

Indian Opinion

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INDIAN—"THE CUCKOO OF SOUTH AFRICA"

MR. STRACHAN ON THE WAR PATH

MR. T. G. STRACHAN, the Labour member for Maritzburg North, delivered a bitter address on the Asiatic question recently at Capetown.

In the course of his address, Mr. Strachan is reported to have said, if he had any fault to find with the Rev. Mr. Andrews it was that, though he deprecated the Government's proposed attitude, he had nothing to suggest in its place, except a five years' truce, and during that time to allow matters to progress and have a round table conference. There could be no question that in a matter of that kind the Imperial Government would step in, and it was obvious that it would side with the Indian Government, and then, he asked, where would South Africa be? They would then have representations of three peoples, and South Africa would be outvoted every time.

"The European population of Natal are not prepared to wait five years or a much less period," said Mr. Strachan, "for something to be done to relieve them from the encroachment that has been going on steadily and surely into the economic life of Natal by the Indians. I want to approach this question from the standpoint of what it means to the future generations of South Africa, what it means to the children coming after us, what it means for the public health of the European, and what it means for European civilisation in South Africa.

"I do not wish to approach it from the ethical standpoint because I would not have a leg to stand upon, but I do wish to impress upon this or any audience that from the economic standpoint something should be done in Natal at all events."

Seventy Years Ago

Continuing, Mr. Strachan referred to the importation of Indians for work in the Natal sugar plantations. "It was not the people who brought them," said the speaker; "the franchise of those days was far different to what it was to-day. The rank and file of the people of Natal some 70 years ago had no say in the Government of that colony, as the people now resident in Natal and South Africa and, I contend, that the then Government of Natal was largely composed of men interested in the sugar industry in Natal, and they had it all their own way. That, however, is not the proper viewpoint to take in this matter, and I would point out that it was not the South African Government that stopped the importation of Indian indentured labour to South Africa, but it was the Indian Government itself in 1911.

Inducements to Go

"Thirty-two thousand Indians," continued Mr. Strac-

han, "have taken advantage of the Government's repatriation scheme, and I would like to see every inducement given to Indians, their wives and families to shake the dust of South Africa from their feet. I have advocated that and I intend to advocate it so that the coming generations of South Africa and Natal may live, be able to live and have their being. However, owing to the unfair, unscrupulous competition of the Indians, they are not able to do that today—in Natal at all events.

"It may surprise you to know that there are 161,339 Indians in the whole of South Africa, and of that number there are 141,346 in the Province of Natal. That does not represent the total number in Natal; the census of 1921 is not correct by a long way, because it is the attitude of the Indians to give as little information as to their numbers for census purposes. There are 200,000 Indians in Natal today, and they far out-number the Europeans; there are five Indian adult males to every three European adult males. That is a more correct estimate of the actual Indian population in Natal.

"In Durban alone the Indian population own half a million pounds worth of property. (A voice: "Disgraceful.") In face of that it is said that the Indian will not live up to the European standard of living because he did not receive enough money. Even if given the same money as the European, I question if the Indian will live up to the same standard. It would only enable him to save up more money and acquire more property.

Cuckoo of South Africa

"The Indian is the cuckoo of South Africa," emphatically declared Mr. Strachan. I do not know much about bird life but I understand the cuckoo raises its young in the nests of other birds and when the young become sufficiently strong they oust out the original owners and ultimately kill them. The Indian is the cuckoo of South Africa and he has got into the wrong nest. Slowly but surely he is killing the original owners of this nest. There can be no question about that."

Continuing, Mr. Strachan gave striking illustrations of Indian penetration in South Africa, especially in the Berea and Maritzburg. Indians purchased property from white men, and with that he had no fault to find. The profiteer took advantage of the public during the war period and he did not find fault with them, but he did find fault with a Government that allowed such a condition of affairs to exist. He pointed out that the Indians made a practice of purchasing property in European centres. The adjoining properties depreciated in value and the ultimate result was that the European cleared out and left the district to the Indians. While that

was gradually taking place they had European children mixing with Indian children, and it was for that reason that he supported the Areas Reservation Bill.

