

# CALCUTTA'S PROTEST AGAINST UNION'S POLICY.

## FLAGRANT BREACH OF PLEDGE.

### CRITICAL TEST FOR THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT.

The citizens of Calcutta, irrespective of sect, community or political opinion, voiced their united, emphatic protest at a monster public meeting held on Wednesday 3rd February, in the Town Hall, against the anti-Indian measures now on the legislative anvil of the South African Government.

The Lord Bishop of Calcutta, who presided, declared his wholehearted sympathy with the Indian settlers in South Africa in their fight against an iniquitous piece of legislation which aimed at depriving them of their elementary rights of citizenship.

Mr. J. M. Sen Gupta in a forceful speech recalled the circumstances which compelled England to declare war against the Boers in 1899 when the franchise rights of the non-Boer settlers in South Africa were threatened to be violated by the Government of that Colony; and said that the whole of India was now waiting to see what action the Imperial Government would take at the present time, when history was going to repeat itself in South Africa so far as the rights and interests of the non-white residents were concerned.

Mr. F. E. James said that the European community of Calcutta was at one with the Indian people on this South African question.

#### WILL HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF?

Adding to the chorus of universal protest against the proposed anti-Indian Legislation in South Africa, the citizens of Calcutta in a meeting assembled at the Town Hall on Wednesday evening the 3rd February pledged their support to their compatriots fighting their battle with the White Settlers in that distant Colony.

The meeting was largely attended representing all shades of political opinion, sects and communities. The Lord Bishop of Calcutta, presided.

The Lord Bishop maintained that so long as the rights of Indians in South Africa were denied to them by the Union, the Government of India had every right to see to their grievances and that no case had been made out to give the go-by to the Gandhi-Smuts agreement. He expressed his whole-hearted sympathy with the movement which the meeting supported. Mr. F. E. James on behalf of the European community in India said that on this question the European community stood shoulder to shoulder with the Indians.

The most effective speech was that of Sri J. M. Sen Gupta. He completely dissociated with two of the three resolutions that were adopted expressing appreciation of the Viceroy's speech and the attitude of the Government of India on this question. When time came, he said, they would not be loath in giving thanks to His Excellency or the Imperial Government when they had translated their words into action.

Most of the audience expressed their disapproval of the first two resolutions by crying out "not all, not all" when these were put to vote.

Principal Heramba Chandra Maitra in proposing the Reverend Lord Bishop to the Chair said that a crisis had arisen in the history of the British Empire. Never was there a greater need of all sections of the community coming together in an united protest against the wanton violation of the most elementary dictates of justice, humanity and fellowship by the white citizens of the British Empire in South Africa. To talk about the British Government being the friend of enlightenment and progress was utter hypocrisy, if on a matter like this it did not command the strength of purpose to meet the situation properly.

## THE LORD BISHOP.

### "CONTRARY TO PRINCIPLES" OF HUMANITY AND JUSTICE.

The President said he valued the opportunity of showing his whole-hearted sympathy with the movement which the gathering was intended to support. As representing the Church of England in this country he was bound and pledged to support the poor, the weak and the oppressed (cries of hear, hear) and please, God, so long his life lasted he would be on the side of those who were the oppressed and the weak. He had no doubt as to what was right in this particular question. He recalled the words of General Smuts in 1917 when he assured them that with the Immigration Law which was then passed restricting immigration of Indians into South Africa all trouble would end and that the fears which some of the European settlers in South Africa had entertained of being swamped by a flood of Indian immigrants being removed, the remaining difficulties would be easier of solution. It therefore, came to them, naturally as a matter of great surprise that the action which was now proposed to be taken should be adopted by the South African Government, for the chances of South Africa being swamped by Indian immigrants did no longer exist. The Census Report of 1921 made it abundantly clear that in Transvaal where the European population showed an increase of 29 per cent, the increase of Indians was only 2 per cent and in Natal where the bulk of the Indian population resided, the increase of the population of Europeans in the previous decade was 40 per cent. and that of Indians was only 5.5 per cent. Obviously, therefore, their fears were now groundless. Why then did they want to alter that Agreement? Why did they recreate the fears when their ground was removed?

