

Indian Opinion

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CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE UNION AND INDIAN GOVERNMENTS

NEGOTIATIONS CONCLUDED

THE following is the text of the correspondence which preceded the announcement regarding the agreement of the Union Government to a conference to come to an amicable solution of the Indian question:—

Telegram to the Governor-General of South Africa, Cape Town. Dated Delhi 20th February, 1926.—

"The Government of India understand from the report which they have received that the Minister of the Interior in his speech moving that the Areas Reservation Bill be referred to a Select Committee before the second reading stated that the Government of India had been informed by the Union Government that while they were not opposed in principle to a round table conference the discussions must include the question of the ways and means required to make the scheme of voluntary repatriation of Indians more effective. Had the Government of India agreed to this point being included in the agenda a round table conference would have been held. But as we did not see our way to agree to a discussion of this particular point the Union Government could not agree to a conference. If Dr. Malan has been correctly reported we fear that there has been some misunderstanding regarding our attitude on this point. In our telegram dated October 9th we made it clear that a conference, of which the main object was to expedite Indian repatriation was not contemplated by us. We nevertheless indicated that we were prepared to discuss the working of the existing system of voluntary repatriation and maintained the same attitude in subsequent communications.

"We have never refused to include the question of repatriations as above described within the scope of the discussion of the proposed conference. We are as anxious as ever to participate in a round table conference which would include the repatriation question limited as above stated, within its scope. We should be very grateful if the Minister of the Interior would take an early opportunity of dispelling the misconception to which we fear his speech may have given rise. We understand that the *Cape Times* in a leading article of February 18th has already taken the point that the attitude of the Government of India in refusing to discuss voluntary repatriation made the holding of a conference impossible. We are not anxious to secure an unprejudiced reception for the statement which our representatives will shortly make before the Select Committee and are confident that Your Excellency's Ministers will understand our desire to remove any misapprehension which might possibly prejudice

public opinion against the case which they will present."

Union Ministers' Views

Telegram from the Governor-General of South Africa. Dated Cape Town 10th (received 11th), March 1926:—"Your telegram dated 20th February. My Ministers desire to state that in their opinion no discrepancies exist between the statements of the Minister of the Interior in the Assembly to which you refer and the actual course of negotiations as revealed in the published correspondence. Reference to my telegrams dated 16th June, 1925, and 24th September 1925, must in their view remove all possible doubts. It was clearly the attitude of the Union Government that no conference, however restricted in scope, was possible unless some definite prospect was held out beforehand that it would result in a considerable reduction of the Indian population. They further clearly intimated that they welcomed tentative and provisional proposals to this effect, and that their attitude with regard to the holding of a conference would eventually depend upon the nature and practicability of any repatriation scheme offered as a basis for further discussion at such conference. They even went so far as to suggest the particular form of additional inducements which with the assistance and co-operation of the Government of India might be offered to the Indians as a part of such a repatriation scheme besides agreeing to the inclusion of at least one other important aspect of the Indian problem, which had been put forward by your Government within the range of the proposed conference.

"It was only after the Government of India had intimated in your telegram of 9th October, 1925, that they did not intend to explore the possibilities of more effective repatriation with the object of bringing about a considerable reduction of the Indian population, but wished merely to confine themselves to helpful suggestions in connection with the existing repatriation scheme that further attempts on the part of the Union Government to arrive at a satisfactory basis for a conference were dropped. My Ministers accept the assurance expressed in the second paragraph of your telegram that the real attitude of the Government of India has been misunderstood by them. They also note that according to your Excellency's telegram dated the 26th November, 1925, it was clearly the intention of that Government to put forward definite proposals in connection with repatriation after they had considered the report of their deputation to the Union.

"Under these circumstances my Ministers wish to

assure the Government of India that provided they could be made to feel that they have the necessary assurance of the probability that the problem will really and effectively be solved through the instrumentality of a conference, thus affording them a real basis for consenting to a round table conference, they are prepared to take such steps as are still at their disposal to keep the door open for a further consideration of the question. They trust that the Government of India will realise that the progress of the Bill through Parliament cannot be held up unless such action can be clearly justified to Parliament, and in the eyes of the people of South Africa by the nature and adequacy of the assurance given, and, therefore, unless the Ministers are enabled to point to some very definite and substantial prospective results to be anticipated from the proposed conference they cannot contemplate the possibility of agreeing at this stage to the holding of such a conference.