Plight of Small Dealer

"In the old days the native trade was entirely in the hands of Europeans in Natal and many a young fellow with little capital could open a grocery store and make a very good living indeed. Such a man could get married and settle down and have a home until the 'oukoo' came along and pushed him out of the nest. To-day there is no hope for a little man with a little capital who wants to set up a little store. If he does, sooner or later the Indian will come along and take the adjoining store, and the result is inevitable, and the European will be frozen out.

"It is true that a good many of the Indians were born in South Africa and it will not do to have anything in the nature of compulsory repatriation. But, as Dr. Malan said, in introducing the Areas Reservation Bill, no solution will be acceptable to this country unless it results in a considerable reduction of the Indian population. Without advocating compulsory repatriation of Indians I would like to make the Indians' position in Natal so unpleasant that they would be obliged in large numbers to accept the generous repatriation offer of the Government. I know that is not acceptable in many quarters here; it would not be accepted by the Rev. Mr. Balmforth. I would not dare to cross swords with him on the moral standpoint."

Continuing, Mr. Strachan referred to a speech of Mr. Tielman Roos, and echoed his sentiments when he said that the people of Natal would only be satisfied if the Bill was placed on the Statute Book this year. They were anxious to arrive at the point when they would have reduced the Indian population to the irreducible minimum. In his speech Mr. Roos referred to the fact that in Natal Indian clerks were dictating letters to European typists, and his comment was that he would prefer to cut the throat of his own daughter rather than she should have to work under such conditions.

Continuing Mr. Strachan asked what would the position be in 50 years' time if things were allowed to continue as at present. "Durban will become one huge Indian bazaar, and little Asiatic children (the descendants of the original indentured Indians) will be playing around the graves of all that remain of the descendants of the old sugar planters. If advocating as I do the making of conditions so unpleasant for Indians that they will be obliged to take advantage of the Government's generous provisions, if that is considered to be racialism, then I have to plead guilty to being a racialist."

The Durban Municipality, said Mr. Strachan, in its many departments, provided a livelihood for no fewer than 1,462 persons described as Indian employees. The great majority were employed at a trifling wage; only 23 were in receipt of £5 per month or more, while the bigger number were found to be in receipt of from 3s. to 41s. 6d. per month, while the lowest wage of all was 5s. per month. "How can Europeans compete against that," asked Mr. Strachan. He further pointed out that 2,135 Indians were employed in the Railway Ad-

ministration; the Cape employed 31 and Natal the remainder.

"I will conclude," said Mr. Strachan, "by quoting what the member for Standerton (General Smuts) said during his tour of Zululand, 'I have nothing against the Indian or against any of the good people of this earth, but a great task has been committed to us, a great banner is being carried forward by the white people of South Africa, a great torch has been put in our hands by Providence. Let us carry it forward, let us stabilise the basis of a white civilisation in this country.'" (Applause.)

A general discussion followed, and the proceedings concluded with a vote of thanks to Mr. Strachan.

Notes and News

WE extend a hearty welcome to Dr. Abdurahman the leader of the South African Indian Congress Delegation to India, who returned by the *s.s. Karoa* last Wednesday. Dr. Abdurahman had a great task to perform in India and well has he performed it. He was fearless and frank in his speeches and he has succeeded in awakening the people in India to their duty to their fellow-countrymen in this sub-Continent. Dr. Abdurahman is the leader of the coloured people in the Cape and we have no doubt they will be pleased to have their leader back amongst them.

Dr. Abdurahman was received at the Durban Point on his arrival last Wednesday by a large number of Indians and was garlanded on behalf of the South African Indian Congress. In the afternoon a mass meeting of Durban Indians was held at Rawat's Bio Hall to welcome Dr. Abdurahman. A full report of the proceedings of the meeting will appear in our next week's issue.

On Thursday the 25th instant Dr. Abdurahman left for Capetown via Johannesburg upon a hearty send off was given him by prominent members of the Indian community. Dr. Abdurahman was accompanied by Mr. J. M. H. Gool and Messrs. N. A. Camay and A. A. Mirza.

The Nationalist organ *Die Burger* learns on the best authority, says a Reuter's message from Capetown, that there is not the slightest ground for the rumour, from Durban, that the Government has decided to postpone the Asiatic Bill until next year in order to send a deputation to India to discuss a scheme for the gradual repatriation of the Indians, with fair compensation.

