

Undated

(Bantu Welfare Trust)

Draft Letter to Mr. Hofmeyr regarding South-West Africa. *N4.3*

BANTU WELFARE TRUST

P. O. Box 97, Johannesburg.

Right
The Hon. Jan H. Hofmeyr, M.P.,
Parliamentary Buildings,
Cape Town.

Dear Mr. Hofmeyr,

As a member of the Bantu Welfare Trust, We take the privilege of approaching you concerning a matter which has received some considerable consideration from the Trust and also from the South African Institute of Race Relations, and in regard to which we have reached an impasse. We refer to the question of sending a deputation representative of these two bodies to South-West Africa.

It has been urged by the members of the Institute and the Bantu Welfare Trust, by Colonel James Donalson, who has had first-hand experience, as you know, of the country and people, by Senator Edgar Brookes, Mr. Molteno, and others, that such a deputation should visit South-West Africa (1) to gain an objective and accurate view of the present situation, (2) to suggest how Native and Coloured interests might be protected if the territory were incorporated into the Union, and (3) to publish this information in pamphlet form for the benefit of members and others interested in the matter, without necessarily taking any line on the question of incorporation.

Mr. J. D. Rheinallt Jones and Mr. L. Marquard discussed this matter with the Administrator of South-West Africa who agreed that such deputation visit the latter's territory in May after the Union Government's consultation with the Native tribes and the Rehoboth people had been completed. It was decided to notify the Prime Minister of these plans and request his agreement to the proposal. Such communication was accordingly sent.

Couraged
In reply to this communication, however, General Smuts discouraged the sending of such a deputation until after the meeting of UNO in September, at which meeting he will discuss the question of incorporation. He states that Government consultations with Natives in South-West Africa are taking place, and that it will be confusing to the Native mind to find other non-official inquiries being made at the same time.

We recognize the force of what General Smuts says about having more than one inquiry being conducted at the same time. It was not our intention to send this deputation until some time had elapsed after the official inquiry which, we were given to understand, would be completed in March.

We feel strongly, however, that to postpone such inquiry until after September would reduce its value very greatly. We feel, further, that a report by an impartial deputation of competent and independent investigators might conceivably strengthen the Government's hands in its representations before UNO and in laying down, later, a liberal and far-sighted policy for the peoples of that land.

Can you, as a member of both the organisations concerned, give us a word of guidance in this matter? We are reluctant to drop the question because we believe too little is known about the actual facts concerning South-West Africa and its immediate human problems. And we are not happy at the prospect of postponement of such inquiry

until the end of the year. If this is the only alternative, we shall probably drop the matter of deputation and content ourselves with getting someone familiar with the territory to prepare a pamphlet for us containing as much information as is available in the Union. This would be a poor substitute for a fresh report.

With cordial good wishes,

Yours faithfully,

The Bantu Welfare Trust,
The S. A. Institute of Race
Relations,

Secretary.

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