

Native Laws Amendment Bill Expected to be Passed This Session

"I am one of those," he said, "who feel that it would have been better to have held over the further consideration of this measure until the next session, by which time the Native Representative Council would have had an opportunity of scrutinising it, and by which time the natives would have their own elected representatives in the Assembly and in the Senate.

"I recognise, however, that there is a good deal to be said in principle for many of the provisions of the Bill, and, provided certain amendments are agreed to in committee, I am not prepared to vote against the third reading.

"I have been convinced, however, that in regard to this non-party measure, on which every member has complete freedom as to his vote, the majority of the House, consisting chiefly of the rural members, especially in the northern provinces, as well as the Malanite opposition, are determined that the measure shall become law this session.

"Any organised attempt, by those of us who would have preferred to see the measure postponed, to hold up the Bill in Committee in the hope of forcing the Minister to drop it, is in my opinion, doomed to failure. I feel, therefore, that the only wise and responsible course to adopt is to press for the acceptance of certain amendments.

"If the Minister indicates in advance as I feel confident he will, that he will accept these reasonable amendments, which will have the effect of removing from the Bill as drafted much of its present harshness, then the time likely to be taken in Committee will be very considerably reduced by the abstention on the part of members of the so-called Liberal group from any obstruction."

Of the specific amendments which he thought essential the Member for Berea referred to the clause empowering the Minister to remove churches and schools from an urban area. He considered that at least churches should be exempted and that the section should provide that the Minister should take into consideration the reasonable recreational requirements of natives whose residence is with their employers or who are otherwise exempt from residence in the location or native township.

SOCIAL NEEDS

The clause as drafted should also provide that due consideration should be given to the religious, educational and social needs of such locations or native village as may make desirable the residence of an accredited European worker.

The clause at present prohibits any European, not being an officer of the Native Administration Department, or a local authority or a member of the South African Police, from residing in any location or native village without the approval of the Minister and the concurrence of the local authority concerned.

LIBERAL OPPOSERS SATISFIED WITH MODIFICATIONS

From G. A. HEARD, Our Political Correspondent
Capetown, Sunday.

AS a result of discussions between the liberal elements in the United Party and the Minister of Native Affairs, Mr. Piet Grobler, it is probable that the Native Laws Amendment Bill will be so modified in certain of its more drastic proposals that it will pass through the House this session without strenuous opposition.

The Minister, who is determined to pass the Bill before Parliament rises, has, I understand, agreed to meet some of the chief objections to the measure, and although the concessions are not likely to be substantial, the liberals have decided not to obstruct the further progress of the Bill.

Their attitude was defined by Mr. Leif Egeland, M.P. for Berea, when I interviewed him to-day.

"DISTURBING POWERS"

"In regard to Section 21 of the Bill, which gives the Minister what are, in my view, disturbingly arbitrary and far-reaching powers to order the removal of redundant natives from urban areas, I think," said Mr. Egeland, "it would be some safeguard if the Minister's exercise of these powers is made conditional on prior consultation with the Native Affairs Commission.

"It has long been the practice for the Minister in these matters to consult beforehand with the Native Affairs Commission, and there should, therefore, be no objection to such consultation being specifically enjoined wherever in the Bill the Minister is given any discretionary powers.

"Even with the above amendment, however, I think it is more than probable that some of the United Party members will vote against this clause, which is admittedly one of the principal sections of the Bill.

"The clause which permits a local authority to call upon an employer to deduct up to 50 per cent. of the wages of a native employee who resides in a location in order to pay his rent to the urban authority would, in all probability, cause grave hardship in many cases. The proportion of wages the employer may deduct should be reduced to 25 per cent. at the most.

RENT ARREARS

"Furthermore, the same clause should be amended so far as warrants of execution against the movable pro-

perty of any native, who is in arrears with his rent are concerned, by providing that due notice shall first be given to such native who shall have an opportunity of being heard. As the clause stands cases might easily arise where the first intimation to a native that he was in arrear with his rent might be the confiscation of his goods under warrant of execution.

"The Young-Barrett Committee had recommended," added Mr. Egeland, "that natives born or domiciled in an urban area should be exempted from the requirements of the clause empowering their removal from that area when out of employment, and I feel that this recommendation, somewhat on the lines of the amendment which has been tabled by Mr. Morris Alexander, should be accepted.