### INDIAN GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY.

He had read in various articles of the complaint made by the South Africans. They said if the Indians claimed to be citizens of South Africa, why should they always appeal for support and help to India and to the Indian Government? Surely they should not have it both ways. If they were domiciled in Africa why should they appeal to India? If their home was in India, why should they resent the effort to repatriate them to their own native country? To this, the President said, the reply was plain. The Government of India had always insisted that it had a grave responsibility for those whom it encouraged and persuaded to leave their own country at the urgent request of the Government of South Africa, to supply labour for the various industries in that country. The Government of India maintained that should the Government of South Africa refuse to give the Indians whom they persuaded to stay by giving them lands in lieu of the return passage by extending the period of indenture when it was completed for a fresh period, should they refuse to give them Parliamentary or municipal franchise which would enable them to gain for themselves the rights to which they were entitled obviously it was up to the Government of India to use its influence and all the constitutional means at its disposal to secure for them that protection which was denied to the Indians. Surely that was perfectly a reasonable attitude to take up, and when people said, 'We have a right to take action in order to secure for us that right, that liberty which we feel we are entitled to' they should give them that power, that position that citizenship which would enable them to obtain for themselves that right to which they were entitled.

### IMMORAL SUGGESTION.

Proceeding the President said that another argument which he had seen put forward again and again was "You cannot expect the Government of South Africa for all time to keep those laws unaltered, namely the laws and legislation which were enforced in connection with the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement of 1914." That was, he said, an utterly immoral suggestion. Certainly that Agreement was reached by the consent and mutual agreement of both parties and not by the initiative of one party only. It was not fair that a certain thing which was agreed upon by both the parties upon a certain basis of existing law, should be altered because the Agreement could not suit one party and any argument based on that would have no force. He maintained that the Agreement, in common fairness on the basis of existing laws, should be fairly administered. That was one of the principal points which Mahatma Gandhi insisted on in his letter dated June 1, 1914 and it was recognised and accepted by General Smuts on behalf of the South African Government in his letter dated the 20th June, 1914 saying that those laws would be fairly administered and the existing rights of Indians

fairly and justly maintained. They could not now, without being charged of being unfair, repeal those laws upon which that Agreement was based and replace it by another which would rob Indians of their rights to which they were entitled.

No Government, maintained the President had any right to pass laws for a section of its people which would rob them of the full opportunity of developing their own personality. Surely the right to develop one's own personality was a right which belonged to men as men and any law based on the principle of segregation of men from men was what they might call 'cattle condition.' Certainly that did not make for the uplift of the people or the advancement of the people, but it only worked for their degradation. "We have a right to maintain that to enforce or to induce people to adopt such a system of living is unfair to them and contrary to the true principles of humanity and justice."

In conclusion the Lord Bishop referred to the question of the removal of untouchability which he felt as a blot on India and he hoped that justice should be done in India in solving this problem.

#### A BREACH OF AGREEMENT.

Sir Abdur Rahim said that the proposed Bill as expressed by the Rev. Lord Bishop was a flagrant, immoral breach of the Agreement entered into by the South African Government represented by General Smuts and the Indian settlers there represented by Mr. Gandhi. What possibly could happen since 1914 that the arrogant white settlers there, were bent upon breaking that pledge? It was indeed difficult for him to understand the mentality of those persons who formulated the Bill and who had been helping it in its passage.

Mr. F. E. James, speaking on behalf of the European community, said that in regard to the question of Indians in South Africa the European community stood shoulder to shoulder with the Indian community. Dealing with the proposed legislation Mr. James said that repatriation of settlers in any country was an extraordinary difficult thing and he believed that time would come when the authorities of South Africa would realize their gain in using the Indian settlers as a part of their body politic. He feared that the present attitude of the White population in South Africa would indirectly do more harm to them than to the Indians themselves. Speaking as a Britisher, he was more concerned with the imperial issue involved in this problem. The present Bill of the Union Government aimed at the denial of the rights of equal citizenship. It struck at the very basis of Empire citizenship and was bound to affect the ties of common loyalty and common interest which bound the various races in the British Commonwealth. The whole question of race relationship was bound up with this question. The race problem was becoming more and more acute throughout the world which had got to be solved. If it was not solved within the British Commonwealth, then the Commonwealth comprising various races was absolutely doomed and there would be left only the Commonwealth of white peoples. There was no self-respecting European who had the welfare of Indians at heart, who did not see eye to eye with Indians on this question of South Africa.

