

Before closing our evidence, however, we would like to bring forward the following, as requested at a public meeting held in the location on Sunday last. We submit that the Natives in urban and rural areas have been hard hit by the prevailing depression and drought, more so than any other section of the population in South Africa. The unemployment amongst them is assuming terrible dimensions. The Government, according to a Bill now before Parliament, is giving the European farmers £5,000,000 as a drought relief. The distressful conditions of the Natives is so fierce that, in some Native Reserves (Witziesshoek), people may resort to cannibalism and, during this period, the Natives are prayerfully asking the State Government that there should be a temporary tax remission for all Natives until such times as the World market may improve.

I do not wish to take up your time unduly, but I have a mandate from my people to bring this matter before you. The Minister of Finance has brought before Parliament his bill to lend five millions pounds sterling to the farmers--- my people feel that really it is not just-- if there is such a thing as justice. We feel it is unfair that the people who own farms and cattle and evetything should, when they are suffering from drought and depression, be able to come to Government for relief; these are the people who when they earn over £300 per year do not pay anything in income tax; yet we natives have to pay ,whether we suffering from drought or depression or no matter what; yet to-day these people are to be given money. We know that in the native reserves large numbers of animals die from drought and starvation--- the police can always find out what happens so far as the natives are concerned, because other natives will always come and tell them-- they

will always give the game away. The Natives figure that the Commission should convey the message to the Government that we Natives ask to be exempted, to be given a temporary exemption from the polltax, until we return to normal times. You have heard of the heartrending conditions from which the Natives are suffering, mostly through the polltax. Some of the Natives are sent to gaol for one reason or another, because they cannot pay their taxes. Does the Government want to make the Bantu race a race of slaves and criminals? Do they want to get the Natives to go and work for the farmers for nothing? We are now asking for a temporary remission of taxation until such time as the markets are improved. On some of the Free State farms, particularly in the northern parts, Frankfort, Reitz and the Notorious Hoopstad and Boshof, shootings of Natives have taken place. If that had taken place anywhere else, the people would have revolted against the State. The position of the Natives is shocking, it is intollerable. When a Native wants to get his money from a farmer, the farmer says, "I shall give it to you later", but if the man comes again, the farmer tells him that he will shoot him and tells him to get off. Well, sir, I have mentioned these points to you so as to give you an idea of what is taking place so as to give you an insight as to what is taking place among the Natives. I do not want to take up your time any longer, but I hope our message will be taken to the right quarters. But I say this, that the Minister of Finance should not be allowed to bring in such a pernicious Bill as the Master & Servants Bill, under which the farmers shall be given the right to lash the Natives.

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CHAIRMAN: The Minister does not propose to do anything of the sort?— Well, that is what I understand and we want to protest against it. Then we also protest very strongly against this lodger's permit, and I hope you will take note of what I say in my statement, as it is causing more and more dissatisfaction. It only means adding another pass to the great many which we already have to carry.

MR. LUCAS: Is not that lodger's permit to cover the water and sanitary services for these extra people?— In the rate which I pay it is included.

But that is for yourself only?— No, it is not for myself only, it is for the place in which I live.

Now, you represent the I.C.U. of Africa. Is that body going to give evidence at some other centre?— (Mr. Sello): No, it is not.

You said that the Riotous Assemblies Act had smashed the integrity of the I.C.U. What did you mean by that?— I meant that we could not function.

Is there any movement today towards forming trades unions for Natives?— Yes, there is.

What direction is that taking and how far has it gone?— Well, the movement is just in its initial stages, but in Johannesburg we have the laundry workers, the bus drivers and other trades organized as a trades union. The brickmakers have also been organized. We are also trying to organise locally the shopworkers and we are trying to establish societies of municipal workers.

DR. ROBERTS: And the bakers, too?— Yes, but we want to go over these industries one by one.

MR. LUCAS: What is the membership of your body in Kroonstad?— Our figure was 14,500.

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Is that for Kroonstad?- That is for Kroonstad and district, but that was before it went down.

When was that?- In 1928.

Have you been keeping the organization going since then?- Well, since we cannot hold meetings, the matter has not gone on.

You have been studying this question; we are asked to report on the application to Natives in urban areas of the laws relating to the regulation of wages and conditions of employment and for dealing with industrial disputes. Have you anything to say about that?- I want to say that there are several causes which make the organizing of Natives very difficult. We are cutting out the rural areas meanwhile and we want to deal purely with Natives in urban areas. Now, we cannot get these people to meet us because they are afraid; I do not know what has happened. Probably the Riotous Assemblies Act has been preached to them. We are trying, however, and I think that, in the near future, we shall be able to give you a fuller report on the situation.

You are trying to organize the Natives?- Yes.

Is the idea to organize them independently of the Whites into unions?- Well, the idea is to have separate unions for Natives, only because we think that the White union still holds the same views as before, that they cannot co-operate with Natives.

Of the Natives whom you know, would they be willing to co-operate with the Whites?- If the Whites offered us their hand, sure.

