

# Indian Opinion

No. 17—VOL. XX. FRIDAY, APRIL 28TH, 1922.

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## NOTES AND NEWS

THE annual general meeting of the Natal Indian Congress was held last Sunday afternoon at Durban in Rowat's B.O. Hall. Representatives from the various districts were present and the Maritzburg branch of the Congress was also fully represented. Apart from the members of the Congress there was present a large number of spectators who were permitted to occupy the gallery seats only in order that there may be no hindrance in the election work. The president (Mr. Ismail Gora) in his opening remarks explained the object of the meeting after which minutes of the last meeting were read out by the Secretary and unanimously adopted by the meeting. A report of the activities of the Congress during the past year was then read and audited accounts of the past year as well as a supplementary audited account up to the 21st of March were presented and unanimously passed. The president in reviewing the report of the Committee drew the attention of the meeting to the increasing seriousness of the position of Indians in this country and to the consequent necessity of the work being done more vigorously and the display of more public spirit on the part of our country-men.

A vote of thanks to the officials for the services they had ably rendered during the past year, as well as to the Maritzburg Branch of the Congress for the magnificent way in which that branch had carried out its duties was carried with acclamation by the meeting.

The following officials were then unanimously elected for the ensuing year:—Mr. Amod Bayat, President; Messrs. R. B. Chetty, E. M. Paruk, Pandit Bhawani Dayal, A. A. Gandhi, Charlie Nalliah, Shaik Ameer, Vice-Presidents; Messrs. Albert Christopher and Sorabjee Rustomjee, Joint Hon. Secretaries; Messrs. O. H. A. Jhaveri and V. S. C. Pather, Joint Treasurers; Mr. Sapurjee Randeria, Auditor; and Messrs. S. R. Pather, E. G. Bassa, Sayed Fakrodeen, S. Emmamally, Parshotam Devshi, A. I. Kaje, M. C. Bassa, Ismail Gora, L. Gabriel, V. Lawrence, R. K. Kapitan, B. A. Meghraj, R. K. Naidoo, B. M. Patel, M. B. Maharaj, A. A. Mirza, M. A. Motala, M. B. Naik, P. R. Pather, M. Thungavelu, Luchman Pandey, Shaikh Amod, B. L. E. Sigamoney, Satyadev, Committee.

There was considerable amount of enthusiasm shown by our brethren during the election of committee members and we can but only remark that if only half of that would be shown in the work that lies before us, we feel sure that we would be able to make progress not at a snail's pace but by leaps and bounds.

In place of Mr. Ismail Gora we have now Mr. Amod Bayat as the president of the Natal Indian Congress. Mr. Ismail Gora who had during his presidency shown tactfulness in conducting the meetings of the Congress had, we understand, tendered his resignation at the end of the year. We have no doubt, his resignation will be generally regretted especially for the ability he had shown during his office.

On the other hand, in electing Mr. Amod Bayat

as their president our brethren have made the best choice they could possibly have done. Mr. Bayat is one of the oldest and most respected residents of Natal whose name is hardly unknown to any Indian in South Africa. Though blessed with prosperity Mr. Bayat is one amongst those who have not been infected with arrogance a disease which it always carries with it. He is simple and possesses a lofty heart. He knows no distinction between rich or poor, or one nationality or the other. He looks to all alike. His love for the poor is very great and does all he can for them. Though himself a Mahomedan he has always proved himself an Indian first. He has the welfare of his community at heart and is ever ready to assist in communal matters. His leadership in Maritzburg is well-known to all, and Durban Indians are fortunate to have him now amongst them. In giving Mr. Bayat the presidentship our fellow-countrymen have honoured one who is worthy of that honour.

With the exception of the new president and a few new members the new election of the Congress stands exactly the same as the old one. The community has done wise in re-electing the old secretaries of the Congress, namely, Messrs. Albert Christopher and Sorabjee Rustomjee. That they are worthy of the position bestowed upon them they have amply proved by the way in which they have energetically carried out their responsibilities in the part. We congratulate the members of the Committee, many of whom have rendered very useful services in the past, on their re-election, and we also congratulate the new members and hope that they will prove worthy of the trust placed on them by the community.

Remarks were made at last Sunday's meeting about Mr. Parsee Rustomjee not taking part in the Congress. In justice to Mr. Rustomjee we feel it our duty to make an explanation in order to prevent our brethren from being misguided. Those who remark about Mr. Rustomjee not taking part in communal affairs are not only untrue but they do a cruel wrong to the revered gentleman. Mr. Rustomjee's past services are so well-known that we hardly need mention them here, and since his recent severe illness Mr. Rustomjee has never been able to regain the health he enjoyed some years ago. Owing to this reason it is true that he does not take part in public meetings and other active work. But, in all matters affecting the community he is never backwards in giving his full sympathy and support and his purse has always been open when expenses have been incurred in communal affairs in the right direction. Apart from this, it should not be forgotten that in the absence of Mr. Rustomjee his place is ably filled by his worthy son Mr. Sorabjee.