It is reported from Delhi that after negotiations extending over a period of five years on the question of Indian emigration to British Guiana the Legislative Assembly has approved the emigration of 500 families of unskilled labourers not exceeding 1500 persons.

We learn from a Reuter's message from Delhi that Mr. Jinnah had intended moving in the Assembly a strong resolution dealing with the Asiatic question in South Africa but being prevailed upon by Mr. Alexander Muddiman (Leader of the Assembly) who referred to Lord Olivier's conduct in recently withdrawing his motion in the House of Lords in view of the fact that a Select Committee was sitting and hearing witnesses on the Asiatic Bill, Mr. Jinnah withdrew his motion hoping, however, that in the event of the Asiatic Bill being passed the Government would immediately call a special session of the

Indian Legislature to allow them to express their feelings.

Mr. Sorabjee Rustomjee, a member of the South African Deputation, informed Reuter that he was satisfied that on this important issue the Government and non-officials saw eye to eye and was pleased that Mr. Jinnah went to the length of asking for a special session in case the Asiatic Bill was passed.

Lord Headley and Khwaja Kamaluddin have had a fairly busy week in connection with their mission. They have delivered several instructive lectures in Durban and Districts and will be the guests on Saturday and Sunday of the City Indians. Both the distinguished visitors sail by the s.s. *Karoo* for Delagoa Bay. Lord Headley will thence be returning to England and Khwaja Kamaluddin will after a short tour of the country be returning to Durban.

The Colour-Bar Bill has been defeated in the Senate by 12 votes to 29.

With this number is issued as a supplement the text of the correspondence between the Union and Indian Governments regarding the position of Indians in South Africa.

MR. STRACHAN'S CANDIDNESS

MR. T. G. STRACHAN, Labour member of Maritzburg North, delivered a strong speech in Capetown in defence of his case against Indians. Mr. Strachan finds fault with Mr. Andrews for deprecating the Government's proposed attitude in connection with the Indian question and not suggesting any other remedy. A man who is intent on committing murder can only be told not to do it. There can be no other remedy suggested but to set the victim free. But, of course, that is only on the moral standpoint and Mr. Strachan frankly admits that on that he has no ground to stand. He wants to approach the question only from a material standpoint and he tries to make the people believe that his material standpoint is so strong that there is no room for ethical standpoint to come in it at all. The teaching of Mr. Strachan's Bible is apparently quite different to the teaching of the Holy Bible.

Mr. Strachan does not want to accept things as they have been created by Providence. That Indians were brought here 70 years ago is no fault of ours, and that they have given their life blood to the development of this country is no concern of ours says Mr. Strachan. That Indians should shake the dust of South Africa from their feet is all that Mr. Strachan seeks. And all this because of the alleged unfair and unscrupulous competition of the Indians.

Mr. Strachan is not prepared to believe the official figures of the Census Department but assumes that there are 200,000 Indians in Natal. He accuses Indians of giving misinformation as to their numbers for census purposes. He evidently forgets that there is the ever vigilant Immigration Department that has a record of every Indian and that every birth is being registered.

It is said, says Mr. Strachan, that the Indian

will not live up to the European standard of living because he did not receive enough money. But Mr. Strachan is not prepared to give the Indian the same money as the European because he fears that the Indian would only save it up and acquire more property than he at present possesses. So the vice of the Indian is that he possesses the ability to save his money and not waste it like the European. And yet all the avenues that would lead him to waste his money are closed to him.

Mr. Strachan describes the Indian as the cuckoo of South Africa. The cuckoo is, of course, a beautiful bird and in that sense we could describe Natal as being the cuckoo of South Africa and Indians can pride themselves, to a great extent, of making it so. But Mr. Strachan does not wish to credit the Indian with possessing the virtue of the cuckoo but its vice. Its vice is that it goes into another's nest and drives the owner out of it and takes possession of it. Now the European came to this country first and killed out the original Native. Then in order to build up his nest so that it may be beautiful and comfortable he invited the Indian to come and do the hard work and promised to give him in return the same liberty to live in the nest as he enjoyed himself. The Indian came and did so and later flourished by his industry and thrift in his own limited capacity. But the European usurper's purpose was served and he could no longer see a stranger, whom he had once promised to consider as one of his own, flourishing in his own nest. He was instinctively jealous and wanted now to drive him out as he had driven out on the first occasion the original owner of the nest. Now we would ask Mr. Strachan to think who was the real cuckoo of South Africa.

