

# Indian Opinion

No. 29—Vol. XXIV.

Friday, July 16th, 1926.

Registered at the G. P. O. as a Newspaper  
PAGE FOURTEEN

## NOTES AND NEWS

THE All India Congress Committee has passed the following resolution:—

"The All India Congress Committee congratulates the Government of India and the Union Government upon the postponement of the Class Areas Reservation Bill pending the deliberations of a conference between the Governments.

"The All India Congress Committee further congratulates the South African Indian Deputation and the Indian settlers on the happy result of their efforts.

"The All India Congress Committee tenders its respectful thanks to Mr. C. F. Andrews for his great sacrifice and for his energy and undying hope and faith without which the result so achieved would have been impossible.

"The All India Congress Committee while noting the happy result of the Government of India's negotiations so far, warns the public against slackening the effort on behalf of the Indian settlers of South Africa and hopes that they will not rest until the position of the settlers is placed on an honourable and satisfactory basis.

"The All India Congress Committee authorises the President to send a message of congratulations to the Union Government for their having postponed the said Bill and having agreed to a conference for the purpose of exploring possibilities of satisfactory solution of the question."

Dr. R. M. Nanji who had recently been on a visit to India has returned last Wednesday per the *s.s. Karra*. We join his many friends in according him a hearty welcome.

Mr. and Mrs. V. Lawrence celebrated their Silver Wedding yesterday. We wish them both and their family a long, happy and a prosperous life.

We note with pleasure says the *Hindu* (Madras), that the Trade Union Congress of South Africa has suggested to the All-India Trade Union Congress the holding of a conference of the representatives of both the organisations to consider the question of Indians in South Africa. It is a very desirable move fraught with far-reaching consequences, for nothing conduces to better understanding than personal contact and frank and free discussion. It would be well if South African delegates are invited to come over to India where the conference could be held, because in that case they would have an excellent opportunity of ascertaining Indian views and knowing the country and its people. We would suggest that this conference should be held before the round table conference meets, so that the deliberations of the latter might be influenced by the friendly exchange of views and decisions of the representatives of labour. The subject of Indians in the Union of course includes the disabilities imposed on them by the Colour Bar Bill and we think that perfect frankness and desire to reach a settlement should lead to the success of the second formal conference.

A Reuter's message from Bombay dated July 9 states:—

An illustration of the changed feeling which has been recently manifested in India is afforded by the action of the Standing Committee of the Bombay Corporation in recommending the Corporation to rescind a resolution passed in October, 1923, for the boycott of British goods as retaliation for Indians' grievances in South Africa and Kenya. The Committee urges that the Corporation should be enabled to deal freely in the open market, and points out that the political reasons for boycott have now been removed.

In the course of an interview with the Associated Press representative prior to his departure for England from Colombo Mr. Eardley Norton is reported to have laughed at the proposal to eliminate the Union Jack in favour of an independent national flag as a huge joke which he thought was bound to meet with ridicule and opposition before they could come to anything like a decision.

### INDIANS AND THE COLOUR BAR ACT

THE Hon. Mr. Raza Ali, a member of the Government of India Deputation that recently visited the Union to gain first hand information in connection with the position of Indians in this country has appealed to Indians not to protest against the Colour Bar Bill recently passed by the Union Government in the face of strong opposition not only from Indians and Natives but a very large number of prominent Europeans as well as the Press other than the Nationalist Press. The reason Mr. Raza Ali gives for his appeal is that the Colour Bar Act is not a legislative measure against Indians and does not mention Asiatics or Indians at all. Mr. Raza Ali admits however that the Bill empowers the Union Government to frame regulations prohibiting the grant of certificates of competency in certain occupations to the classes other than those mentioned in the Act. We are glad Mr. Raza Ali admits that but he is evidently satisfied with the assurance given by the Union Government that there is no present intention on the part of the Government of extending the regulations beyond rendering certain regulations valid which were held by the Supreme Court to be not valid.

