

In what ways did the
british government
attempt to change the
government of india...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

There were many ways that the British Government tried to change the Government to India. Before 1919 the Indian Government consisted of mostly British but that soon changed during the next 20 years.

In 1919 a major incident happened that made many Indians who had previously been loyal to the British to turn against them and join the campaigns for Independence.

In April 1919 a British officer in command of the Punjab region in the North of India, Brigadier-General Dyer, took strict action on a protest meeting that was to take place in the holy Sikh city of Amritsar. Dyer had banned all public meeting in the Punjab area due to the civil disobedience that had occurred after world war 1. Dyer believed that the only way to stop civil disobedience was to eliminate it before it started and also thought that the usage of force was the only way to stop unrest in the area. So when the meeting was called for 13th April Dyer made plans to teach the Indians a lesson.

On 13th April 1919 Dyer marched a platoon of Nepalese armed soldiers in to the Bagh (were the Indians were gathering) and opened fire on approximately 5000 unarmed civilians including women and children. The massacre lasted for approximately 6 minutes and 376 people were killed.

The Amritsar massacre took a huge impact on the Indian loyalty to the British. Many Indians now show the image that the British were prepared to use any tactics, even if it meant the usage of force, to get their control over India and eliminate any resistance to their authority.

The Amritsar massacre led to the formation of The Government of India Act in December 1919 which was originally put forward by the Montagu-Chelmsford report.

The government of India Act was known as a Dyarchy which meant that the two countries , India and Britain, shared power between their representatives.

An Executive Council was set up to advise the viceroy , Lord Chelmsford, on general issues. The Executive council also included the viceroy himself. The commander-in-chief of the army and 6 representatives of which 3 were Indian. The Indian representatives were to be called the transferred ministries and overlook agriculture, education and health. The Executive Council was to have 3 reserved ministers who were to look after defence, foreign policies, tax, law and order.

The Imperial Legislative Council was renamed the Imperial Legislative Assembly and enlarged to 146 members, with 106 of them being elected. The Imperial Legislative Assembly was also to be the lower House of Parliament.

A Council of State was set up to overlook the laws passed by the Assembly. It had 61 members.

The Governor of each Indian province was to appoint a Executive council which would have to be responsible to the Legislative Council and would be elected by a popular vote. However the provincial government of each province would be led by both Indians and British. The Government of India

Act also stated that they should meet every 10 years to discuss if India was ready to be given more power.

However the Government of India soon found out that it had some very major weaknesses that could not go unnoticed.

Firstly there were about 5 million Indians could vote which is only 2.8% of the country's population and only included the richest. The Provincial Assemblies also soon found out that they did not have enough money to carry out their duties. Gandhi told the Indian people not to co-operate with the British through non-violence. This included strikes, fasting and boycotts. The British had no idea how to punish these people. If they beat them the Indian public would lose more faith in the British and the non-violent campaigns would gain more support. The most important weakness of the Government of India Act was that Congress did not accept it and believed that it did not go far enough and it was too little too late. Congress had become a major new movement in India and if the British wanted to make any changes in the way India was governed then they would have to be accepted by Congress.

In 1927 the British government set up a commission to review that the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms were going well. This commission was part of the terms in the Government of India Act of 1919.

The Commission was to be led by Sir John Simon, thus it was called The Simon Commission. The Simon Commission recommended that each individual province in India should have its own little government however

the central government was not be changed. This did not change the way that India had been governed since 1919.

Again there were many weaknesses in this act. The main reason that there were mass protest was that there were no Indians in the commission. Congress boycotted all meetings and a man called Jawaharlal Nehru introduced the idea of an Independent India. So, Congress rejected the recommendation of the Simon Commission and voted for a total dominion status in December 1929. This meant that India would govern itself however it was still part of the commonwealth and inside the British Empire. A Declaration of Independence was drawn up and 21st January 1930 was proclaimed Independence.