Mr. Strachan has made allegations about Indians penetrating in the so-called European localities and about Europeans having had to vacate whole districts leaving them to Indians. These are wild allegations which have been repudiated officially and unofficially so often that it is futile to discuss them here again.

As to Mr. Strachan's statement about European children mixing with Indian children, we would like Mr. Strachan to quote some instances of such mixing and of the evils resulted therefrom within the last 70 years. We need not quote instances of the evils that have resulted from the mixture of Europeans with Natives for there is a whole population standing as proof of it. The position that has not changed, therefore, after 70 years will not necessarily change within another 50 years, as Mr. Strachan fears, if things were allowed to remain as they are.

We admire Mr. Strachan for being so candid about his intention to make the conditions so unpleasant for Indians that they would be obliged to leave the country, but we cannot admire nor congratulate him for his intention which can only be described as totally base and immoral and contrary to all known principles of Christianity.

Prayer Day at Kimberley

The City Hall of Kimberley (apart from the gallery) was packed on Feb. 23 with Indians and there were numerous Europeans in the gallery, when a protest meeting was held against anti-Asiatic legislation. The Chairman, Mr. P. M. Dawson, couched his speech in a careful language, and he was followed by the Bishop of Kimberley, the Rev. Mr. Pescod and the Rev. Mr. Isaacs. When two of the European speakers declared that, should the proposed legislation be passed, they took their stand on the side of the Indians, they were accorded enthusiastic applause, and this reached a crescendo when an exceedingly eloquent speech was made by Mr. McLeod, vice-president of the African People's Organisation.

Mr. Dawson said that they were aware the day was one of humiliation, that that morning they had offered prayers to God Almighty that the Union Government might be guided in their activities by a truly Christian spirit. The object of the Colour Bar Bill, he stated, was to prevent Indians and Natives from participating in the benefits of what the Government called civilised labour, thus depriving many of making an honest livelihood. They could not but see with alarm that the Government was most unreasonably obsessed with prejudice in all matters concerning them, and without the least regard for the cause of justice and peace.

Then there was the Liquor Bill. Although the object of this Bill was to amend the liquor laws of the Union, they could not ignore the underlying principle of the Bill, which was being aimed at the elimination of the Indian and Native from being employed in the various branches of the liquor trade. If this Bill became law thousands of Indians who were born in this country would be thrown out in the streets without any other means of earning a livelihood.

The Asiatic Bill

Coming to the Asiatic Bill, Mr. Dawson declared that the principles of this Bill were compulsory segregation of Indians and their total ruination. In fact, it was designed to make the lives of the Indian community in this country such a misery and a burden that they would have to leave of their own accord without compensation. The very people who were clamouring for this Bill, and would impose such restrictions and disabilities, would not tolerate the same treatment for 24 hours. Therefore, it was not surprising to them that they were not prepared tamely to submit to the humiliation of being segregated like so many sheep being driven into kraals. Yet, in accordance with the Smuts-Gandhi agreement the Indians were entitled to fair and just treatment. The Indian community have gone through eight years of trials and tribulation and untold sufferings and sacrifice to secure this agreement, which was called the Smuts-Gandhi Settlement of 1914. They certainly believed that there had been a breach of faith. The Government of India itself understood it as implying that no new law would be passed imposing fresh restrictions and disabilities on Indians. The settlement would have no meaning at all if their existing rights could be restricted at will by fresh legislation. The contention of the Government that no breach of faith was contemplated was beyond the comprehension of plain men like the speaker, and still more incomprehensible to men of letters like the Rev. Mr. Andrews and the Bishop of Pretoria.

"We are harmless law-abiding people," he declared, and we realise that we are bound to abide by the laws of the country in which we live, but we can only do that so long as those laws are in conformity with justice and equity. We cannot submit to humiliating differential treatment without losing our self-respect and manhood.