Do your people realise the advantages of there being co-operation among the employees, or do they think that it

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would be a good thing to have an organization separate from the Whites?— They realise that if the employees and the Native employees joined hands for co-operation purposes, it would be the best thing in the world.

DR. ROBERTS: That is really your feeling?— Yes, honestly.

So anything that could be done to break down the division would be beneficial to all of you?— Quite. It is one of these things which would help. What makes us backward here is that the White man will not co-operate with the Black man, because he thinks that we are an inferior body.

Have your people been able to get the employers to meet you and to discuss matters of mutual interest?— We have tried many a time, through the Joint Council, but the only times we have met the employers was through the European and Bantu Union.

You managed it once?— Yes.

It was in Kroonstad that you met the employers?— Yes.

What trade was that in?— We only met them as a Joint Council and not as a trade.

Now, a question which we have to report upon is whether the Industrial Conciliation Act should apply to Natives. What is your view about that?— We certainly do feel that that should be the case.

You feel that you, as employees, should be able to organize into a trades union?— Yes

And you want that?— Yes.

If that took place, would you be prepared to enter into an industrial employment agreement with the employers?— Yes.

Take the Wage Act. The Wage Act is based on recommending to the Government that certain conditions should

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be enforced by the Government. Now, do you think that that should be applied to the Natives, or not?- I think that the meaning of the law was that, if the Industrial Conciliation Act failed, then the Wage Act should be applied, and that is exactly what we desire.

You want that?- Yes.

DR. ROBERTS: How could you possibly manage to function under the Conciliation Act with White employees also whose desires must be different from yours. Would you not have more force as Natives?- No, I said that we should co-operate, even on federal lines. If we find some difficulty or some problem in our way and we do not know how to go about it, we should be able to refer to our White colleagues and point out the matters to them.

And they would come to your help?- Yes, that would not only help to make things better, but it would bear out the good spirit between Europeans and non-Europeans.

MR. LUCAS: It has sometimes been suggested that, instead of the Natives organizing and being represented directly on industrial councils, someone from the Native Affairs Department should represent them?- I think that would be rather unfair.

Why would it be unfair?- Because, very often we get people who are supposed to represent Native opinion on these councils, and I do not know whether it is by accident or otherwise, but we have often got people in those circumstances to represent us, who really have not understood the Native mind at all and who have not done us any good, and it is therefore that we say that it is better for the Natives to be represented by a man of their own kind, a man who would understand the psychology of the Native.

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DR. ROBERTS: But does not that view hold good, too, in regard to your having an entirely Native trade union? Well, we can have an entirely Native trade union, but if we are amalgamated with the White unions, we can appeal to them for help.

MR. LUCAS: Have you any suggestions to make in regard to amending the Wage Act as far as Natives are concerned? No, I have never thought of the matter.

It is one of the points with which we have to deal? I shall think it over and let you know.

Do you agree with what the witness has said, Mr. Binda? (Mr. Binda): Yes, I agree with him. (Mr. Sello): I want to express an opinion on the question of good feeling between Europeans and Natives. During the last decade, there has not been a very good feeling. The Natives did not think the White man was giving them fair treatment on account of the several oppressive laws which we have had. For instance, I might mention the Natives Land Act, which was a very unfavourable Act for the Natives, but, with the advent of the Joint Council movement, it would seem as though things were becoming better and the Native is beginning to study the mind of the European and the European is studying the mind of the Native. Hence a reasonable compromise is arrived at. I think that if the European section and the Government encourage such meetings, a great deal would be done to have the South African Native feel more trust in the White man, who is really his ruler. Now, I notice that the Government has arranged for an annual conference of the Natives and the members of the Government. It is only to be regretted that this conference has no effect at all. Although it is just

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an advisory council, the Government does not seem to make use of its suggestions.

It would be a very great pity if the Government were to allow this conference to die away, because, as a result of that conference a great deal has been done to solve some of the great problems in this grand country of ours. Speaking as the Vice President of a very big organization, I think I am entitled to express that opinion.

CHAIRMAN: Well, thank you very much for having put your views so clearly before the Commission?— We want to thank the Commission for having listened to us and we hope that our suggestions may bear some fruit for the future. (Mr. Mote): Yes, on behalf of the body which I represent, I also want to express the hope that the message which I have conveyed to the Commission will find its way to the proper quarters and that something may be done to grant, if it is only a temporary, remission or exemption of taxation to the Natives, who are so badly hit by drought and depression.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 6.45 p.m., MEMBERS SUBSEQUENTLY PROCEEDING BY CAR TO WITZIESHOEK AND RYDAL MOUNT, WHERE AN INSPECTION WAS CONDUCTED OF THE NATIVE AREAS WEDNESDAY ON ~~TUESDAY~~ FEBRUARY 18th, THE ADJOURNMENT FOR EVIDENCE BEING SET DOWN FOR RYDAL MOUNT AT 10 A.M. ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19th.

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