The Indian community in South Africa is certainly not prepared to fall in with the views of Mr. Raza Ali however sincere his intentions may be. We think Mr. Raza Ali is still lacking in his information and experience about the attitude of the Union Government towards Indians. We do

not wish to contradict Mr. Raza Ali when he speaks of the sincerity of General Hertzog. But the assurances given by General Smuts when he was in power were also on each occasion taken as given in all sincerity, and have we not had bitter experience of how those assurances were fulfilled? And what guarantee have we that the present assurance will also not be fulfilled as in the past. Besides, who can prevent the enforcement of an Act already on the Statute Book. Verbal assurances surely do not count for much when written assurances have actually seen their fate in the waste paper basket. Mahatma Gandhi has very clearly shown the futility of the present assurances given by the Union Government in connection with the Colour Bar Act in his article reproduced in another column from *Young India*. Mr. C. F. Andrews is not the only European who is so strongly against the Colour Bar Act. There are very many even in South Africa who have strongly opposed the measure as an unjust and iniquitous piece of legislation. Mr. Raza Ali's attitude seems therefore to be rather surprising.

The Indian community will be wise in taking their lead from Mahatma Gandhi and Mr. C. F. Andrews and reiterate their protest against the measure and ask for the question to be included in the discussions at the ensuing Round Table Conference.

### Valueless Assurance

Mr. M. K. Gandhi makes the following comment on the Union Government's assurance to the Indian community in connection with the Mines and Works Amendment Act:—

The Union Government have, the Government of India tell the public in a communique, given the assurance that "there is no present intention on the part of the Union Government of extending the regulations beyond the position as it existed prior to the judgment of the Transvaal Provincial Division of the Supreme Court in the case, *Rex v Hildick Smith*, when it was held that certain regulations with reference to mines and works, which have actually been in force in South Africa since 1911 and in certain provinces for many years before that date, were not valid under the sections of the Act in terms of which they were promulgated."

The communique further states "that the Government of India have also been assured that should any such extension of the scope of these regulations be contemplated in future, every reasonable opportunity will be given to all parties in the Union interested in the matter to make representations."

I hold these two assurances to be simple camouflage. For the Union Government, in reply to questions in the Union House of Assembly, have been repeatedly saying the same thing that they have now told the Government of India, namely, that they have no present intention of exceeding the scope of the regulations beyond the position that existed prior to the judgment in question. The sting of the new Bill lies in its enabling powers. It is like the sword of Damocles hanging over the heads of both the natives of South Africa and the Indian settlers, for, it can be made applicable to the latter precisely as the former. The Bill is, therefore, as insulting as it can possibly be made. Only it does not affect the material interests of the Indians as

much as the Class Areas Bill, not because of any good will on the part of the Union Government, but because Indians as a rule do not take to labour, skilled or unskilled, of the kind contemplated under the Colour Bar Bill. They are better touched materially through their trade and through restriction of residential rights. And this is sought to be accomplished by the Class Areas Bill which is to be considered by the Round Table Conference. The Colour Bar Bill shows the mentality of the Union Government and as the *Times of India* correspondent very properly says in effect the acceptance by the Union Government of the proposal for a Round Table Conference is a mere courteous gesture. It is not to be interpreted to mean a change in the Union Government's angle of vision. And this deduction is further strengthened by the later information that in adumbrating his native policy, General Hertzog has made it clear that, whilst he is prepared to allow limited representation in the Union Parliament to the natives and to the coloured people, he will not allow any whatsoever to the Indian. The result which the *Times of India* correspondent rightly deduces is that the Indian, in the estimation of General Hertzog, stands infinitely lower than the native. In fact, he is to be tolerated till he can be effaced from South Africa as a necessary evil. The Colour Bar Bill therefore cannot be isolated from the different acts of the Union Government. It forms part of its settled policy and furnishes the key to it.

Nor is the second assurance given by the Union Government of the slightest value. Is it any new right that they have conceded when they say that when the scope of the regulations is extended every reasonable opportunity will be given to all parties in the Union, interested in the matter, to make representations especially when it is known to them that representations of Indians carry no voting force behind them? And, if the qualifying phrase in the communique means that parties outside the Union, that is, the Government of India or the Imperial Government will not be allowed even to make representations, surely the assurance is worse than useless, because, it is a restriction of which the announcement has been made and not a concession.

### Colour Bar Bill

#### Mr. Raza Ali's Appeal Against Cry of Veto

Simla, May 29.