"The Government of India will, therefore, understand that the assistance so far offered by them in connection with the system of repatriation at present obtaining is for the purpose of formulating a satisfactory basis for a conference altogether inadequate. The Government of India in refusing to discuss voluntary repatriation made the holding of a conference impossible. We are most anxious to secure an unprejudiced reception for the statement which our representatives will shortly make before the Select Committee, and are confident that Your Excellency's Ministers will understand our desire to remove any misapprehension which might possibly prejudice public opinion against the case which they will present."

Not Averse to Conference

Telegram to the Governor-General of South Africa, Cape Town. Dated Delhi, 26th March, 1926:—"Your telegram dated March 10th. We have not yet seen the text of the speech delivered by the Minister of the Interior on February 17th and are, therefore, glad to receive an assurance from Your Excellency's Government that it was in no way discrepant with the actual course of negotiations. Your Excellency's telegram makes it clear to us that the Union Government are not averse to the idea of a conference provided that they are satisfied that such a conference will hold out a definite prospect of leading to a real and effective solution of the Indian problem. We appreciate the desire of Your Excellency's Ministers to obtain an assurance on this point and to find a formula acceptable to Your Government and mine as the basis of a conference which would enable discussions to be initiated. We ourselves are equally anxious that if a conference takes place it should not prove abortive or lead to a misunderstanding, and it is with this object in view that we desire that there should be no misapprehension about our own attitude.

"As we explained in our telegram of October 9th we are unable to agree to enter a conference of which the object would be to effect a considerable reduction of the Indian population and we still adhere to this opinion. In our view the right method of arriving at a real and effective solution of the Indian question would be for both the parties to enter the conference without being committed in advance to any particular solution of the questions at issue. We ourselves should enter such a conference with the sincere intention of discussing frankly with the Union Government all possible methods of settling the Asiatic question, of understanding the difficulties which have led to the present policy of the South African Government, and of explaining our own difficulties in acquiescing in that policy and the objects which we have in view. In the atmosphere of the better mutual understanding which we believe this exchange of views will establish we are

hopeful that an agreement may be rendered possible.

"As to the general lines on which the question can be finally settled, as a preliminary step we would suggest that the Union Ministers might consent to confer informally with the leader of our deputation with a view to ascertaining whether the obstacles in the way of a conference cannot be overcome. We cannot, of course, agree to invest Mr. Paddison with plenipotentiary powers to act on our behalf and any agreement suggested after consultation with Your Excellency's Ministers would be subject to our confirmation after receipt by us of his report and after discussion with him. We are impressed with the difficulty of arriving at an understanding by telegraphic correspondence and it is on this account that we propose a personal discussion and have always held that a conference affords the most hopeful method of dealing with this question. In the event of an agreement being reached regarding a conference meetings between the representatives of this Government and of the Union Government might conveniently be held either formally or informally at the time of the meetings in October next of the Imperial Conference, or if necessary at an earlier date. We assume that progress with regard to the pending legislation would be held up until the conference has had an opportunity of discussing the question in all its bearings."

Better Understanding

Telegram from the Governor-General of South Africa. Dated Capetown, 13th (received 14th) April, 1926:—"In reply to your telegram dated 26th March, 1926, my Ministers desire to inform the Government of India that in compliance with their request the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Interior have informally conferred with Mr. Paddison, the leader, and Mr. Bajpai, the secretary of the Deputation, and that the conversations have undoubtedly resulted in a mutually better understanding and appreciation of the respective points of view and difficulties of the two Governments. My Ministers do not consider the divergence in points of view or the difficulties so great that it should be deemed impossible to find a satisfactory basis for the formal conversations which might lead to an amicable settlement as long as it remains understood that such conversations shall on both sides be entered into and conducted with the sincere desire, and intention to co-operate in finding a real and effective solution of the Indian problem. Any conference which could justly be interpreted as a mere attempt from outside to prevent the Union Government from dealing with its own problems in its own way will be resented by the people of South Africa and is and will continue to be unacceptable.