The case against Messrs. Ismail Gora, Sorabjee Rustomjee and Manilal Gandhi who were charged on the 30th of last November under the Harbour Regulations with alleged obstruction of the free use of the wharf was heard last Tuesday before Mr. F. J. Clerk in the First Criminal Court. Mr. H. J. Stuart appeared for Mr. Ismail Gora while Messrs. Sorabjee Rustomjee and Manilal Gandhi conducted their own case. Sergt. P. S. Van Vuuren, a constable, Mr. Morris of the Customs Dept., and the mooring attendant were examined, after which the Prosecution closed their case. From the evidences it was not proved that the

...asked in any way obstructed the free use of the writ and Mr. Stuart asked for the discharge of his client without proceeding further with the case. Messrs. Sorabjee and Gandhi opposed the plea made by Mr. Stuart. The Magistrate, however, refused to grant it and the case was adjourned till the 9th of May. There was a large crowd of Indians present at the Court awaiting with keen interest to learn the result of the case.

In these unexpected circumstances we have been obliged to hold several important matters to be dealt with in our next issue.

## NATAL INDIAN CONGRESS

### ANNUAL REPORT

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The committee regretted that the attendance of some of the members had been very poor. And as it was the first year of the revival of the Congress they extended every courtesy to these members but it had made no reference to their attendance.

Owing to the departure of Messrs. A. I. Kaje, V. D. Mada and H. I. Joshi for India their places were filled by Messrs. Anand Bayat, M. M. Gandhi and B. M. Patel.

### DISTRICT COMMITTEES

The whole of Natal was circularised in order to ascertain the desire of our people in the several Magistrate's areas as to the formation of Congress District Committees, but no interest was shown by them. The Committee felt that the formation of District Committees except in special areas was unnecessary. The Maritzburg District Committee had been very active and had been rendering useful service and was to be congratulated for the interest it had shown in public questions. The Committee, however, thought that it was desirable that the Congress should at a special meeting called for the purpose consider the question of the financial relation between itself and the District Committees and the scope of their duties and for the revision of its rules.

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### TOWNSHIPS FRANCHISE ORDINANCE

Protest was lodged and a petition also against this Ordinance opposing the disenfranchisement of Indians in Townships.

### RURAL LICENSING ORDINANCE

The Committee also protested against the proposed licensing ordinance. Both the foregoing ordinances were passed by the Provincial Council, but the Governor General vetoed them. Much of the credit for the work done on behalf of the community in opposing these ordinances was due to the Maritzburg District Committee which at the seat of the Provincial Government was very active. And the Committee believed, the Hon. Mr. Srinavasa Sastri who was then on behalf of the Government of India attending the Imperial Conference in London to whom they appealed, was also of service in this matter.

### THE HON. MR. SASTRI

An invitation was extended to the Hon. Mr. Sastri to visit South Africa on his way to the Imperial Conference in London but he was not able to come. The Committee therefore cabled him at London with a statement of their grievances, and to Mr. H. S. L. Polak, the Secretary of Indian Overseas Association. An invitation was again later, cabled to the Hon. Mr. Sastri, but they had heard nothing definitely from him.

### IMPERIAL INDIAN CITIZENSHIP ASSOCIATION

The Committee had opened up communication with the Association at Bombay, and they thought that it was in the community's interest to develop these communications so that the people and the Government of

India may be properly kept informed of the condition of Indians in the colonies.

The Committee had also been in communication with representative workers in the Indian cause in India who had at some time or other shown sympathy with the Colonies.

### VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION

With the object of decreasing the Indian population in this country the Union Government were inducing Indians to leave for India, in other words, the provisions of the Asiatic Relief Act were being to-day misapplied. Those who had gone to India under the voluntary repatriation scheme were, the Committee knew from information received, practically destitute in this country. The Committee were preparing for propaganda work among people who were likely to leave this country in ignorance of the consequences of going under the so called Relief Act, and some literature to their information had been printed through the generosity of Mr. Sorabjee Rustomjee. An important question arising in connection with the Repatriation Scheme was the signing away of the rights of Colon-born Indians by parents and they would urge on the coming Committee to test the legality of this and other aspects of the repatriation question.

### ASIATIC ENQUIRY COMMISSION REPORT

The recommendations of this commission without improving their position in this country made for the restriction of their existing rights, and they accordingly protested against the report of the commission.

### INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Messrs. A. I. Kaje, P. K. Naidoo and H. I. Joshi were appointed to represent Natal at the Indian National Congress held at Ahmedabad 1st December. The Committee understood that they were not allowed to participate in the deliberations of the Congress, but that they were present during its sessions.

### DURBAN TRAMWAYS

Differential provision based on racial grounds was passed in an Ordinance in regard to the Durban Tramways by the Natal Provincial Council sometime before the revival of the Congress. The Ordinance and the differential notice issued under it had been the subject of much consideration and legal opinion taken in Natal had held that the enabling Ordinance was *intra vires* but it had been the intention of the Committee to seek other legal opinion elsewhere in South Africa and to test the legality of the Ordinance.