#### NO TWO OPINION.

Mr. B. Chakravarti said the feeling of the people on this question of South African Indians was very keen. There was no two opinion. It had been his lot to see Indians and Europeans of all shades of opinion gathered together for the purpose of voicing their united protest against the treatment meted out to their compatriots in South Africa.

Mr. D. P. Khaitan said that the agreement of Indian competition with the whites in South Africa was a myth. He thought that the least that the Government could do was to urge the Union Government to secure the barest justice by convening a Round Table Conference.

#### MR. SEN GUPTA.

Mr. J. M. Sen Gupta said the question of the rights of Indians in South Africa was not a new one. The question had been discussed both on the public platform and the press for a long time. He would not deal with the question from the point of view of morality

or religion. He would not even discuss whether the proposed legislation would break the Gandhi-Smuts Agreement. They knew what their case was on that point. Even General Smuts who was a party to that Agreement agreed with them that this legislation was a breach of that Agreement which he entered with Mahatma Gandhi in 1914. He would not deal with that. He would only remind them of the incidents of the Boer War. They know that in 1899 the English went to war with the Boers principally for the franchise right to outsiders who were called Uitlanders. The Uitlanders of 1899 in South Africa included not only the White, but also the Brown and the Black. For the redress of the grievances of the citizens of the British Empire who were not Dutch, the English thought fit to declare war against South Africa. And to-day said, Mr. Sen Gupta, "I want to know whether England, whether the Imperial Government, proposes to deal with the question in the same way as it did in 1899?" (Cries of hear, hear.)

#### REPETITION OF 1899.

Questions had been put to him both over here and outside India—questions were put to Swarajists and Congressmen by Members of Parliament visiting India and the members of the Government, whether they desired to go out of the Empire or would they seek their self realization within the Empire. He would attempt to give an answer to that. To-day this proposed legislation was against the franchise given to Indians and the coloured people of Asia. "I want to know," the speaker said, "what difference is there between the question that arose in 1899 with regard to the franchise of Uitlanders and the question that has arisen to-day with regard to the franchise of the Indian. (Hear, hear.) I submit there is absolutely no difference. If really the Imperial Government is sincere then this is the test. We are watching—India is waiting to see what the Imperial Government is going to do with regard to this proposed legislation in South Africa."

Proceeding Mr. Sen Gupta said General Hartzog who was the right hand of General Kruger in the Boer War, was the Premier of South Africa, to-day. It was General Hartzog again who raised the standard of revolt against the British Empire during the late German war when he was declared an outlaw. And it was Hartzog again who was at the head of the Republican Party now running the Government of South Africa and was following the same policy that he stood for in 1899. "What has England got to say to that? If General Hartzog and Dr. Malan carry out their threat, by passing this legislation, of driving Indians out of South Africa, I can foresee the day when a bigger, a broader movement would arise out of this policy of non-interference on the part of the British Government saying that they cannot interfere with the domestic policy of Colonial Governments—I can foresee the day when China and Japan and India perhaps, would say, "Go out, you 'Uitlanders,' out of Asia. (Hear, hear) I hope that day will never come."

#### NO THANKSGIVING.

Before taking his seat Mr. Sen Gupta said that he did not agree with the first resolution appreciating the spirit and attitude of His Excellency the Viceroy and the Government of India on the subject. This was not a meeting of thanksgiving. When time came they would not be loath in giving thanks to His Excellency or the Imperial Government when they had translated their words into action. (Hear, hear.) But if any thanks were necessary, thanks ought to be given to Dr. Abdurahman and his splendid band of followers who had come over here from South Africa.

Mr. L. B. Sen said that at present there were only two classes throughout the world—the Whites and the non-Whites. He urged the audience to carry on the fight that had been started, so that a day might come when both the classes would be on an equal footing.

#### THE RESOLUTIONS.

The following resolutions were adopted at the meeting.

1. That this public meeting of the citizens of Calcutta, representing all classes and sections of its people, hereby places on record its appreciation of the spirit and attitude of His Excellency the Viceroy and the Government of India as expressed in His Excellency's latest pronouncement on the subject, regarding the grievances of Indian settlers in the Dominion of South Africa and the grave economic injury and racial humiliation which the proposed anti-Asiatic Legislation of the Dominion offers not only to the Indians settled in South Africa but indirectly to the people of this continent also.

Proposed by—Sir Abdur Rahim.

Seconded by—Mr. F. E. James.

