

Mr. Chairman, Chiefs and Members of Council.

I have read through the Memorandum prepared by Chief Tshekedi for transmission to the British Government and regret that I have been absent from the proceedings for a few days owing to an unfortunate accident that occurred to my wife.

In looking through the Memorandum I must express strongly that I cannot support the Memorandum at this stage, and very much doubt whether at any stage the contents of the Memorandum can be supported by me.

In the first paragraph of the Memorandum, we, as Chiefs of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, allege that "on behalf of ourselves and our respective peoples we are presenting this Memorandum". This is not correct; in fact it is very far from being correct as our peoples have not been consulted and asked for their opinions about the matter.

This Memorandum has been rushed and forced upon the Chiefs without due consideration by them or their peoples. The matter is one of the greatest importance to the people of Bechuanaland Protectorate and our intervention one way or the other may have the strongest and most damaging repercussions that one can imagine. You wish now to interfere with the rights and liberties of people in the neighbouring country without taking into any consideration what their feelings in the matter may be.

We have, as stated in the Memorandum, from time to time recorded our protest against any suggestion for the inclusion of Bechuanaland Protectorate in the Union of South Africa, always using the argument that, before such a move can be considered by the British Government, the residents of Bechuanaland would be fully consulted. Here we are now trying to interfere with the people of South West Africa without our first having consulted them as to whether they wish to make a change from their present position into the suggested status of bringing their country under the Mandate of the British Government. It must be apparent, therefore, that the very argument that we tried to use in paragraph 3 will be thrown back at us as soon as the Memorandum is presented to the British Government, if ever it is so presented.

Have you however stopped to think what would happen if, in compliance with your request, the Mandate of South West Africa is taken away from the Union Government and placed under the British Government? It is quite clear that if that were done the Union Government would feel slighted and would feel that the British Government is accusing them of mal-administration of the Mandate of South West Africa. There can only be one result from such an action and that is that the feeling between the British Government and the Union Government would become strained and that Bechuanaland Protectorate (an integral part of the British Empire) which wishes to inaugurate the change will as a consequence have barriers thrown up against it economically.

It cannot be denied, and is an accepted fact, that without the markets of the Union of South Africa we are hopeless. If the Union closes its borders to us where are we to look for markets? Our egress according to the Memorandum is South West Africa. Are we to move our livestock and produce across the desert to South West Africa without adequate transport; and then when it arrives there who is going to buy our cattle and produce?

Referring to paragraph 5 of the Memorandum, I would ask you to consider for a moment how far our Territory would have developed were it not for the concessions that have been granted to us from time to time by the Union and Southern Rhodesia.

With regard to the native policy of the Union of South Africa, have we anything before us in the shape of proved facts

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that the native policy in South West Africa, as imposed by the Union Government, has placed these native people in any worse position than they were before the Mandate was taken over by the Union Government?

While on this question it ~~will~~ ill becomes us to talk about displaced people from South West Africa. We have always had displaced peoples in Bechuanaland even before the arrival of the British.

In the Memorandum we are asking for a free and open route to a free West Coast port. Have we ever made application for a free and open route? Has such an application ever been refused to us by the Union Government as a mandatory power? If such route were given to us are we in a position to build a railway line; and if we are, are we able to meet the expenditure for the erection and running of such a line? If not, can we reasonably hope after all that Britain has economically suffered in this war that she will provide funds and carry the losses for the running of such a railway line?

All these are points that have not been given consideration to either by ourselves or by our peoples. We have had no time to place the proposals before our people and I think that we would be doing a very wrong thing and making ourselves ludicrous if this Memorandum should go forward in its present form, without more careful consideration. The matter should be submitted to our peoples for full discussion and authority for us to sign any such proposals.

It may be true that the Bakgatla are to a minor extent differently situated in comparison to other tribes but what applies to the nakgatla must in a very great measure apply to the other tribes of Bechuanaland Protectorate.

As you know, a ~~big~~ big proportion of my people live in the Transvaal under the Union Government and have common interests with us in Bechuanaland Protectorate. Up to now, I have had no complaints of wrong treatment by the Union authorities which would justify me in any way suspecting the suggestion that if the Union Government incorporated South West Africa in the Union, the position of the Bechuanaland Protectorate would become ~~worse~~ worse.

I must, therefore, lodge my strongest protest against the Memorandum and cannot associate myself with it in any way.

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