

Misc. 12/38.

TO MEMBERS OF THE NATIVES REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL
FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATIVES AND CAPE
PROVINCIAL COUNCIL MEMBERS

As a session of the Natives Representative Council is to be held in November it seems to us desirable that we should inform you about the most important of the matters we have brought forward in Parliament and in the Cape Provincial Council and elsewhere during this year.

Resolutions of N.R.C.:

We have kept before us the Resolutions passed by the Native Representative Council in December 1937. We at first intended proposing that the resolutions be referred to the Sessional Committees on Native Affairs in the Senate and the House of Assembly, but we found that if we did that we should not be able to bring the resolutions to the notice of Parliament until the Committees had reported. There were other reasons also which made us decide against this action.

Control and Finance of Native Education:

We have supported the Council's resolutions but at the end of the Session the Minister of Native Affairs (the Honourable H.A. Fagan) spoke in the House of Assembly and in the Senate in favour of the control of Native Education under the Native Affairs Department, although the administration will be left with the Provinces. We regret this change of view and will continue to oppose it.

Efforts to obtain additional funds for Native Education have not so far been successful, the Cape Provincial Council adopted a resolution put forward by the two M.P.C.'s. The resolution supported the proposal of the Inter-departmental Committee on Native Education that Native Education should be financed from the general funds and not from Native taxation and that a grant of £3. 12. 9. per child be given. A deputation of leading M.P.C.'s conveyed the resolution to the Minister of Native Affairs. They were accompanied by some of the Parliamentary Representatives. The Native Education Advisory Boards of the four Provinces and other bodies have endeavoured to obtain an interview with the Minister of Finance but he has refused to meet the representatives. Unless more funds are voted no more schools will be registered and increments in teacher's salaries will not be possible after April 1st, 1939.

No steps have been taken to form the Union Advisory Board on Native Education.

A sum of £50,000 has been loaned to the South African Native Trust to enable it to make loans to Provincial Administrations at a low rate of interest for the building of schools in new urban locations. This will help Port Elizabeth and other towns to provide schools in their new locations.

- Hospital Grants: -

Hospital Grants:

The Transvaal Province has not yet passed the Ordinance fixing the rates of the Provincial grant to Native Hospitals. The Orange Free State is trying to off-load the financial responsibility for Non-European Hospitals on to the Union Government. The Cape Provincial Council accepted a motion put forward by the two M.P.C.'s for a Commission on the need for Hospitals in Native territories.

Land Purchase:

Several instances were brought up in Parliament of excessive prices being paid for land purchased by the South African Native Trust. If too much is paid Parliament may object to spending the money necessary to acquire the $7\frac{1}{4}$ million morgan and the rentals charged to African tribes, etc., may become heavier. This matter calls for close attention.

Individual Tenure:

This has been pressed on the Government, and there are grounds for hoping that opportunities for purchase of land on individual tenure will be given before long.

Native Health:

On several occasions the need for medical and health services was brought forward in Parliament and the training of African doctors, nurses, etc., advocated.

Amendment of Representation of Natives Act:

The amending Bill has been passed. The Urban Advisory Boards in Natal will soon hold an election for the third elected member of the N.R.C. for Natal.

Wages:

Strong efforts were made to persuade the Minister of Railways and Harbours to restore the cuts to the Non-European employees in the Railway and Harbours Administration and to increase their wages. A deputation representing the Parliamentary representatives, the Trades and Labour Council attended on the General Manager (as the Minister said he could not meet the deputation). Several M.P.'s also attended. The matter was also brought up in both Houses of Parliament, and it was shown that the Government pays lower wages than the Municipalities and other employers. So far no success can be reported. On every possible occasion the attention of Parliament was drawn to the deplorably low wages on the farms and in the towns, and their evil effects upon the health of the African people and upon the country generally.

Farm Labour:

For the first time in South African history the farm workers have been heard directly by a Government Committee on Native Farm Labour, and their evidence has been voluminous.

An effort to harden the Masters and Servants Law of the Cape was defeated in the House of Assembly when Mr. Geldenhuy's Bill was brought forward. Several M.P.'s supported the efforts of the three M.P.'s.

Taxation:

A resolution asking for the abolition of the Poll Tax was put forward in the House of Assembly by Mr. Molteno and debated, but the discussion was adjourned and it was not possible to carry the matter further. It should be noted that some of the farmers in Parliament were prepared to support abolition for the farm workers, (and perhaps to increase the tax in the towns). A few M.P.'s were also prepared to support total abolition.

The report of the Committee on Methods of Native Tax Collection has been kept back by the Government until the N.R.C. meets. We understand that it makes recommendations along the lines of the Resolutions passed by the N.R.C.