Imperial Government's Responsibility

"If the Government has any sincere desire to settle this thorny question amicably, it cannot do better than have a round-table conference on the lines suggested by the Colonial Secretary of the late Labour Government. In this connection the Imperial Government is not without responsibility, seeing that it has left us severely alone to the tender mercies of the Union Government. I have always been taught to believe and rely upon the traditional British justice and fair play, but at times like this the very indifference of the British people makes us wonder whether it is not after all a myth. Of course, there are exceptions. The very fact of having these gentlemen in our midst proves that our claims for fair dealing are just, and have therefore some staunch support. It is also said that justice and truth must prevail in the end. I sincerely hope that such will be the case in this instance, even at the eleventh hour."

The following resolution of prayer was then proposed by the Chairman, all present standing:—

"This mass meeting of resident Indians of Kimberley and district beseeches Almighty God to protect the South African Indian community in this hour of their greatest difficulty and danger, and prays that He may in His mercy move the hearts of the rulers of this country to sympathy and justice."

Bishop of Kimberley

"I believe," said the Bishop of Kimberley, "that there is no sacrifice which the Government has not the right to ask from its subjects. I believe that we ought to be prepared to offer our lives, our land, and ourselves for our country, and it is because we ought to be prepared to make so great a sacrifice that I believe no Government has the right to demand it unless the cause is sufficiently great."

He quite agreed that it would be convenient to build up localities in which different nationalities could dwell, and one might say after this that each of these peoples had their ways and manners and customs, and would be happier by themselves. They must remember, however, that the disadvantage of this was that people who lived apart were very apt to hate one another. The country could not be really prosperous by mutual hatred of people. Segregation might be quite a good thing, but it must be considered on its merits. He was speaking because he felt there might come a day when people might want to segregate the English. Referring to the British Government, and the point of responsibility raised by the Chairman, his Lordship pointed out that it did not interfere in any South African affairs.

After dealing briefly with some of the proposals in the legislation before Parliament, the Bishop said the Indians had been encouraged and asked to come to South Africa, and to-day there were in the country the grand-children of these people. Suddenly they were told, "Come on and get out." "My belief," he said, "is that that is unjust. (Applause). He felt, as the Chairman had shown, that there was a systematic series of Bills and that the one particular Bill was hardly brought forward by mistake.

Not Christianity

He felt that the proposed legislation was not Christianity, and he was speaking not as a politician, but as a Christian. (Hear, hear). "I don't believe," he declared, "there is any record of any nation in the world which has taken this line that has not come to grief." (Hear, hear). His Lordship referred at some length to the cases of Egypt and Russia. He considered that there was something in what was proposed that was unjust, that it was oppression, and had something in it which was immoral and wrong. (Applause).

"If the legislation," said Mr. Pescod, "which is now before the Assembly is passed, then I take my stand by the side of the people which are oppressed." (Applause.) Colour was a matter of indifference to

him. The Indian people were British subjects, and as such they had to bear responsibilities. There was taxation, and he was proud, too, to say that in the Great War their Indian citizens were not one whit behind any of the great Dominions. (Loud applause.)

Some time back the commission presided over by Sir John Lange had found that the question of Indian trade competition had been exaggerated. (Hear, hear.) The speaker took his stand on the moral question, and he was sure that no thinking man would have two opinions. On the moral side he could not and he dare not support the proposals. He found that there were 70,000 people to whom South Africa was their home. They were entitled to the privileges of citizenship, and he found that in this proposed legislation they (the white people) had not one leg to stand on.

The Case of Russia

Mr. Isaacs, in a powerful speech, dealt at length with the persecution of the Jews in the past. He declared that if the Bill they were discussing became law, what had happened to the Russian Jews and the people of Russia would happen to South Africa. (Hear, hear.) "The policy," he concluded, "is an immoral one. It will not be just, and I as a Jew stand by your side." (Loud applause.)

Mr. McLeod said it had been stated the Indians were no good to the country, since all their money went to India, but if they visited a bioscope they found "For Europeans only," so the Indian could not spend his money there. (Laughter and loud applause.) There were thousands of people buried under the British flag, and he felt that these people had done right in upholding the British Empire, and the Empire would not be playing the game if it did not stand by them.