The Hon. Raza Ali in a statement says:—"It is not without surprise that I have seen the statement issued to the Press by Mr. Andrews from Ahmedabad yesterday. The Colour Bar Bill is not a legislative measure against Indians. The full text of the Bill is before me and does not mention the Asiatics or Indians at all. True, it empowers the Union Government to frame regulations prohibiting the grant of certificates of competency in certain occupations to the classes other than those mentioned in the Bill.

I am free to admit that the Union Government will under the Bill have the power to extend such prohibition to our people if it so deems necessary. But is there any reason to suspect that General Hertzog who above everything else, is a sincere and honest statesman, and whose Government in the words of Lord Athlone's telegram on the 13th April 1926, "is guided by sincere desire and intention to co-operate in finding a real and effective solution of the Indian problem," will go against the basic principle of the formula agreed upon between the two Governments. To the best of my belief, and such knowledge of the intentions of General Hertzog's Government as I was able to have during my stay in South Africa, I can say that the present

Ministry is sincerely anxious not to offend against Indian susceptibilities.

### Cry of Veto Inadvisable

I have no doubt that good-will and sympathy towards India obtain in South Africa to-day. It is for the Indian public and press to respond to them in the same spirit. If we show our readiness to meet the South Africans in a reasonable manner, I am full of hopes for the success of the coming Conference, whether it is held in India or South Africa. But to invoke the Crown to put its veto on the Colour Bar Bill is certainly not the way calculated to bring about an atmosphere of mutual trust and goodwill. If there is one point more than another on which South Africans are sensitive beyond description, it is what they call an attempt at interference from outside. In an extreme case like the Areas Reservation Bill it is our right to appeal to the Sovereign to interfere on our behalf. But I assure my countrymen that by raising the cry of veto in the case of the Colour Bar Bill, which does not practically affect our rights, we are not only alienating the sympathy of the majority of the South Africans, but unconsciously making our position weak.

It may be, that Mr. Andrews and I look upon the Colour Bar Bill from different viewpoints. As a humanitarian, he is against all racial legislation and is opposed to the Bill, root and branch. I as an Indian am concerned with the fate of my countrymen alone, and if the Bill is not going to affect their position prejudicially, in my view it should be no business of my countrymen to take up cudgels in opposition to it. May I appeal to my countrymen and the Indian press to be patient, and work to bring about the right atmosphere on our side. If this is done, I feel confident and I realise what I am saying, that if necessary, the Conference will not be averse to consider the Colour Bar Bill in relation to its effect upon the resident Indian community.

### Mr. Andrews' Advice

Mr. C. F. Andrews has issued the following communication to the Associated Press with regard to the statement of the Hon. Mr. Raza Ali:—

"My friend Mr. Syed Raza Ali with whom I have been working all these months on the South African Indian question has rightly pointed out in his statement on the Colour Bar Bill that we have no reason to suspect General Hertzog who is a sincere and honest man. That has been all along my own position and I have never wavered from it. But Mr. Tielman Roos and Mr. Strachan have been equally sincere both in expressing their determination to reduce Indians in Natal to their irreducible minimum as quickly as possible and also in emphasising their dislike of the postponement of the Asiatic Bill itself.

Mr. Tielman Roos is the present Minister of Justice and the leader of the Young Nationalists. Mr. Strachan is the chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party. Both of them made public speeches insisting on immediate passing of the Asiatic Bill on the eve of General Hertzog's decision to postpone it and seek friendly settlement with India. Thus they have only passively accepted that decision and as far as I can see they are under no direct political obligation with regard to what General Hertzog has done. If as seems quite possible the Nationalist and Labour members who follow Mr. Tielman Roos and Mr. Strachan on this Indian question increase their power in the country and the new election gives them an upper hand then the Indian community in South Africa will have no solid guarantee that the Colour Bar Bill would not be applied against them.

Therefore it would appear of the utmost importance to make emphatic protest now so that the South African Government might be left under no misapprehension about our own determination in

India to seek for the repeal of the Colour Bar Bill if it actually becomes law. It will not hinder the coming conference, but will materially help it if the Indian Government and the people thus make their position unmistakably clear in this matter before the conference begins.