II. This meeting enters its emphatic protest against the Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration Bill, which is in violation of the 1914 Gandhi-Smuts Agreement, and has for its object the compulsory segregation of Indians, deprivation of their trading and proprietary rights and ultimate elimination of the Indian community.

This meeting earnestly requests the Government of India to urge upon the Union Government the necessity of a Round Table Conference before any further action is taken by the Union Government in respect of the proposed Bill.

Proposed by—Mr. B. Chakravarti.

Seconded by—Mr. D. P. Khaitan.

III. This meeting pledges its whole-hearted support to the Indian settlers in South Africa in their fight against the policy and action of the Dominion Government in regard to their just and legitimate rights of civilized citizenship in the country of their domicile.

Proposed by—Mr. J. M. Sen Gupta.

Seconded by—Mr. I. B. Sen.

With a vote of thanks to the Chair by Sir P. C. Mitter, the meeting terminated

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# DELHI'S PROTEST AGAINST S. AFRICAN TYRANNY.

INDIANS SHALL NOT YIELD,

MOTHERLAND'S HONOUR AT STAKE.

A mass meeting of the citizens of Delhi was held on 4th February in the Queen's Garden to protest against the South African outrage, Lala Pyare Lal presiding.

Lala Pyare Lal drew the attention of the audience to the sufferings of the Indian inhabitants in South Africa, and said that they would not have felt this so bitterly had it happened outside the Empire. The British Government told them that India was a part of British Empire, but it seemed Indians were partners only, when they were losing. When a matter concerning their benefit arrived everything was overlooked. The Government was saying that they were doing something in the matter, but what that something was he could not conceive. The only thing that Indians could do now was to gather in meetings and protest.

Maulana Mohamed Ali then moved the following resolution:—

"This meeting of the citizens of Delhi views with the greatest apprehension and records its emphatic protest against the Areas Reservation and Immigration Registration Bill which is in violation of the 1914 Gandhi-Smuts Agreement and has for its objects the compulsory segregation of Indians, the deprivation of their trading and proprietary rights and the ultimate elimination of the Indian community as openly declared by Dr. Malan, the Minister of Interior.

"This public meeting strongly condemns the re-introduction of the Miners and Workers Act Amendment Bill, popularly known as the Colour Bar Bill into the House of the South African Parliament as it excludes Asiatics from all industries excepting those of the common labourers and reduces the Asiatic population of that country to economic serfdom.

"This meeting calls upon the Government of India to urge upon the Union Government the necessity of a round-table conference before any further action is taken by the Union Government in respect of the proposed Bills; and should this reasonable proposal be declined and the Bills forced through the Union Parliament this meeting expects that His Excellency the Viceroy would advise the Imperial Government to disallow the measures under Section 65 of the South Africa Act.

"This meeting pledges itself wholeheartedly to support Indians in South Africa morally as well as financially in their just, noble and honourable struggle against the consolidated forces threatening their existence in that part of the Empire."

## MAULANA MOHAMED ALI

Maulana Mohamed Ali traced the early stages of Indian immigration into South Africa and the subsequent Gandhi-Smuts Agreement which he thought was being violated by the South African Government. When South Africa was not in the hands of the British, Indians were made to fight for its acquisition, but now, when it was in their hands, Britain considered herself helpless.

He wished the Councils to be deserted in case nothing was achieved by remaining there. The Viceroy asked them to keep silent as very delicate negotiations were going on. Their so doing had resulted in another bill being proposed for enactment. If India wished to help the South African Indians unity between Hindus and Muslims in India was absolutely essential. This was a better opportunity for the communities to come to terms. As they succeeded in 1919 they would succeed now.

## DR. ABDURAHMAN.

Dr. Abdurahman made an eloquent speech "Indians in South Africa" said the Doctor, "are mere political helots. We have done what we possibly could to establish ourselves there, and no one can deny that we form to-day a very respectable portion of the population of South Africa."

Dr. Abdurahman pointed out in detail the consequences of the various Bills now pending before the Union Government. If they were placed on the Statute Book it would mean that no Indian could work either as a trader or farmer and even as a servant in liquor shops, stores and factories. These Bills were designed to make South Africa the home of the Whites. Even if Indians there were defeated they would fight to the end. (hear, hear.)

