elected representative in the Legislative Assembly! For the representations of the varied interests separate electorates are necessary, and not direct elections, but elections through electoral colleges are required. Let all Mahajans, Panchayats, Jamats and Anjumans in every pargana be given the right of electing a certain number of their representatives to the electoral colleges. The number of their representatives should not be in proportion to their numbers only: each community should have representatives not merely according to its numbers, but according to its general usefulness and importance in the body politic. The representatives of the different communities in all the parganas in the whole presidency should form different electoral colleges, and then be asked to elect representatives for the Legislatures, the condition being that candidates for the Legislatures must have a sound knowledge of the *lingua franca* of India, which is at present English only.

The proceedings of the legislatures must be in English only. Such an arrangement only will make them work smoothly and harmoniously. To get the best men the electoral colleges must be empowered to elect as their representatives in the Legislatures candidates from outside their college and even outside their community. They will thus be able to get as their representatives men, who understand English well and can follow the proceedings of the Legislatures intelligently. The present system of elections is faulty inasmuch as only men with long purses have a chance to win, and small minorities have very slender chances even with the long purse. Witness the last election of the Legislative Assembly, where only one Parsi ventured to stand as a candidate and he also failed.