"As was pointed out in previous correspondence the European community in South Africa consider that their economic position and civilisation are seriously menaced by the presence and unfair competition of Asiatics, and the demand on their part that steps shall be taken without delay to counteract that menace is insistent and practically unanimous. This fact has been corroborated to the fullest extent by the evidence laid before the Select Committee. My Ministers, therefore, wish to impress upon the Government of India that public opinion in South Africa will not view with favour any settlement which does not hold a reasonable prospect of safeguarding the maintenance of western standards of life by just and legitimate means. If the Government of India could accept this presentation of the position as the correct one and could further express their willingness to assist in exploring all possible methods of settling the Asiatic question the Union Government will be ready to accept their offer to enter into a conference for the purpose. Any proposals which such a conference might make would be subject to confirmation by the Governments of the countries.

"In order to ensure that the conference, if finally agreed upon, should meet under the best auspices, my Ministers have decided, subject to the approval of the Select Committee and Parliament, not to proceed further with the Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration (Further Provision) Bill until the results of the conference are available. Should the reply of the Government of India be favourable and a final agreement in regard to the holding of a conference be reached, my Ministers suggest that such agreement shall be embodied in the following terms which could form the basis and be included in any official public statement to be made at a later date.

"The Government of the Union of South Africa and Government of India have been further in communication with each other regarding the best method of arriving at an amicable solution of the Indian problem. The Government of the Union have impressed upon the Government of India that public opinion in South Africa will not view with favour any settlement which does not hold out a reasonable prospect of safeguarding the maintenance of a western standard of life by just and legitimate means. The Government of India are prepared to assist in exploring all possible methods of settling the Asiatic question and have offered to enter into a conference with the Union for the purpose. Any proposal that the conference might make would be subject to confirmation by the Governments of the two countries. The Union Government have accepted the offer of the Government of India and in order to ensure that the conference should meet under the best auspices have decided, subject to the approval of the Select Committee and Parliament, not to proceed further with the Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration (Further Provision) Bill until the results of the conference are available. In view of the limited time of the Select Committee and in order that they may be enabled to make the necessary recommendation my Ministers will be glad to be favoured with an early reply.

Most Hopeful Method

Telegram to the Governor-General of South Africa, Cape Town. Dated Delhi, 17th April, 1926.—"Your telegram dated April 13th. We learn with great satisfaction that the conversations between Your Excellency's Ministers and the leader and secretary of our Deputation have led to a better understanding and appreciation of the respective points of view and difficulties of the two Governments, and that as a result of them the Union Government are prepared to enter into a conference with us with the object of exploring all possible methods of settling the Asiatic question in South Africa consistent with the maintenance of western standards of life. We have constantly affirmed our belief that a conference affords the most hopeful method of dealing with this question and we gladly, therefore, accept the proposal which is now made to us. The terms in which it is proposed to embody the agreement to hold a conference afford in our opinion a suitable basis for its proceedings and have our complete concurrence. We accept the statement of Your Excellency's Government that public opinion in South Africa would not view with favour any settlement which does not hold out a reasonable prospect of safeguarding the maintenance of western standards of life by just and legitimate means, and for our own part will enter the conference with the sincere desire of co-operating with the Union Government in finding a solution of the Asiatic question which can be honourably accepted by the Governments and people both of South Africa and of India. We agree further that it is essential that any proposals that the conference may make should be subject to confirmation by the Governments of both countries. It is understood that in presenting the report of the Select Committee on the Areas Reservation Bill the

Minister of the Interior will announce the agreement that has been arrived at between the two Governments and will move that Parliament should not proceed further with the Bill until the results of the conference are available. We should be glad to know on what date this announcement will be made in order that we may arrange for simultaneous publication in this country."

We published in our last week's issue in our Notes and News columns a report of the fifth anniversary of the Aryan Benevolent Home. The name of the Home was by mistake omitted.

Mr. Sorabjee Rustomjee wishes to thank through these columns the many friends and bodies who kindly sent him messages of welcome on his arrival from India.

MERE SENTIMENT!

THE main topic of discussion during the last few days has been the Government's Flag Bill. The Pact Government had determined against the will of the South African Party members and all Britishers to establish a new flag for the Union the colours of which were going to be red as representing the Cape, green (dominating colour of the old Republican flag) representing the Transvaal, yellow the Free State, and blue representing Natal. It was decided that on any official occasion intended specifically to indicate or represent the relationship of the Union to the British community of nations the Union Jack of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland shall be officially displayed in addition to the National Flag of the Union.

