

Montague Chelmsford Reforms

(Indian Council Act of 1919)

(Important points)

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The Montague Chelmsford report was published in July 1918. The reforms contained in the report were embodied in the Government of India, Bill which became an Act in December 1919. The main provisions of the act were.

- The salary of Secretary of State was transferred from Indian to British exchequer.
- Some of the functions of the Secretary of State were taken away and given to the High Commission of India who were to be appointed and paid by the Government of India.
- The number of Indians in the Governor General Executive Council was raised to three in a council of eight. The Indians were entrusted with departments like that of law, education, labour, health and industries.
- The new system of Government envisaged a division of subjects into the Central List and the Provincial List.
- Instead of single- bicameral house was created, the Council of State and Legislative Assembly.

Dyarchy was introduced in the Provinces

- Subject of administration was divided into two lists i) Transferred and ii) Reserved.

- The Transferred list was administered by the Governor acting with ministers appointed by him from among the elected members of the legislature and who were to be responsible to the legislature and were to hold office depending on his pleasure . The Transferred List were
 - i. Education
 - ii. Libraries
 - iii. Museums
 - iv. Local Self Government
 - v. Medical Relief.
 - vi. Public Health and Sanitation
 - vii. Agriculture
 - viii. Cooperative societies
 - ix. Public works.
 - x. Veterinary
 - xi. Fisheries
 - xii. Excise
 - xiii. Industries
 - xiv. Weights and Measures
 - xv. Public entertainment
 - xvi. Religion and Charitable endowment etc.

- The reserved subjects were administered by the Government with the help of members of the Executive Council who were nominated by him and who were not responsible to the legislature. The Reserved items were- i) Land Revenue, ii) Famine relief, iii) Justice, iv) Police, v) Pensions, vi) Criminal tribes, vii) Printing Press, viii) Irrigation and Waterways, ix) Mines, x) Factories, xi) Electricity, xii) Labour welfare and Industrial Disputes, xiii) Motor Vehicles, xiv) Minor ports etc.

Changes in the Legislative side

- Now the Provincial Legislatures was to be called Legislative Councils.
- Of the total number of members of a Provincial Council, at least 70% were to be elected, while not more than 20% were to be officials, the remaining 10% were to be nominated non-officials.

Powers of the Governor General

- The prior sanction was required to introduce Bills relating to certain matters.
- He had the power to veto or reserve for the consideration of crown any Bill passed by the Indian legislature.
- He had the power of certifying any Bill or any grant refused to be passed or made by the legislature.
- He could make an ordinance.
- He had the power to amend, refuse, accept but Governor General in Council could restore it by simply declaring that it was essential to discharge of his responsibilities.
- So far as transferred subjects in the province were concerned, the power of superintendence direction and over local Governments, vested in the Governor General in council, could be exercised only by specific purposes mentioned in the rules.

The system of Dyarchy created complications and broke down the unity of administration. Unable to control the Executive, the Central Legislature harassed the latter. The perpetuation of separate electorates made it difficult for Hindus and Muslims to work together. The Governor was

made supreme in the provinces and the ministers were more of namesake. There was no harmony and coordination among them in matters of policy. Finance was in the reserved list and ministers found it difficult to carry out their responsibilities without adequate funds. Britain failed to realise the political aspirations of the people of India. The Moderates accepted the reforms as a 'substantial instalment in India's struggle for self-rule'. But the extremists like Tilak dismissed it as a 'entirely unacceptable. The reforms therefore failed to satisfy Indian political opinions, and prevent the eventual mass movement. However the reforms were crucial in establishing parliamentary democracy in India and thereby, in beginning the process of decolonisation.