

The South Atlantic  
Indian Question -  
World opinion  
1947

Item no. 50

263.2

SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS  
(INCORPORATED)

To:

Mr. Quintin Whyte

From: The Regional Representative,  
S. A. Institute of Race Relations,  
P.O. Box 731,  
DURBAN.

19/12/47

Dear Mr. Whyte,

In case you missed my footnote to yesterday's letter, please send me a supply of the two last issues of RR.

The enclosed is for your information and file. It is not for publication.

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I expect that your attention has already been drawn to the fifth para of RR/174/47. There IS a Colour Bar on Maritzburg buses. I understand that the position has not been altered as a result of the Sililo case.

Yours sincerely,

MW

22 DEC 1947	
Received .....	
For Attention .....	
Recorded .....	
Acknowledged .....	
Answered .....	



For Private Circulation only.

MEETING OF THE DURBAN INDO-EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON NOVEMBER 10.1947.

ADDRESS BY; MR. MAURICE WEBB, (Chairman of the Council) on;

THE SOUTH AFRICAN-INDIAN QUESTION- WORLD OPINION"

CHAIRMAN: Mr. H.S. Miller.

PRESENT: 30 MEMBERS .

ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS.

World Opinion is interested in the S.African Indian situation particularly since the subject was raised at United Nations by the Government of India. This World Opinion is, however, divided and has to be seen against a background of general indifference. Of those who are keenly interested in world events many have their attention focussed elsewhere; on Palestine, or Java, or Russia. Anyone who bases hope of a solution of our difficulties in South Africa, coming from a strong united informed world opinion is bound to be disillusioned.

At United Nations the conflict between white and non-white which dominated the scene last year is now one among other conflicts; that between "East" and "West" ( meaning Russia and her supporters and America and her supporters) and between the Arab and non-Arab worlds for example.

Discussions involving South Africa are at present going on at United Nations with regard to South West Africa and with regard to the position of South African Indians. In both cases South Africa has declined to comply with the requirements or the suggestions contained in resolutions passed by the U N Assembly last year and the question that is being asked at U N, particularly by the delegation of the Government of India, is, "What can we do to compel South Africa?"

We observe already that there are limits to the power of United Nations. It is a valuable forum. It gives an opportunity for grievances and difficulties to be ventilated. Through its subsidiary organisations, notably UNESCO, it can do long term constructive work. But, in practice it cannot intervene decisively in a situation such as that of the Indians in S.Africa. It can discuss, suggest, recommend, but that is all. When it tries to go further as it did in the case of Spain, it only defeats its own objectives. We have to face the fact that whatever resolution emerges from the discussions now proceeding, the situation will be the same, that whatever United Nations can effectively do in regard to South African Indians, has already been done. Had the Assembly been wise it would have agreed last year to let the legal aspects of the case of the Government of India go to the International Court of Justice. If the International Court had found against South Africa the moral force of the Assembly's resolution would have been greater; but, in any case it is upon moral force and not on physical compulsion that United Nations has to rely.

This means that for a solution to the complex, difficult and grievous problem of the relations of Indian and European in South Africa we must look not to United Nations, but to ourselves. The solution must be found here. This is largely a Durban problem because 40% of the Indians in South Africa live in the City of Durban. A great responsibility rests upon the Indo-European Council and upon all of us who care for the good name of our country and for good relations between its people. We, Indians and Europeans, must work at this thing together until some solution of our difficulties can be found.



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