

NATIVE TRUST AND LAND BILL.

Exclusion of STEELPOORT RIVER from proposed Released Area No. 32.

In the Report and Proceedings of the Joint Committee on the Native Bills, on pages 63 and 64 there is a description of the proposed Released Area No. 32.

On page 64 line 8 the description states:-
 "thence north-eastwards along the boundaries of and including the farms OLDHAM" etc. and the description goes on to line 21 of the same page to "AAPIESBOOM No. 229 aforesaid, DRIEHOEK No. 87" etc.

Thus it is that almost the whole of the river STEELPOORT is excluded from the proposed Released Area. The exclusion is most impolitic and is likely to prove a constant source of friction between white and black throughout that neighbourhood.

Taking the STEELPOORT river upwards from its junction with the OLIFANTS, the only riparian farms left in the proposed Released Area are the farms ZAMENLOOP, KROMELLENBOOG No. 387 on the left bank, ONVERWACHT No. 301 on the right bank and the farm AAPIESBOOM No. 229 about seventy miles higher up the STEELPOORT. The three first named farms are stony, mountainous, with little or no grazing and are useless for agriculture, except for some twenty morgen at the southern corner of KROMELLENBOOG. AAPIESBOOM No. 229 is a valuable farm which lies on both banks of the STEELPOORT at the southern end of the LULU range.

With the exception of ZAMENLOOP, KROMELLENBOOG and AAPIESBOOM No. 229, the Released Area boundary has been

pushed/

pushed one farm's width back from the left bank of the STEELPOORT all along its course, thus largely destroying the value of this part of Released Area No. 32 for the purpose for which it will be required. It deprives the natives of access to water and forms an unnatural boundary which will have to be fenced at great and continuous expense. If persisted in, this boundary is likely to be, for ever, a cause of ill-feeling between white and black.

On the other hand the STEELPOORT itself, would form a fair, natural and visible line which the natives have always looked upon as the boundary of what has been known as the SEKUKUNILAND area since the days when in 1857, their Chief SEKWATI made a treaty with the LYDENBURG Republic defining the STEELPOORT as the boundary between white and black.

At the time when the Beaumont Commission took its evidence in LYDENBURG the main witness for the exclusion of both banks of the STEELPOORT from the Native Area was the late MR. J. NIEUWENHUIZE while among those who gave evidence in favour of making the STEELPOORT the boundary were the local Commissioner of SEKUKUNILAND and MR. G.C. SCHOEMAN a well-known farmer who was regarded as an expert on the subject. MR. SCHALK BURGER who was a member of the Commission favoured the views of MR. NIEUW^{EN}HUIZE but that Commission eventually decided to recommend that five farms ZAMENLOOP, KROMELLENBOOG, KRANZKLOOP, HAAKDOORNHOEK and NABOOMKOPPIES on the STEELPOORT LEFT BANK should all be in the Released Area. It will be noted that the last three of these are now excluded.

The Eastern Transvaal Natives Land Committee (the STUBBS Committee) reported in 1918 (vide Blue Book U.G. 31 - 18, page 17) :- "In the STEELPOORT Area the Committee finds:

"(1) That the left bank of the river is very largely occupied by natives at the present time, and is traditional Native country;

"(2) That the Natives living in the south-eastern portions of the old area are, in dry seasons, dependent entirely on the river for the watering of their stock. The river, moreover, is a natural and visible boundary, and has been regarded by the Natives for many generations as marking the limit of European interests."

"It is true, on the other hand, that the river is capable of being used for irrigation, but in this respect, the left bank is no wise comparable to the right bank, which is reserved for Europeans. No comprehensive scheme of irrigation is possible, and in any event, it is extremely doubtful whether the volume of water available is sufficient to irrigate the land capable of receiving it. The left bank is extremely rugged, even mountainous in parts, and the Committee is confident that it has little or no value for white settlement."

Several of these farms riparian to the STEELPOORT on the SEKUKUNILAND or Released Area side, are now owned by white farmers including the family of the present sitting Member of Parliament for LYDENBURG MR. E. DE SOUZA (BOTHASHOEK), the family of the previous member the late MR J NIEWENHUIZE (also BOTHASHOEK), and the family of the first Union member for LYDENBURG MR. C.J. JOUBERT (STEELPOORTDRIFT) but this coincidence should not deter Parliament from rectifying what is at present an obvious injustice and what is contrary to the recommendations of both Land Commissions.

If the line, as at present demarcated in the Schedule to the Bill, is carried, it will show that Parliament is swayed by other influences than by truth and justice in its endeavour to find a solution of the Land

question and it will be

question and it will be a fruitful source of future trouble.

"D.R. Hunt".

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