

MEMORANDUM RE NATIVE AREAS IN THE LYDENBURG-
PILGRIMS-SABIE DISTRICT. SCHEDULED AND/OR
RELEASED AREAS.

Act. No. 1913: This act proposed to separate Natives and Europeans by defining areas within which land should be held only by the one race.

Areas were "scheduled" for this purpose and those set aside for Natives in this District (N.E. Transvaal) known as the Lydenburg-Pilgrims-Sabie District were at once seen to be totally inadequate.

Beaumont Commission:

The Beaumont Commission recommended various additions to this Scheduled Area but even thus the area for this district was declared on all hands to be quite unfit and inadequate for the purpose and when the Stubbs Commission was appointed they had no difficulty in showing that the Scheduled Area was neither suitable nor adequate.

Stubb's Commission:

The Stubbs Commission proceeded to define and recommend a large area which was to be set aside for Native Purposes as a Native Area in the Eastern Transvaal.

This area took the Drakensberg Mountains as its Western Boundary and consisted of a very large area lying to the East of, below, and along the foothills of the Drakensberg; but even so the Stubbs Commission carefully pointed out how inadequate and unsuitable even such a large area must be unless the settlement of natives therein was very slow and gradual.

1927 Bills: An entirely new class of land for Native Settlement is created by the 1927 proposals as set forth in the Amendment Bill.

What are termed "Released Areas" are created and it is apparent that conditions in these "Released Areas" will be quite

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different to those aimed at by the 1913 Act.

Europeans, it would seem, are to be allowed to continue to own, acquire and occupy land inside this "Released Area" but Natives are also to be allowed and, indeed, encouraged, to acquire land within such "Released Area" and to take up permanent residence thereon.

It does not, therefore, appear that "segregation" is to be aimed at within such released areas but, on the contrary, that there may be considerable competition between Black and White for this land.

It would not appear to be probable that land values would fall under such competition although it is held in some quarters that the effect of natives crowding into an area must depress land values because of the inferior farming conditions which would ensue from careless and unskilled methods and also because of the undesirable living conditions created by an influx of native settlers.

The proposals in the Bill indicate a good many restrictions which are to be imposed upon natives with regard to the acquisition of land in such released areas.

Only recognized tribes are allowed to acquire land in combination, except under special conditions to be proscribed, and restrictions are laid down preventing the acquisition of such land except by tribes approved for any special area i.e. special areas are to be allotted to special tribes.

Detribalized natives do not appear to be catered for and such natives will find the conditions of the Bill peculiarly onerous, especially in this district of Pilgrims and Sabie where tribal conditions have for a long time been practically non-existent.

-- The effect --

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The effect of the Bills as published, if rigorously enforced, will be to sweep large numbers of natives out of their present habitats, whether on the High, Middle or Low Veld and to force them, either to take up residence in the released area as provided, or else to accept conditions of life on whatever terms may be offered on farms scattered throughout the Union and as whole-time servants.

A very limited number only will be able to continue as squatters in their present surroundings.

Natives in this district thus uprooted in large numbers will, for the most part, have no adequate cash or means for purchasing land nor will they be united in well defined tribes.

Cattle: Their cattle, which represent the savings from their work, painfully scraped together over long periods, will either have to be realized at forced prices, or moved to fresh areas where cattle diseases are rife and where they will be liable to contract all sorts of troubles to which, in their former surroundings, they had become comparatively immune.

An animal reared on a certain area may become immune to Red Water and Gall Sickness within that area but, if moved to a different area, it often contracts these diseases and dies. Much of the land within the released area, or within any area which could be set aside as a released area, is entirely raw and unbroken, and considerable tracts are quite unfit to support human life.

Any land that is already broken has already been occupied.

Health Conditions: The released area is for the most part but poorly watered and directly the foothills are left fever

-- conditions --

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conditions become more and more rampant.

Natives accustomed to the higher regions will be peculiarly susceptible to fever and other Low Veld diseases, and at the outset, and for a considerable time, conditions will bear very hardly indeed upon those natives thus moved into entirely unaccustomed surroundings.

Crop Conditions:

Another important factor is that the further you go East from the Drakensberg the more difficult it is to find even moderately large areas of ground which could be relied upon to produce adequate or regular crops.

