

A Listener Research Report"INDIA"The State of British Public Opinion
on India in the Autumn 1941.

1. With the object of supplying those responsible for broadcasts on India in the Home Programmes with some background of knowledge of the existing state of public opinion on India, a listener research enquiry was made in September 1941. It took the form of a questionnaire to Sections A, B, and D of the panel of Local Correspondents. 527 Correspondents returned the questionnaire which included the questions on India. 443 of these form the basis of this report.

2. The problem was approached in two ways. First, a number of balanced statements, such as might be expected to receive support from different sections of the public, were laid before Correspondents. They were asked, after talking them over with their contacts, to say whether each statement represented the view of either "all", "a majority", "a minority" or "none" of the people with whom they came in contact. Secondly, space was provided for amplifying comment.

3. Below is a table which summarises the results of the first part of the enquiry. (To arrive at this table some compression has been necessary and the process is described in an appendix to this report.)

ATTITUDES

Proportion of the British Public
taking up each attitude as revealed
by this enquiry:

Interest in India

"I suppose I ought to be interested in India, but it's all so complicated"	More than half
"I am very interested in the Indian Question"	Relatively few
"I do not see any reason why I should interest myself in India"	Relatively very few

On the British record in India

"I have no particular feelings about our record in India"	Not quite half
"I am proud of our record in India"	Relatively few
"I am ashamed of our record in India"	Relatively few

On the British Government and India

"We can safely leave Indian questions to be settled by the British Government"	Not quite half
"The British Government needs watching about India"	Relatively few

Indian Self-Government

"Britain genuinely intends to give India self-government as soon as she is ready for it"	More than half
"Britain is going to withhold self-government from India as long as she possibly can"	Relatively few

British policy in India and Freedom

"There is no inconsistency between our policy in India and our fight for freedom in Europe, because conditions are so different" More than half

"Our fight for freedom in Europe seems hypocritical in view of our policy in India" Relatively few

Indian Self-Government and the War Effort

"We are bound to postpone any increase in self-government in India till after the war" Not quite half

"A further measure of self-government in India would result in an increase in the war effort" Relatively few

The paragraphs which follow are a commentary on these results, supplemented by material derived from Correspondents' observations made in answer to the second part of the enquiry.

Interest in India

4. Generalisation about so tenuous a thing as the interest of forty-five million people in the affairs of three hundred and fifty million people may well be regarded as foolhardiness. But on the basis of 443 reports from widely scattered Correspondents - themselves in contact with more numerous, and more widely scattered, individuals, it is possible to attempt the task.

5. It is, perhaps, platitudinous to state that interest in the subject of Indian affairs ranges through a very wide field, bounded on one side by something akin to aversion, ranging through varying degrees of indifference, to considerable interest in most phases of Indian affairs.

"Am sorry but this is a subject which housewives generally are not interested in. No opinions at all." (LCD 296) Housewife, Watford.

"I incline to think that general interest in India is very fitful. There is a minority (a very intelligent minority) tremendously interested in all the problems of India, but the general public wake up to such problems chiefly when some particular event arouses them - then sleep again." (LBC 1424) Housewife, Letchworth.

Interest in the subject is closely related to knowledge and experience. The majority of people in this country have little of either, in respect of India. Hence interest is limited. Frequently Correspondents in their reports emphasised the enormous public ignorance of Indian affairs, and attempted, according to their social and political lights, to assign reasons for this.

"I found it difficult to get definite opinions about India, as almost everyone felt the whole question so vast and complex that they hesitated to give a clear-cut opinion on most points, also it was felt that the matter was so far removed from their ordinary lives." (LX 616) Grocer, Pembury.

"Quite a lot of people are interested in India and wish to give the Indians a 'square deal'. They, however, feel that they do not know enough about the background of the varying policies, views, and present conditions to give reasoned answers to all questions." (NX 784) Schoolteacher, Keighley.

"The vast majority have no opinions and little interest and it would seem that public opinion has not been nearly sufficiently well educated in these matters or indeed has had any easy opportunities of learning the facts of Indian life and its position." (LCD 543) Clerk, Milford.

"Only about 10% of my contacts showed any interest in the Indian problem. On the whole India is looked on as a foreign country - some parts of the British colonies in Africa are also similarly regarded - as distinct from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, etc., which are looked on as definitely English." (NX 730) Pharmacist, Blackpool.