"I will tell you," continued the speaker, "that Africa will never be a Whiteman's country exclusively. It is from the point of view of population a Blackman's country. To think of South Africa as a Whiteman's country is to think of acquiring the moon. They cannot kill the spirit of resentment that is being engendered into the minds of the people."

He wished to know the nature of the negotiations that were going on between the Indian Government and the South African Government. Were they intended, he asked, to allow the Union Government to go on with their obnoxious business while Indians here were lulled with spurious hopes. They could not stand it any longer. His countrymen felt that they were being humiliated to the greatest extent. The laws of the African Government were the negation of any principal of righteousness and justice. These Bills were in violation of their Christian doctrine. No country in the world ever did what South Africa was doing. He asked the audience as to what would happen if the Whiteman were treated like that anywhere. No Whiteman would submit to such a state of affairs for even 24 hours. If India had been a free country with its own army and navy the cowards in South Africa would not have done what they were doing to-day (hear, hear.) England was standing aside while Indians were being humiliated. This was due to disunity and lack of national spirit amongst Hindus and Mohammadans. The South African Indians were not fighting their own cause. They were fighting for the honour and glory of India (hear, hear.)

## MR. SORABJI RUSTOMJEE.

Mr. Sorabji Rustomjee another member of the South African Deputation, made a short speech. The object of all this legislation, he said, was to considerably reduce and even to eliminate Indian element in South Africa. He asked the audience whether they would help them, if they started Satyagraha in South Africa (voices: Yes, yes.) South African Indians had once put up a fight for eight years and were not afraid now to fight for another eighteen years. They were not like the Indians in India. He wished Lord Reading to note this. By his non-responsive attitude in the South African problem he was creating in the Indians a spirit to fight Government. He considered it a blessing that that spirit was being created in the people. India would see non-co-operation on a larger scale on the South African issue and Hindus and Muslims united. While the Government of India was carrying on its so-called delicate negotiations with a request to Indians to be quiet, the Union Government, on the other hand, was vigorously proceeding on with its work. He thought the Government of India was giving the Union Government time to carry their Bills without interruption by Indians.

Pandit Benarai Das Chaturvedi, in the course of a speech, said that whenever Indians approached the Government for help in any direction they were always denied it. He exhorted the audience to help the South African Indians in every way possible when the opportunity arose.

## PT. MADAN MOHAN MALAVIYA.

Pundit Madan Mohan Malaviya confessed that every Indian had full sympathy with Indians in South Africa and was ready to help them in whatever way they wished them to do. He suggested that if the Union Government passed the Bills the Government of India should use all their efforts in nullifying their decision. If that was not possible, they should move the King-Emperor to veto the Bills. So far he did not entertain any hope. He was, however, grateful to the Government for the sympathy they had shown in the matter.

**LALA LAJPATRAI**

Lala Lajpat Rai pointed out that Indians were considered unfit for Swaraj because they had a system of untouchability among them. The Europeans in South Africa were doing the same thing. The Empire, Lalaji thought, was a farce so far as Indians were concerned. He admitted that the Government was sympathetic but they were also helpless, because they were a subordinate section of the British Government and could not interfere with Dominion matters. He wished the parties in the Legislative Assembly were combined to speak with one voice all that was in their minds about the South African affair. Unless Indians were combined in India and had full political rights, it was impossible for them to help the South African Indians adequately.

Lala Shankar Lal suggested that Indians should do whatever they could to help their suffering brethren.

The meeting then dispersed late in the evening.

**INDIANS SHALL NOT YIELD.****MR. GODFREY SAYS THEY WOULD FIGHT TO THE END.**

Madras, Feb. 4.

"These delicate negotiations are really no good. We are the people who are concerned in this matter. The Viceroy and his Government are acting only as our agents. They might be our grand mothers after all. It is this policy of keeping things in the dark that has given room for a grave situation and misunderstanding." Thus commented Mr. Godfrey on the South African negotiations in the course of his address at a public meeting held at the Soundarya Mahal, Madras.

After tracing the history of the Indian settlement in South Africa, Mr. Godfrey stated that the status of Indians in India depended very much upon the status of Indians in South Africa. The Indian in South Africa did not expect to get any relief from the Imperial Government which had got power under section 65 of the South African Act to veto the legislation. They might be told that what was being done could not be undone. There was still that brave spirit in South African Indians to fight the present Bill whatever the fight might cost. If the Government was determined to proceed with the legislation, Indians were equally determined to oppose it.—A.P.I.