There was a certain amount of uneasiness among the British people over the removal of the King's head from the Union stamps and this present step of throwing off the British flag was of course the limit. Their patriotic feelings did not allow the British people to sit quiet any longer and the Imperialist organs of the country, one and all, gave vent to their feelings without restraint. There were demonstrations throughout the country against the proposed action of the Government and in Durban last Friday one was reminded of the Coronation day, when the Union Jack was all-pervading. The demonstration at the Town Hall the same evening was unique in the annals of the Union and the speeches were full of patriotic fervour. One of the speakers went to the extent of saying that he would like to meet the man that would pull down the Union Jack! It is a consolation to feel that the result of all this agitation is that the Flag Bill has been postponed and it may very likely be shelved.

But what was all this for? The only thing behind it all was sentiment, and in sentiment lies everything is the lesson that has been taught by this incident.

How often has it not been argued that Indians in this country have no practical grievances to complain of and that their grievances are merely sentimental and need no consideration. Has the age we are living in changed. Indeed no. The age is the same but the circumstances are different. In the present case sentiment has made itself heard because there was power behind it. But in the case of the Indian his sentiment was "mere" sentiment and was ignored because it had no support behind it of power. This incident reminds us of a Biblical phrase which will not be out of place to quote here viz., "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

Maritzburg Notes

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT]

Readers of INDIAN OPINION are aware that in 1919 when the Asiatic Enquiry Commission held enquiries into the Asiatic question, there came into being a European anti-Asiatic League, which tried, with very little success, to paint the problem as black as possible. The branch of this League, as time went on, changed its name into "Young South Africa" to give it, it is presumed, a patriotic touch. Mr. Wm. Cox is at the head of "Young South Africa" whose avowed aim is to carry on an incessant propaganda work against the well-being of Indians.

When Prof. Thaele addressed a meeting in Maritzburg in March last, using violent language against British rule as it affected natives, Europeans of a certain school of thought, formed a European Protection and Welfare Society to protect the interests of Europeans, as though their interests needed protection. The object of this Protection Society can be judged by the following report which appears in the *Witness* :—

A public meeting was held on the 19th inst., at the Oddfellows' Hall under the auspices of the European Protection and Welfare Society for the purpose of discussing the Asiatic question.

Major. Jas. S. Short (president of the society) took the chair.

Major Short, after a few words, introduced Mr. Cox and called upon him to address the meeting.

Mr. Cox said that he had been requested to attend for the purpose of giving information respecting the position in regard to the Asiatic problem. He did so because he believed the aims of Young South Africa and the European Protection Society were largely the same, and he thought that if they were in possession of all the facts they would agree with him that the present was not a time for public demonstration.

The Union Government had at first, refused to enter into a conference with India without some guarantee that the Indian Government would do all it could to assist in the solution of the problem. That guarantee had been given, and now it was a question of whether they trusted the Union Government to stand by the white man's cause. If a peaceful solution of the question was possible they would, of course, be glad, and nothing should be done which would imperil that possibility of an outcome of the conference.

He assured them that while they regretted delay in the passage of the Areas Reservation Bill, the Union Government was trustworthy, and would not shirk its duty.

Dr. Malan, the Minister of the Interior, had proved that his word could be relied upon, and it was, he submitted, their duty to heed his request that no demonstrations be held on the question in the meantime.

A hearty vote of thanks was passed to Mr. Cox.

Major Short, in a few words, explained that the European Protection and Welfare Society came into being on account of recent native and Asiatic problem propaganda. He did not think that it was ever the intention, when the Asiatics were introduced into South Africa, that they should ever come here as anything but labourers.

The intention of the society was to make South Africa a white man's country as far as possible, and look after his interests.

It was hoped that a large membership would be formed in the society.

Many of those present signed themselves on as members of the society.

The semi-final intertown match between Durban and Maritzburg was played for Emmamally's Cup

on the new sports ground, and resulted in 2 goals to nil against Durban. The game at times was fast and exciting, and Maritzburg combination of play was superior to Durban. Mr. D. Fakir Yusuf, of Lady-smith, refereed.