Lord Birkenhead's unfortunate utterance has only confused the issue by its irresponsible haste and lack of previous consultation. The Indian people are not bound by it in any way whatever.

### Betraying Indian Interests

The *Bombay Chronicle* writes as follows:—

When the other day the Colour Bar legislation was brought up for discussion by Lord Olivier in the House of Lords, Lord Birkenhead, who as Secretary of State for India is supposed to be guarding Indian interests, ridiculed the suggestion that Indians would be affected by it and considered that no discussion of that measure could form part of the Round Table Conference shortly to be held between the Union Government and the Government of India. Lord Birkenhead's speech was marked by amazing levity and ignorance of the Indian feeling on the subject. In happy contrast with this attitude of the English politician, whose duty is to see that Indians are saved the ignominy of the racial stigma which the measure imposes, by insisting on its repeal, is the radical opposition to it stoutly maintained by General Smuts. The Ex-Premier of South Africa, who knows the Indian problem at close quarters, sees the implications of the measure far more clearly than either Mr. Raza Ali, whose visit to South Africa, it is evident, has been in vain and whose views on the subject are as amazing as they are perverse, or the Secretary of State for India who ought to make it his immediate business to study the question and realise the depth of feeling amongst Indians in South Africa and in this country against this statutory sanction to racial discrimination of a most insulting character.

Mr. Andrews has done well to emphasise that Indians must offer to the Colour Bar legislation "a fundamental and radical opposition" because the racial stigma it contains is a direct blow to Indian national honour which, according to Mr. Raza Ali, is no concern of an Indian. Such opposition will continue to be advanced against it and this country must be on its guard and avoid being persuaded into acceptance of the suicidal policy of separating the two issues, the legislative enactment of the Colour Bar and the anti-Asiatic legislation which alone should form, according to Lord Birkenhead and the Union Government, the subject of the Round Table Conference. We must insist that the Colour Bar is included in the discussions when the Conference meets. The issues cannot be separated, because in essence they are one. The one and only problem before the non-white races in South Africa is whether they are to allow themselves to be condemned to the position, which General Smuts sees clearly is apportioned to them in the Hertzog scheme of development of the country, the position of hewers of wood and drawers of water. As a writer in the *Natal Mercury* points out, that position is one which neither the Indian nor the African Native can accept. There are white men in South Africa who realise this, men like General Smuts and Mr. Burton, the Capetown politician who has had the courage to declare that the Native has "an unchallengeable right" to live in South Africa and that "a thousand Colour Bar Bills will not keep him out of the pale." He fears that if the Native is forced downward, he will not go down alone. He will drag part of the white race with him. But such wisdom and width of outlook are rare amongst the South African whites, and it is our duty not to be lulled into a sense of false security by the announcement made by the Government of India that the

Colour Bar Bill will not affect Indians, because they are not employed on skilled posts in the gold mines. Along with Natives we have to fight against it, because it affirms a dangerous principle, the principle of preventing a particular race by legislation from pursuing certain callings, thus denying to it every chance of rising in the social and economic scale. Its retention on the Statute Book means for Indians the impossibility of maintaining the Western economic standards upon which the Union Government insists, because it deprives them of participation in high grade labour, and receiving the corresponding high remuneration. If Whitehall is in a mood to betray India's interests, Indians must only expect that a Government of Die-Hards will not act otherwise. They must be prepared to fight out this issue to the bitter end, resorting to every method of agitation available to them under the guidance of Gandhiji, and his trusted lieutenants like Mr. Andrews.

When we fear that Whitehall may betray Indian interests and when we know that we must be prepared to fight against this imposition of a racial stigma on Indians to the bitter end, we must also be on our guard in endorsing views such as those held by the Hon. Mr. Raza Ali on the Colour Bar Bill. He deprecates the agitation invoking the Crown to put its veto on the measure. From a perusal of the full text of the Bill he finds that it does not mention Asiatics or Indians at all. But Mr. Raza Ali himself admits that the measure empowers the Union Government to frame regulations prohibiting the grant of certificates of competency in certain occupations to the classes other than those mentioned in it. This is surely enough to justify the Indian apprehensions regarding this iniquitous piece of legislation and the suggestion of Mr. Raza Ali that he is taking a practical view of the matter, while Mr. Andrews takes a humanitarian view of it, ought not to appeal to his countrymen, who are warned in time by their best friends amongst the whites in South Africa, apart from devoted champions of their interests like Mr. Andrews, that the measure is only a thin end of the wedge with regard to Indians. India has every right to demand that it should be vetoed and that the whole question of the Colour Bar be included in the discussions at the ensuing Round Table Conference.

