

The 1867 Reform Act granted the right to vote to working class men in towns but not in counties. William Gladstone and most members of the Liberal Party argued that people living in towns and in rural areas should have equal rights. Lord Salisbury, leader of the Conservative Party, opposed any increase in the number of people who could vote in parliamentary election. Salisbury's critics claimed that he feared this reform would reduce the power of the Tories in rural constituencies.

In 1884, Gladstone introduced his proposals that would give working class males the same voting rights as those living in the cities. Although the bill was passed in the House of Commons, it was rejected by the Conservative dominated House of Lords. Gladstone refused to accept defeat and reintroduced the measure. This time the Conservatives agreed to pass Gladstone's proposal in return that it would be followed by a Redistribution Bill. Gladstone accepted their terms and in 1884 the Reform Act was allowed to become law.

The twenty-five odd pages of the Report of Native Papers for mid-January 1884 covered scores of issues, though mostly of a regional and local nature. For example, the quarterly journal of the Poona Sarvajanic Sabha analysed the proposed reforms in the resettlement of land assessments, while *Indu Prakash*, an authentic voice, called for amendments in the Land Revenue Code. Another section in the compilation dealt with Local Self-government, followed by legislation. Both reveal the newspapers' depth of involvement, as also their demand for wider participation in local affairs. They reacted to and commented on the viceroyalty of Ripon (1880-84) and his successor Dufferin (1884-88). It was during his period that the Indian National Congress was founded in Bombay.

Another concern of the newspapers was to reform the legislative council in order to provide representation to the non-official elements; this demand figured again and again in the Congress resolutions. The *Dnyan Prakash* (4 February 1884) also criticized the monopoly of high offices in India held by the Europeans. It concludes with a stern warning:



**WHAT IT HAS COME TO ;
OR
THE LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE LEADERS
AT LOGGERHEADS.**

Conservative—Down with you !

Liberal—And down with you, too !

તડાતડી પર આવી લાગેલી વાત.
કાનઝરવેટીવ સાલસઝરી—તાઝ' પીલ ખરયા
ખરખર !

લીબરલ ગઝેડસરન—અને તમેખી ખરયા ખર
ખર થવાના, યા !