Pass Laws:

A motion by Senator Welsh in the Senate asking for an enquiry into the Pass Laws with a view to modification and simplification was not passed, but an amendment moved by the Minister of Native Affairs was passed requesting that the Native Affairs Commission examine the Pass Laws with a view to simplification. Suggestions should be sent in at an early date.

Pass-ports:

The action of the Government in refusing to issue a pass-port to Mr. W. Nkomo to attend a Youth Peace Conference in New York was actively questioned in both Houses, and the explanations given were most unsatisfactory.

Cheaper Foods:

Efforts to persuade the Government to permit Natives to purchase mealies at the same prices as mealies can be bought for stock were unsuccessful. The taxation of food through the levies on mealies, wheat, etc., was strongly opposed in the Senate when the Marketing Act Amending Bill was before it.

Health:

The importance of more medical facilities and of the training of Africans as medical practitioners, health assistants, nurses, etc., was emphasized. The bad effects of low wages and dear food on the health of the people were strongly condemned.

Physical Disability Pensions Bill:

This Bill proposed to supplement Old Age Penions and Blind Pensions Acts, by enabling the Government to make grants to Europeans and Coloured persons who cannot fully support themselves because of some physical disability. An amendment by Mrs. Ballinger to include Africans was tabled, but the Bill did not come forward for discussion. This matter might be taken up in the N.R.C.

Milk for School Children:

A motion by Senator Welsh in the Senate for the inclusion of Native School Children in the Free Milk scheme was rejected. The National Council for Child Welfare and other bodies are still pressing it on the Government.

Employment of Educated Africans in Government Service:

This matter was brought up several times. The Minister of Native Affairs promised that as much use as possible of educated Africans would be made in Native areas.

Trading Rights in Urban Locations:

An appeal was made to the Minister of Native Affairs to use his influence to persuade Municipalities to grant trading rights. A petition to the same effect signed by all the Urban Native Advisory Boards of the Orange Free State was submitted to the Minister on October 20th. The Minister refuses to use his power under Section 22 of the Urban Areas Act to compel the Municipalities to grant trading rights.

Powers and Remuneration of Chiefs:

In replying to representations made in the Senate and the House of Assembly, the Minister of Native Affairs said that he hoped to improve the salaries of Chiefs next year.

Blind Africans:

The Government is to spend £46,000 in grants to blind Africans this year (the amount was £20,000 last year).

Every opportunity was taken by the representatives in the Senate, the House of Assembly and the Cape Provincial Council to bring the disabilities of the people before Parliament and Provincial Council.

Lashes for Stock Theft:

Strong protests were made in both Houses against the circular sent out to prosecutors on General Smuts' instruction to tell them to press for lashes in Stock Theft cases.

Old Age Pensions:-

The claim of Africans to old age pensions was pressed in Parliament.

Miners' Phthisis Compensation:

The inadequacy of the scale of compensation for African mine workers suffering from miners' phthisis and the need for greater care in their treatment were brought to the attention of the Government. There is a committee considering this matter at the present time on which the Native Affairs Department is represented, but no Parliamentary representative of the Africans is a Member.

Prison Conditions:

The attention of the Government was drawn to the antiquated, insanitary conditions in the prisons, and also to the unsatisfactory treatment of African prisoners. The matter is to be followed up next Session.

Recruited Native Labour:

The Government was asked to put into force the international Labour Convention on Recruited Labour passed at the International Labour Convention at Geneva in 1936. This Convention has not been adopted by South Africa because one clause requires the employer to pay the travelling expenses of the recruited worker to and from the place of employment. The Government is not willing to enforce this, but the British Government has adopted the Convention and the Mines will probably be compelled to observe it in respect of workers recruited in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. This matter should be followed up.

General:

Every opportunity was taken in both Houses of Parliament of bringing up the needs of the African people. This was done in debates and by means of questions to Ministers.

Proposed Joint Meeting:

The M.R.C.'s of the Transvaal and Orange Free State have suggested a joint meeting of the Parliamentary and Provincial Council representatives and M.R.C.'s a day before the next meeting of the Council which I understand is to be held at Pretoria during the week commencing November 21st. We therefore suggest that we meet on Saturday, November 19th, at 10 a.m. in a Committee Room of the City Hall, Pretoria.

N.B. But every M.R.C. is asked to inform Senator Rheinallt Jones, P.O. Box 97, Johannesburg, whether or not he can attend on the Saturday. Unless replies are received the meeting will not be held.

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| Edgar H. Brookes | } | Senators. |
| J.D. Rheinallt Jones | | |
| C.H. Malcomess | | |
| W.T. Welsh | | |
| Margaret Ballinger | } | M.P.'s. |
| G.K. Hemming | | |
| D.B. Moltano | | |
| H. Burman | } | M.P.C.'s. |
| J.G.F. Moulton | | |

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