The essential business of growing mealies will become more and more difficult within the released areas as virgin ground is used up.

The unavailability of suitable fertilizers at reasonable cost, in sufficient quantities, presents a problem which in itself threatens to wreck the whole scheme.

In the past, within the areas now under contemplation, natives have moved about at will over large acreages, selecting fresh virgin ground as their former holdings or patches got used up and failed to produce adequate crops. Under the new system this will be quite impossible.

At its best the ground is naturally poor and calls for heavy fertilization.

Under future conditions of constant use it will speedily become quite unproductive.

Present Population:

Nor should it be forgotten that the ground in question already supports a considerable number of natives who have for long years/^{past}moved from area to area within this section of country.

-- The ground --

(5).

The ground is quite incapable of supporting a large access of fresh population if suddenly moved onto it.

The best authorities in the district estimate that the released area cannot support more than from 10 to 15% of the natives who will be affected under the Bill and who will have to turn to this released area for their permanent support.

Estimates place the numbers of natives who are likely to be affected within this district at from 150,000 to 180,000 and only some 12% of these can hope to be provided for within the released area as defined, and even then such provision will be far from suitable nor can they hope to become really prosperous or happy.

On the attached map are shewn :-

(1) The Scheduled Area:

This was the area originally proposed by the Beaumont Commission.

This area is some 80,700 morgen in extent and comprises some of the poorest and most difficult ground in the district.

(2) The Released Area:

This is the area now contemplated under the 1927 Act.

This released area comprises some 202,000 morgen in extent and though it embraces some much better ground than that included in the scheduled area referred to in (1) yet, by no stretch of imagination, can even this area be described as generally fertile or well watered, nor is it by any means free from fever, whilst the proximity to the Sabie Game Reserve lays it open to frequent disastrous attacks by lions, wild dogs, etc. upon stock of all sorts, whilst crops will be at the mercy of large game of every description which break down fences and

-- trample --

(6).

trample crops making farming a heartbreaking task.

(3) The Edge of the Drakensberg:

To the East of this Edge lies the "Stubbs Area".

The Drakensberg represents a well defined, strong, physical boundary to the East of which stretches a very large area of low-lying country at present but sparsely populated. This area is not too well watered and is largely quite unbroken country and subject to malaria and other difficulties. Much of it is quite uninhabitable.

(4) The Transvaal (Sabié) Game Reserve:

This game reserve has already been marked off as a National Park and is subject to certain obvious disabilities as a Native Settlement Area.

It should be noted that the area to the West of the Drakensberg Range is considerably higher above Sea Level than that to the East thereof and climatic conditions are very different indeed.

In Conclusion and to summarize it will be seen that any sudden attempt to move natives in large numbers from one area to another can but have disastrous results.

The difference in climate, soil, rainfall and temperature is very wide.

The extent of the released area is quite inadequate for the support of the natives who will be affected.

Cattle and stock will be seriously affected by the change in pasture and conditions, and great hardship and loss must result.

The natives themselves will surely suffer under the changed climatic conditions when they move into an area heavily subjected to malaria conditions.

-- The soil --

(7).

The soil within the released area is not rich enough to ensure any adequate and continuous return of crops. Fertilizers will not be readily available, nor the use thereof properly understood.

The proximity of wild game in large numbers, and carefully protected by law, will militate heavily against cattle, stock and crops of all sorts.

Facilities for the purchase of land are not likely to be at all adequate especially for detribalized natives, or casual units, or for individuals, who abound in this district.

The price of desirable land is not likely to be within the reach of natives under the conditions suggested.

It is well known throughout this district that any attempt to rigorously enforce the provisions of the Bill, as laid down, must create ^{great} discontent amongst the natives and with such discontent will come passive resistance of the worst description.

The fees which will be levied upon land owners under the Bill will be beyond the means of the average run of native squatters and it is certain that land owners will look to such squatters to refund such fees if they are to remain in their present holdings.

The effect of the Bill upon labour conditions has not been dealt with in this memo, but it will be severe, whilst the established rights of land owners in the district both within and without the native areas will be heavily impinged upon and must affect the ultimate view of the Bill.

PIGRIMS REST.,

21st. March, 1927.

Collection Number: AD1715

SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS (SAIRR), 1892-1974

PUBLISHER:

Collection Funder:- Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

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