"When you start with the Indians," he said, "remember what Napoleon said, 'Don't wake up that monster of the East, the Chinaman,' and there are 420 millions of them." The Rev. Mr. Andrews had warned the Government not to think of the few thousand Indians in this country; there were 320 millions behind them.

Mr. McLeod then seconded a resolution of protest against the Colour Bar, Liquor and Asiatic Bills, proposed by Mr. T. V. R. Pillay, and they were supported by numerous other speakers.—*The Diamondfield Advertiser*.

OUR LONDON LETTER

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT]

25th February, 1926.

The latest development in the political situation in Egypt is quite promising of a better future for the constitutional Government of that country. Since Nashaat Pasha is no longer the shadow behind the Egyptian Throne and the arrival of Lord Lloyd the English High Commissioner on the scene, there appears to be a better atmosphere in Egypt and this is evident from recent events. The Senators held a meeting to urge upon the Government to discontinue its present unconstitutional policy especially in its attempt to put into force the new electoral law, and to call on Tiwar Pasha that if it was impossible for him to revive the dissolved Chamber, he ought to arrange for immediate holding of new elections, under an electoral law passed in accordance with the constitution. They obviously referred to the law passed during the Wafd regime.

As the arrangements for the Opposition Congress proceeded, the chief topic of discussion among the public was the question as to what action the Government were going to take in regard to it. The Government at first contemplated some action but eventually decided not to take any, and to leave the

responsibility to the organisers for the conduct of the meeting.

Tiwar Pasha meantime enquired of the Senators, while defending his administration, as to what electoral laws they had referred. They then replied that it was to the law passed under the Zaghlul regime in 1924. Tiwar Pasha then met a deputation of the Senators and told them that he was prepared to carry out the elections under the Zaghlul laws which provided for male suffrage not excluding illiterate males. And again Tiwar later informed the Press that he had suspended the electoral law that his Cabinet had passed in December and was putting into operation the Zaghlul electoral law as he was anxious to hasten the return to constitutional government and for conciliation with the opposition parties.

The Opposition Congress was held on the 19th February. Zaghlul Pasha presided supported on either side by former Prime Ministers Eghen Pasha and Serwat Pasha. There were over 1200 delegates present representing the three opposition parties. The Senators also were present. Zaghlul in opening the Congress, admitted that the eleventh hour decision of Tiwar had upset his programme. He condemned the acts of the present Government and asked the members of the opposition parties to take part in the coming elections under the old electoral law, and called upon the people of Egypt to help the speedy return to constitutional life. There was some discussion whether it would not be preferable for the dissolved Chamber to be revived than for new elections to take place and on Zaghlul again addressing them they decided to take part in the new elections. The meeting was quite orderly. There were no incidents in the streets and the police in no way interfered. Most of the students were on the other side of the Nile watching a football match between the Turks and Egyptians in which the Turks were defeated by 3—0.

In the House of Commons a question was raised as to the present position of the Indians in South Africa in view of the proposed legislation there. The usual Ministerial reply was given that the Indian Government were negotiating with the Union Government. Yesterday in the House of Lords the ex-Secretary of State for India in the labour government sympathetically raised the question, and the present Secretary of State for India Lord Birkenhead replied, a report of which from *The Times* will be reproduced next week.

Indians in South Africa will be sorry to hear that Mahatma Gandhi is sick again. He was prevailed upon to take quinine. The doctors are in consultation over him, to ascertain whether he is suffering from malaria or from some complications.

Mr. Ben Spoor a prominent Labour member of Parliament who has from time to time espoused the cause of Indians has been asked to resign from the Independent Labour Party because he has advocated that the Labour Party should coalesce with the Liberals whenever they were agreed on any subject. This the Labour Executive hold is against their policy as they do not wish for a coalition between the Labour and the Liberals.

There have been so many revelations of short weight and short measure in the sale of foodstuffs that they have aroused the country, and there are indications that a bill will be introduced for the purpose of regulating the questions involved, and the provisions of such a bill will among other things make the giving of short weight and short measure, and the oral or written misrepresentations in regard to weight and measure penal.

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