

Native Witnesses

it is proposed to reinstate the curfew and it is being considered, as you possibly may know, by the Town Council, principally because of the moving into town of a lot of Natives and because of the increase of petty theft and housebreaking during the evenings. We are supposed to act in loco parentis for a number of these umfaans. We have been definitely told that we must look after these umfaans who, in the towns, cause a great deal of inconvenience and do a lot of things that are evil. Well, now, I would suggest first of all that, if a regulation of hours is necessary for the protection of people, that such regulation should apply to the population as a whole and not only to the Native population. Because, then it will be made clear that such a regulation is for the benefit of the people as a whole. Secondly, such a regulation, of course, could be done away with as soon as the Native village is complete, because it would be perfectly feasible that no Europeans should be allowed in the Native village after hours and no Native should be allowed in the European areas, after hours.

But, sir, what would be the effect of the reintroduction of the curfew law which is at present being considered? There are certain exemptions being considered for ministers, teachers and others --- they will not fall under the curfew. Well, I would submit that this will have a very bad effect in increasing division among the Native people themselves. We know that already there is, in the Native people, as there is among the European population, distinct jealousy and suspicion on the part of the uneducated man towards the educated man. Whereas the Europeans expect that the uneducated Natives shall help his brothers to rise, by bringing in legislation which

favours the educated Native, that will only bring about, in the minds of the uneducated people, the idea that once again the educated man is using his influence to bring about better conditions for himself and that again will tend to increase the division among the various sections of Natives. The Natives will feel this, and that was the reason why those interested in the matter did not want any particular Native to be exempted.

Then there is the problem of the adolescent. I do not think that the regulations would really protect the adolescents from the evil influences under which they fall when coming to the town. It seems to me that such a regulation could easily be interpreted as simply setting up an easy way out of a difficult situation, whereby, when a Native is brought up for being out of doors during prohibited times, the responsibility can be put on him as a breaker of the law. It does not go to the root of the problem - why is he out at the time, why is there always petty theft and so on? That is the real question.

Then I want to say something in regard to the terms used by European people in relation to the Natives. This may be regarded by some people as a small thing, but I think really it is a very big thing. The common term of "kaffer", "boy", "Jim Fish", simply indicates in the minds of so many people an outlook of denying to the Native people manhood and responsibility. You can take the first two names - take these words 'kaffer' and 'boy'. One hears those terms used daily by European youngsters and I think that, if in the schools and in the homes, the children were taught not to use

Mr. Thomas and
Native Witnesses

such expressions towards the Natives, it would help a great deal. It would help the Europeans to realise the manhood of the Native people and it also would help once more to shew the Native people that we are ready to respect them as men and to give them in time those things which manhood demands.

DR. ROBERTS: What is your explanation of 'Jim Fish' ?- I do not know; I am sorry.

CHAIRMAN: I take it that the Natives are aware of the fact that, among the Europeans, too, there are various terms of obliquay for various classes, such as 'gomtor' and 'bloated aristocrat' and so on ?- Yes, they realise that. But these expressions used towards Natives cause a lot of illfeeling. I am not against some people having nicknames given to them, but what I say is a bad thing is to apply these terms of derogation as 'boy'. It really is a bad thing.

There is no derogation in 'boy' ?- Yes, in the Native language there is. For a Native to be called a boy is considerable dishonour. This question of manhood to a Native is a very important thing. If you take the general state of mind of the people; the terms themselves might not amount to much, but they feel that there is something slighting in them. And then you will also see the children attacking Natives in the street, calling them names and even hitting them. Then, I want to make a point on the subject of force being used by the Police in dealing with Natives. We must recognise that force is necessary on certain occasions. One can bring one's mind to understand that here in Durban there have been occasions when a certain amount of force had to be used. Let us look at the position on Dingaan's Day, when a meeting had

Mr. Thomas and
Native Witnesses

to be broken up. It was a legal meeting and the police were put into a very difficult position through having to break it up. I would suggest that such meetings might be broken up effectively but with less disastrous consequences. One knows, for instance, that the death of that young leader, who was actually rather a fine type of Native boy, has simply planted into the mind of his moth^{er} and brother and others the idea that he was a martyr and so on. Well, I think that some other steps could be taken which would effectively disperse the crowds, you might do something to appeal to the sense of humour of the Native and, thereby, you might retain pleasant relationships. I would far sooner see that done than send out your Native constables who, when let loose among a crowd of Natives, are beyond any control.