However this was not the only way the Indians showed their discomfort. In March 1930 Gandhi started his remarkable Salt March that took him from Ahmedabad to Dandi. In this March Gandhi wanted to prove that India was ungovernable because only the government was allowed to make salt. Gandhi went to the sea and picked up a pinch of salt and in doing this he broke the law. Gandhi was arrested but he had shown the Indian public that if an old man could walk 24 days straight then anything was possible and so after the Salt March congress gained a lot of support. It showed the Indians determination to get the British out of their country and there would be no compromise.

The Muslim League led by M. A. Jinnah boycotted the Simon Commission but later on Jinnah decided it would be better for the Muslim League to co-

operate with the British as it would be a better way to get the British to leave India

Another community that co-operated with the British were the Untouchables. The Untouchables were the lowest of the low in the Indian Hierarchy. They were so low that they were excluded from everything. These people decided to befriend the British as they hoped it would increase their hierarchy.

The British were in trouble. The Simon Commission had been a failure. They need the support of the Congress to have any major effect on India. As they didn't it had proven very difficult to get their views across. Also the fact that the Indian Princes ruled 40% of India didn't help either. Another fact was that the Government of India and the provincial governments relationship was going nowhere as the provincial government was short of money.

So to sort out this problem the British Government decided to attempt a new approach. They invited all the leaders of the British political parties and representatives of all of the political views in India including the Muslim League and the Indian Princes.

A main reason of the setting up of the Round Table Conference was that a new Labour government had just been elected in the UK and they believed in a possible political victory instead of looking after the empire.

The first Round Table Conference took place in London on November 1930. The conference agreed to set up an All-India Federation. Thanks to this the Indian States would have more responsibility however, they would not take responsibility for defence, finance and foreign affairs.

Nevertheless Congress was not present at the Round Table Conference for many of its leaders, including Gandhi, were in prison so, the agreements made by the conference did not mean much.

In January 1931 another Round Table Conference was called up, only this time Gandhi was present so the conference had a much bigger chance of success. This is because Lord Irwin, the viceroy of the time, was deeply religious and ordered Gandhi's release so he could attend the conference.

Even though it may seem that the Second Round Table conference had a much higher possibility of success it was not. Gandhi proposed that India should be made into a constituency without the agreement of the minorities in India e. g. Muslims, Christians. Muslims were unhappy by the way they were represented in the new proposed Indian parliament and the conference collapsed.

The Third Round Table conference was also not successful. It had no representatives of the British or Congress . the conference discussed the right to vote (franchise), finance and the role of the Indian States. The National Government of England that had taken over from the collapsed Labour Party decided that they were not ready to make any new changes to India and so they passed a second Government of India Act. The failure of the Round Table Conferences led to non co-operation back in India where many congress leaders were once again arrested.

The new Government of India Act said that India would have a central government in Delhi. This central government had two chambers that were

all elected and all of them were Indian. Of the seats 250 were reserved for Indians and the other 125 were for the Indian Princes.

India was divided in to 11 provincial states. Each province had its own legislative assembly and its own provincial government. Each province would control all policies except defence and foreign affairs. The legislative council for each province would be mostly Indian.

The viceroy would still be elected by the British Government. He would be responsible for defence and foreign affairs. He also followed advise from executive committee members who were again mostly Indian.

The new Government of India Act hept the communal representation. Altogether 938 seats out of 1525 were reserved for minorities that included Muslims.

This new Government of India Act was a direct result of the failure of the Round Table Conferences. This Act gave Indians more say in the way India was governed. Even though Great Britain still had control over India this was the furthest India could go without getting home rule.

So in conclusion, the British Government attempted to change the Indian Government so it could satisfy both the Muslim League and Congress. The British were forced to hand more power over to the Indians Government that had now got more Indian representatives then it had had ever before. The British Government tried to maintain their control but not giving India the Home Rule she wanted. The Indians were pleased with themselves because

now they played a significant role in the way that their country was governed.