"If the amendments I have mentioned, as well as a few others of minor interest which have already been tabled in the Order Paper by the Minister of Native Affairs and others, are carried then I for my part will be prepared to support the third reading of the Bill, notwithstanding the objections which I have voiced to its being proceeded with at this late stage of a long and wearing session."

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10/5/37

MR. GROBLER IS GOING TO HAVE HIS WAY

Capetown, Saturday.

THE prospect of a Liberal revolt on Mr. Piet Grobler's Native Laws Amendment Bill was diminished materially during the past week. Although an almost unanswerable case has been made out for deferring consideration of the measure until next session, the Minister remains adamant in his determination to force through his proposals in the dying hours of a long session.

His obstinacy has struck fear into the hearts of the Liberals and it is unlikely that they will do more than make a forlorn attempt to import a more generous measure of magnanimity into the Minister's drastic proposals.

Neither Mr. Hofmeyr, nor Mr. Pirow, who represent the two extremes of opinion on measures of the nature, proposes to take an active part in the debate, and, as Mr. Duncan Burnside will not be here next week to fight the Bill at every stage, it looks very much as if Mr. Grobler is going to have



Mr. P. G. W. Grobler as if Mr. Grobler is going to have his way.

It is a matter for regret that a far-reaching Bill of this nature should be steam-rolled through Parliament on the very eve of the establishment of the new Native Representative Council, but political expediency is a powerful taskmaster and in this instance it holds the whip hand.

The Minister without Portfolio, Mr. F. C. Sturrock, who has been getting his legislative baptism in the Senate recently, has already proved himself a sound and skilful pilot. The elder statesmen approve of his businesslike methods, which make up for his limited knowledge of Afrikaans. Mr. Sturrock's Afrikaans, has, however, come on wonderfully since he entered the Cabinet and to day he has no difficulty in following speeches in the other language.



Mr. F. C. Sturrock.

He has also surprised the Senate on one or two occasions by making announcements in Afrikaans. In this respect he is emulating Mr. Stuttaford, who made it his business to improve his Afrikaans out of all recognition as soon as he was elevated to the Cabinet.

To-day the only Cabinet Minister, who is not sufficiently bilingual to follow all speeches in the House, is Senator Clarkson, who seems unable to master the second language sufficiently to sit through a debate, without the aid of a translator.

Even Senator Clarkson is gradually improving. It is doubtful, however, whether any of the English-speaking Ministers in the Cabinet will ever attain the standard of bilingualism set by Sir Patrick Duncan, when he was Minister of Mines.

Mr. J. W. Higgerty, the member for Van Brandis, who alone had the courage to stand up against the big

battalions on General Smuts's latest Liquor Amendment Bill, is himself practically a teetotaler. He is, however, one of those who regard the Roos Act as a most unfortunate piece of legislative patchwork, and he is not afraid to say so in the House. He believes that the wholesale closing of bars in Johannesburg will benefit nobody and will certainly cure none of those social evils which make the prohibitionist's flesh creep.

Unfortunately, the member for Von Brandis was unable to convince a Parliament which invariably takes the line of least resistance, where anything in the nature of liquor legislation is concerned. On this occasion, he was up against the rigid determination of General Smuts, who took the line that if the House did not want his Bill, he would drop it and allow the 1928 Act to take full effect.

This would have meant the closing of all bars, and even the temperance advocates have not gone so far as to insist upon that. Still, Mr. Higgerty put up a good fight and he intends to carry on the campaign for a more up-to-date liquor law in South Africa.

Mr. Eddie Rooth, the member for Zoutpansberg, who has been helping Mr. Wessel Roux to carry out the arduous duties of Chairman of Committees, now that Major Van Zyl is overseas, is rapidly making his mark as a Parliamentarian. When Mr. Rooth first came to Parliament, it did not take him long to realise that a private member cannot be a legislative all-rounder, dabbling in every measure that comes before the House.

He decided that the best way to win the ear of the House is to pick out two or three Bills from a long order paper and concentrate on those, to the exclusion of all else. Last year, Mr. Rooth selected the Involuntary Bill and the Native Trust and Land Bill. He made it his business to familiarise himself with every detail of these two measures, and during the debates he was one of the very few men with a complete grasp of the implications of all the proposals.

Ministers look to him on occasion for guidance. This year Mr. Rooth has been concentrating on the Companies Bill, which is unfortunately being abandoned in the last-minute rush. The member for Zoutpansberg should go far in South African politics. He is one of Mr. Pirow's young men (and, incidentally, a close personal friend of the Minister) and Mr. Pirow knows how to pick good lieutenants.

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