CHAIRMAN: You mean that one might just use a fire hose or stink bombs? - Yes; one knows, from experience, that among European students, for instance, a fire hose is a most effective weapon of dispersing unnecessary crowds. Let me tell you, sir, that one cannot stand up against a fire hose. One is simply bowled over and one cuts such a ridiculous figure that everyone laughs. But, psychologically, the situation is completely changed. That would be a further step towards improving the relations between the European people and the Native people, but I am afraid that the present method of doing things is rather looked upon as a cause of offense and creates a lot of illfeeling among the Native people. You have to do something to improve the standard -----

That is it. Is it because you have got a relatively low standard among them -----

?- My contention is that we

Mr. Thomas and
Native Witnesses

should do something towards improving the standard of the Native police, who are rather a cause of offence to the Native people.

Yes, exactly. Is it because you have got a relatively low standard among them, or is it that the Natives look upon them as traitors to themselves? - So far as I have been able to understand the position, it is that the Native police are regarded very unfavourably. They are recruited from among the uneducated and, on every occasion, they use their authority and they use force without any discrimination, and, whenever they can, they take advantage of the fact that they are police and they use their authority against the well-dressed and educated Natives.

Is that your experience with regard to them here? - I, myself, have not observed that.

So that is what you hear from the Natives here? - Yes, that is what the Natives and the Europeans tell me.

I am referring more particularly now to the statement that they use their authority against the educated and the well-dressed Natives. Now, is that the general opinion of the people you get into touch with? - Yes, that is the general feeling of the Natives in the town. Durban has a tremendous number of Natives and I should like to say something under that heading, - Natives in the town. I think if a Native village could be established it would tend very greatly to improve the general conditions of the Natives and it would bring into greater relief the Native problem. There is, for example, the problem of the detribalised Native living in the town. Now, that Native is without the tribal sanctions and, as we know, he tends to become, in many cases,

Mr. Thomas and Native Witnesses

a lawless person. He loses all respect for law and order. I think that the establishment of a Native village, fully thought out in every detail, would do a lot towards combating this evil. First of all, you would have in a definite area the whole of the Native population by itself. They would then be able to look after themselves a great deal better and attend to their own welfare much better. There would be differentiated in the European mind the great difference between the educated Native and the uneducated Native - yet the lawabiding Native and the restless and turbulent Native, because they would tend to get into their various areas just in the same way as that happens in any European town. The Natives themselves, if given the means of a measure of self-government and control, would be able to size themselves up and thereby a sense of responsibility would be created and these villages would develop on sound lines. The Natives would help the authorities more completely and also to some extent would have the burden put upon them of maintaining decency among their own people. I want to make myself clear. You have these umfaans at present in the towns and, if they continue to be a considerable factor in town life, some provision will have to be made for them. I think that the Natives themselves, by the formation of committee and by other provisions that could be made, would willingly undertake a great deal more care of these children by welfare work and so on. I think that, by putting on the Natives more responsibility, by allowing them to assume greater responsibility within the community, you will be able to achieve a considerable amount of progress. I do feel, and it is not only my own thought, but I am expressing the thoughts of the Native

Mr. Thomas and Native Witnesses

people as well that, in such a village, the opportunity of possessing a house and a plot of land would be a very big factor, but if that opportunity is not given, you will not get the Native population to adopt the idea of the village at all with enthusiasm. I would suggest that that would be an important stabilising factor among the Native population, just as it is among the Europeans. Secondly, it would help to establish, in the minds of these people, the feeling that the European is not merely using the Native people as a chattel to be moved on when no longer required.

I am not stating that as the outlook of the majority, but it is the outlook of a very great number of the Native people, and to counteract that, you must give them something that they can see, you must allow them to have something.

Then, following upon that, of course, would come the need of an amendment, as I understand it, to the 1913 Land Act, which would enable the purchase of land by Natives within those allotted areas outside the present Native areas, but that is a matter which is very greatly desired by the Natives. Then there is the question of women in the town. There is a considerable influx of women into the urban areas and I expect that you have had a good deal of evidence on that. I understand that many of those Native women come in, not because their husbands are here in town, but they come in on their own, independently. It is stated, but I cannot say anything further on that, that it is partly a matter of the attraction of the urban conditions which makes them come in and then also the rural conditions which

Mr. Thomas and Native Witnesses

force them to go out to make a living. When they come here, there is the question of how they are to live. A certain number of them get employment in domestic service, but, in relation to the number as a whole, that is a small number because, at the present moment, domestic service is regarded as the work of a man. I would suggest that proper steps should be taken in the direction of altering this state of affairs and that that monopoly is taken away from the men and that men shall no longer do domestic service work as they do now, because, as the Natives themselves say, it is not a man's work and even we in European communities feel that. It is a woman's work.

DR. ROBERTS: How do you suggest that that work should be taken away from the men? - I shall try to shew that as I go on. By so doing, we would open up a recognised sphere of employment for the, at present, rather lost Native women and that would also help to educate them and enable them to look after their own houses very much better when they are married.