### BRITISH GUIANA

It had been a matter of gratification to the Congress that the Government of the Union of South Africa ascertained their views on the advisability of sending Indian delegates from here to enquire into the possibility of British Guiana being able to absorb some of them and that in view of their disapproval of the idea the Government had decided not to proceed with the question.

### IMMIGRATION MATTERS

Among the many important questions arising out of the Immigration Act of 1913, the question of the restriction of the rights of minors whose parents held dual domiciliary rights had been before the Natal Provincial Division of the Supreme Court which had held against minors having the dual rights of the parents. Mr. Goolam Rasool, the parent of Mahomed and Yusuf the minors in the case, was arranging to take the matter before the Appellate Court of South Africa.

### WHARF RESTRICTIONS

Some of the Congress officials and other members of the Indian community were arrested for alleged contravention of harbour regulations and though the charge had been withdrawn against most of them three years remained to be tried. Representations were made to the Government. There had been no cause for grievance.

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#### DEPORTATION

The Congress was appealed to by the wife of Doorasamy an Indian who was under order of deportation for having been convicted of receiving stolen property well knowing the same to have been stolen and sentenced to four years' imprisonment. The man had served his term of imprisonment and it was his first offence. He had come at the age of 10 with his parents who were introduced under indenture to this country some 44 years ago. He had married a colonial born woman and had seven children. He owned seven acres of land, was a worker on the land and never been to India since his arrival in this country. He had no relation or friends there. The Committee appealed to the Governor General in Council and they were happy to record that the Hon. Mr. Merriman, Mr. Alexander and Dr. Abdurahman interested themselves in the case of the poor man, and the Government were pleased to withdraw the order of deportation and the man was now with his family at Tongaat.

#### DAY OF PRAYER

Christmas day was observed as a day of prayer and humiliation for the welfare and happiness of the people in India and guidance of Indian leaders and those responsible for the Government of India. The Communal service was held in Mr. Rawat's Hall, in Victoria Street, Durban. Prayers were conducted according to the several religions professed by Indians and appropriate sacred songs were sung. The utmost difference and reverence was shown to each other's religion and the service was marked with due solemnity.

#### MAHATMA'S DAY

Meetings of protest and prayer were held in connection with Mahatma Gandhi's arrest. A day was observed as a day of prayer after his arrest. Another day was observed as a day of protest against Mahatma's imprisonment. On those days no shops were open, no business done and no work performed except in the humanitarian and essential services. A feature of Mahatma's Day was the assembling of thousands of school-children who, after a parade through the streets, were told of the life-history of one of the great National heroes—Mahatma Gandhi.

#### CHARKA

Exhibition of the spinning wheel known as charkha was given at their meetings and it was a question for the in-coming committee to consider whether it was possible to introduce the Charkha into Indian schools and into Indian homes in this country.

#### TRANSVAAL INDIANS

During the recent strike upheaval in the Transvaal the Committee offered assistance in the name of the Congress, but they were assured by their compatriots there that there was no need for assistance.

#### CO-OPERATION OF NON-EUROPEANS

D. Rubusana ex M.P.C., Cape, delivered an address on the co-operation of non-Europeans in South Africa. The meeting was convened by the Congress, and in view of the tendency in this country to make two great divisions of Europeans and non-Europeans in one of the legislation, they will sooner or later have to consider how far it was advisable or practicable to co-operate with other non-European races in South Africa on questions affecting non-Europeans.

#### SOUTH AFRICAN INDIAN NATIONAL CONFERENCE

It would be within the knowledge of the Congress that the second Conference was held in Johannesburg, and except for two meetings of the executive, one in Durban, and the other in Johannesburg, there had since been no other meetings, partly the responsibility was theirs, for Natal gave an undertaking at the last Conference that the third Conference would be held in Durban. The need for a central organisation for Indian public work was daily growing greater. The next conference should be held at the earliest possible date and the central executive placed on a proper

working basis, so that the work of organising may be effectively carried out.

#### EDUCATION

The activities of the Congress would never be complete nor would our position in this country be improved unless and until the work of training our children in the use of both mind and hand was taken up by the Congress and substantially supported by the community. They had in mind the founding of an institution more or less on the principles of the Turkejee College of Booker T. Washington, but of course with such alterations as would meet our national requirements.

#### DRAFT ORDINANCES

In regard to (1) the Townships' Franchise Ordinance and (2) the Rural Dealers' Licensing Ordinance, the Committee had forwarded petitions to the Provincial Council of Natal, and in regard to (3) the Durban Municipal Disfranchisement Ordinance, and (4) the Durban Land Restriction Ordinance, petitions had yet to be lodged, and with reference to all of them evidence had yet to be given before the Select Committee.

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The Committee desired to thank all who either in service or in kind had been helpful in promoting the objects of the Congress and they trusted that they would resume their work and they trusted that they had given of their transactions, and in that regard they would mention that much of their minor activities had been left out which also had entailed much time and labour, was satisfactory. They would be gratified if they (the members) were satisfied with the endeavours of their committee during the past year, and they trusted now that the Congress had justified its revival that with their activity and support it may be of greater service to the community.

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