A Council meeting of the Natal Indian Football Association was held on Empire day in the H.Y.M.A. Library. Mr. S. L. Singh presided. After minor matters had been decided upon, arrangements in connection with the coming South African Tournament were discussed, and it was provisionally decided to hold the tourney from the 7th to 15th August. Affiliated Districts were taxed to provide money to meet incidental expenses of the tournament.

The third annual meeting of the Maritzburg Indian Sports Association was held in the H.Y.M.A. library on the 19th inst., at which Mr. S. R. Naidoo presided.

After the annual minutes had been read, the Secretary, Mr. V. Arumugam, presented his annual report, which dwelt upon the improvements effected to the sports ground. The balance sheet showed a credit balance of £40 6s. 11d. on hand. The members of the Committee spoke in eloquent terms of the good work done both by the President and the Secretary. Mr. S. R. Naidoo, replying, thanked the officials and members for the spirit of co-operation shown by them in placing at the disposal of the community a fine recreation ground. He said their work should lie in the direction of converting the ground into an ideal park for sports and pleasures.

The election resulted as follows :—

Mr. J. Hardy (Mayor) Patron; Mr. C. Nulliah, Vice-Patron, Mr. S. R. Naidoo President, Mr. V. Arumugam Secretary and Treasurer, Messrs. P. K. Govonder, Tachariah Gabriel, and A. H. Peters, Vice-Presidents, Mr. G. K. Naidoo Hon. auditor.

The meeting in showing its sense of appreciation of the valuable services rendered by the Secretary passed a motion to present him with a gold watch suitably inscribed.

On Empire day the Natal Indian Congress (Maritzburg Branch) placed a beautiful wreath at the Queen Victoria statue, with the following inscription on a card :—In revered memory of Victoria the Good.

The annual meeting of the Siva Subramanier and Mariamman Temple is to take place on Sunday the 30th inst., at 10 a.m. in the Temple ground, the business on the agenda being :—Minutes, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, Election.

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South African Indian Congress

Seventh Session

Preliminary Notice

In terms of the Rules notice is hereby given to all Constituent bodies that the Seventh Session of the Congress will be held at Johannesburg on the 25th, 26th, 27th and 28th June 1926.

The following is the provisional Agenda :

1. Presidential Address.
2. General Secretary's Report.
3. Round Table Conference.
4. Colour Bar Bill.
5. Provincial Powers Bill.
6. Revision of Constitution and Standing Orders.
7. Other grievances and resolutions thereon.
8. Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement.
9. Election of Officials,

A. I. KAJEE,

Hon. General Secretary.

South African Indian Congress.

Headquarters :

175, Grey Street, Durban.

સાઉથ આફ્રિકન ઇન્ડિઅન કોંગ્રેસ

સાત મી બેઠક

પ્રાથમિક નોટીસ

ધારાઓ મુજબ આથી સઘળી કોંગ્રેસની સાથે જોડાએલી સંસ્થાઓને ખચર આપવામાં આવે છે કે કોંગ્રેસની સાત મી બેઠક તા. ૨૫, ૨૬, ૨૭, અને ૨૮ જુન ૧૯૨૬ના દિવસોએ જોહાનીસબરગ ખાતે ભરાશે.

કામચલાઉ કાર્યક્રમ નીચે પ્રમાણે છે:—

(૧) પ્રમુખનું ભાષણ (૨) જનરલ સેક્રેટરીના રીપોર્ટ (૩) રાઉન્ડ ટેબલ કોન્ફરન્સ (૪) કલર બાર બિલ (૫) પ્રોવીન્સીયલ પાવરસ બિલ (૬) કોલોનિયલ ગવર્નમેન્ટ અને ગેન્ડીંગ ઓર્ગેનાઇઝેશનમાં સુધારા વધારા (૭) બીજી ફરીયાદો અને તે ઉપર ઠરાવો (૮) ટ્રેઝરરના રીપોર્ટ અને હીસાબ (૯) અમલદારોની ચુંટણી.

એ. આઈ. કાજી,

એન. જનરલ સેક્રેટરી.

સા. આ. ઇન્ડિઅન કોંગ્રેસ.

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