Legislation, local or otherwise, could be brought in whereby, after a certain date, new or renewed employment of men as domestic servants could become illegal. Women should be taken on, but, together with that, steps must be taken to ensure that female labour shall be efficient and able to replace the men who are at present recognised by the European employers as being better than the women. That would mean that, under that act, provision would have to be made for training, for domestic training of Native women. There is a certain amount in town at present being done in that direction, though it is not widely known by the Europeans as a whole.

Mr. Thomas and Native Witnesses

How would the Natal people take to that - how would they like a law to be passed under which they would no longer ^{allowed} be/employed to employ a boy? - Well, I have no doubt that many would realise, if the reason were made clear to them, that it was an essential thing to do. Many people, of course, would not like it, but just as you find with the introduction of any new regulation, a lot of people would kick for a start but agree later on.

Surely, you do not urge that the good sense of the Natal people is not sufficient to rise to the need for women servants in their bedrooms? - No, I do not suggest that. I say that, if the point were made clear, the majority would accept it quite willingly.

But why do they not do so today? - Because, I suggest that, in relation to the conditions of the Native people, there is a great deal of ignorance, but once that ignorance is dispelled, there is a great deal of sympathy and understanding, but, what is lacking at the present moment is what I might call a definite drive towards bringing the people to understand the conditions which are at stake.

And next, in relation to such a definite course of training, there should be a definite bureau of employment, so that the Europeans shall be able to get their servants from that bureau and shall know what they are getting. That would probably mean the payment of a higher wage than is at present paid by many Europeans who, at the moment, are getting umfaans solely to help in domestic service. But such employment, I think, is bad for the Native child and bad for the European employer, because, as one understands, it introduces carelessness and a lack of realisation of the value of

Mr. Thomas and
Native Witnesses

labour and responsibility on the part of the employer. In relation to that, may I give this one instance where this is happening, where the increase in efficiency of service due to regulation of service and the raising of wages of such service, would combat the position which at present exists. We know that European children are often in great numbers put by European parents into the care of Native nurses in the different public parts of the town. An instance came to my notice the other day where European children were being illtreated by their nurses - nurses who had been put in charge of these children. One particular nurse, with whom I remonstrated, gave me a great deal of impertinence. There was a lady there too who, at the risk of considerable abuse, took up the matter and put it in the hands of the police and two Native women concerned were arrested by the police. I would suggest that, although it might be the right thing to punish the Native nurses responsible for such illtreatment of the child, the European mother should be equally punished for being careless enough to leave her children in the charge of such persons who are poorly paid and of whom they may have very little knowledge indeed. And then it also comes to the question of the employment of children and that, to my mind, is a very serious question. I would suggest that a certain population of children is inevitable in town, because of the increased number of Natives definitely living in the town, but it might well be that children from the country districts should be prohibited from taking up work within the urban areas if they are under the age of, say, 16 years. I do not know whether that would be the right age, - perhaps it should be 17 -

Mr. Thomas and Native Witnesses

but something should be done so that they should not undercut their own people, for instance, in domestic service, where they are principally used. In the second place, they should not, at that early age, be brought into contact with the evil influences which we know of, and which they are brought into contact with today.

For wage regulation to be brought into force, there would have to be a parallel regulation for educational facilities in the rural areas, with practically free compulsory education up to any given age, which would have to be laid down.

Then, to come to my past point, I want to say something on wages. In relation to that, I want to take up one point in connection with this proposed Native village, to demonstrate that the present wage of the Native people, to use the usual term, is uneconomic. I say so for this reason. If such a village is constructed, as we understand it is to be constructed, it will have to be constructed up to a definitely recognised standard - good houses have to be put up, roads will have to be constructed and lighting will have to be provided for and so on, because the general conception of what is right in the matter of housing is fairly high now and we have the example, I understand, of such a standard set by Cape Town. I have not seen their village there, but the reports which I have seen say that the houses there are of a very high standard indeed. Therefore, we feel that, when a village like that is established, the putting up of the houses will cost a considerable amount. If that village were constructed for European people, the rents charged would be what is generally called economic rents,

Mr. Thomas and Native Witnesses

which would, over a given term of years, pay for the cost of the housing. Between that economic rent and the rent payable by the Natives at present, there is considerable difference. On the present standard of wages among the Native people, one cannot rightly ask for a higher rental per month than fifteen or sixteen shillings. That is on the basis of one sixth of the wage.

CHAIRMAN:

Why do you take one sixth ?- I think that is the general rough proportion, for example, of the Town Council wages. That is the general standard taken for the housing.

Well, let me tell you that very few people get their houses on that economic standard ?- Do you mean that they have to pay higher than that?

Yes, undoubtedly ?- Well, then it is an evil.

