

SECOND ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE (12 SEPTEMBER 1931)

The second session of the conference opened in London on 7 September 1931, during the viceroyalty of Lord Willington. Gandhi attended, it on behalf of the Indian National Congress. Pt. Madan Mohan Malviya and Sarojinl Naidu went there in their personal capacity. The main taskv of the conference was done through two committees'on federal structure and minorities. Nothing much was expected from the conference. The imperialist political forces, which ultimately controlled the British Gov ernment in London, were opposed to any political or economic concession being given to India which could lead to its independence. The Round Table Conference, however, failed as Gandhi opposed the British Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald's policy of communal representation and the British Government refused the basic Indian demand for freedom.

The communal problem represented the most difficult issue for the delegates. Gandhi again tabled the proposal for a settlement, but the Muslim League rejected it. As a result, the communal issue was postponed for future discussion. Three important committees drafted their reports; the Franchise Committee, the Federal Finance Committee and the States Inquiry Committee.

The conference closed on 11 December 1931, without any concrete result. On the concluding day. the British Prime Minister appealed to the Indian leaders to reach a communal settlement. Failing to do so. he said, would force the British government to take a unilateral decision. Jinnah did not participate in the session of the Second Round Table Conference as he had decided to keep himself aloof from Indian politics and to practise as a professional lawyer in England. On his return to India. Gandhi once again started Civil Disobedience movement, and was duly arrested.

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