Anywhere less than one sixth is very low. One quarter is nearer it. Take other communities outside South Africa. In South Africa, we frequently have to pay one quarter ?- Does that leave sufficient really to enable people to meet their expenses? I have here prepared for me an estimate of what an economic rent would be for such houses in the village and, on those calculations, such a rent would be £1.15.- a month if the houses were constructed by European labour entirely, or it would be £1 per month if unskilled labour, Native labour were employed. I think it is clear that there will be a difference between the economic rents and the rents that can be asked from the Native people and I think that about 15/- is the rent which the Native people should be reasonably asked to pay.

The question is, whether the Native is to be made to

Mr. Thomas and Native Witnesses

pay the difference between the economic rents and the rent which it will be necessary to ask him. Is that difference to be met by the European ratepayers, or is it to be met by a direct subsidy from the Government, or is it to be met by the Natives themselves being called to pay this and then being paid an increased wage. I would suggest that, under present conditions where the necessity is stressed of every section of the community standing on his own feet, that the right thing is for the Native to be put into the position of being able to pay the full rental.

(Mr. Sibankulu): As regards the Native Administration Act, I may point out that, since this Act came into force, Natives who have had the privilege of buying land in urban areas, have been restricted from buying such land.

DR. ROBERTS: Did I understand you to say in urban areas? - Yes. Furthermore, this Act seems to make no distinction as between an exempted Native and a non-exempted Native and the object of the Act, I suppose, is segregation, because, so far it seems to throw all the Natives under tribal control. Then again, the Act does not give due consideration to Natives, in that, for instance, Natives who enter into any sort of transaction in town, coming from different centres, cannot, when it comes to a law suit, sue in the local courts to recover anything that is due to them.

You mean, he has to go to Maritzburg to sue? - No, he must go to the place where the defendant resides.

CHAIRMAN: That applies to the Europeans as well? - No, sir. If it comes to an action here in Durban, for instance, the plaintiff has the right to sue in Durban. It does not matter if he has gone to Kimberley, he still has to

Mr. Thomas and Native Witnesses

go to Durban to sue.

DR. ROBERTS: You mean that, if he wants to sue an European whose home happens to be in Durban?— No, sir. It does not matter whether the defendant has gone to Kimberley, the plaintiff has the right to issue summons in the town where the cause of action arose.

I do not follow you. You could not say that Durban would be the place of residence of the Native. His kaia would be in Eshowe or somewhere else. That would be his home?— No, sir. We consider that this is his home. We have Natives coming from Delagoa Bay, for instance, from East Africa, and they are here. Now, the debt is contracted here, but if a person wants to sue, he is referred to the man's residence.

CHAIRMAN: Your point is that the rules which used to be applied to Natives long ago are no longer satisfactory to be applied to the Natives of today?— That is so.

MR. LUCAS: What did you want to say about the riots in Durban?— I wanted to point to the feelings are between Europeans and Natives. I say that the riots in Durban were the outcome of the Natives voicing their grievances in a legitimate way, but the trouble was that the Native was understood in a different way, and eventually that led to the riots.

CHAIRMAN: And then you mentioned the Joint Council advantages and present limitations?— I want to say that I am in favour of the Joint Council, but, on the other hand, I want to say that the Joint Council is not fully representative.

DR. ROBERTS: Not fully representative of what?— Not fully representative of the Natives, in that it does not express the views of the Native population. It is only open to

Mr. Thomas and Native Witnesses

its members and not to the ordinary Native who wants to go in and express his views.

Will you tell us what is the representation of the Natives on this Joint Council. How do you send people to the Joint Council? - Well, as a matter of fact, I think Natives should be able to go to the Joint Council, but I am not conversant with it. (Mr. Kumalo): There is no direct representation, except that originally each Native member was nominated by friends, they might not have been enlightened Natives, ---- you got enlightened Natives on the Joint Council who were able to follow the discussions that took place.

CHAIRMAN: The Joint Council is a purely voluntary body. It is not a Government body at all. Various people become members of it just the same as you can become a member of any other private organisation. It is not a Government thing and, therefore, people are not elected to it? (Mr. Sibankulu): I just want to say this. The Joint Council is trying to create good feelings between the various sections and that is why I am in favour of it.

DR. ROBERTS: But what is your objection, then? You say that the Natives' views are not represented? - For the simple reason that people who go there go there on their own, and they do not represent the Native population. My objection is that the Joint Council is not open to private individuals. Then, I also want to say, in regard to the restriction of land purchase; that comes under the Land Act, and the Native Administration Act of 1927.

(Mr. Kumali): I am going to speak about the influx of Natives into the towns, more especially into Durban. First of all, there is the effect of the Land Act, which causes an

Collection Number: AD1438

NATIVE ECONOMIC COMMISSION 1930-1932, Evidence and Memoranda

PUBLISHER:

Collection funder:- Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of the archive of the South African Institute of Race Relations, held at the Historical Papers Research Archive at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.