## Indian Schools' Exhibition

The Government Indian School in Carlisle Street was crowded on last Saturday morning by pupils, teachers and friends, when an exhibition of work, representing 20 Natal Indian schools was opened by Councillor Mrs. Knight. The Mayor was also present.

Mrs. Knight spoke at some length on the difficulties which had to be faced by Indians in order to ensure their children receiving a good education. She thought, she said, that the girls were too often left out in educational schemes, and few, in consequence, could read or write.

Mrs. Knight urged that greater attention should, in future, be paid to the girls' education—they should be taught, in addition to reading and writing, how to do domestic duties.

Mrs. Knight was then presented with a bouquet by Mr. T. M. Naicker, on behalf of the Natal Indian Teachers' Society, after which Mrs. Knight and the Mayor made an inspection of the exhibits.

The walls were covered with drawings and a number of tables were laid out with needlework, models and carpentry work. Many of the articles shown displayed great originality in their conception and delicate skill in their construction. A model of the Durban War Memorial stood high

above the other exhibits and lacked only the brilliant colourings to make it a splendid replica of the much-discussed original. There were drawings of flowers, animals, birds, motor-cars and Indian home scenes, all attractively executed in bright water colours.

The entire exhibition is a credit to the school children who contributed to it, and as Mrs. Knight remarked, "it shows that some splendid work is being put in by the teachers."—*Natal Mercury*.

## Lady Teachers In Indian Schools

The following is a copy of a letter addressed to His Honour the Administrator of Natal, by the Natal Indian Congress:—

"To His Honour the Administrator of Natal, Pietermaritzburg":

Sir,—We have been directed by the Committee of the Natal Indian Congress to bring to your Honour's notice the feeling of the Indian community with reference to resolution passed by the Provincial Council for the removal of Lady Teachers from Indian Schools.

The teachers in question have been employed in the schools for a considerable time, and so far as we are aware, neither the parents nor the Lady Teachers had any grounds for complaint by the present arrangement. While such being the real facts, the community which we have the honour to represent, was amazed to find a resolution of the kind referred to above, passed by the Provincial Council, followed by speeches from members which reflect not only bad taste, but are also calculated to throw unwarranted and undeserving aspersion on the moral tone of young children attending Indian Schools.

We need hardly state that the Indian community strongly resents the attitude of the Provincial Council, and we have been instructed to state that, in their desire to make political capital out of the Indian children, the Provincial Council has not done justice to the moral character of the Indian community, and it has not evinced credit for their own common intelligence. In conclusion, we have been instructed to place on record our keen resentment at the gratuitously insulting attitude of the Provincial Council towards the community and to lodge our protest against same.

We beg to remain,

Your Honour's Obedient Servants,

V. S. O. PATHER,

SORABJEE RUSTOMJEE,

Joint hon. Secretaries.

"RAMANAND TO RAM TIRATH" We have received from Mrs. G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras, a new book of this name which recounts the lives and teachings of the Saints of Northern India from Ramanand to Ram Tirath. It includes sketches of Ramanand and Kabir, Nanak and the Sikh Gurus, of Ravi Das the Chamar Saint, of Mira Bai the ascetic queen of Chitor, Vallabhaacharya, Tulsi Das, Virajanand, Dayanand the founder of the Arya Samaj and Swami Rama Tirath. Some of the rapturous songs and hymns of the vernaculars are to be found in the ecstatic utterances of Mira Bai, of Nanak and Kabir. The sketches contain ample quotations from these hymns as well as from the sayings and teachings of the saints. The price of the book is Re. 1-8.

## The Story of My Experiments With Truth

[ BY M. K. GANDHI ]

### I. Birth and Parentage

The Gandhis seem to have been originally grocers. But for three generations from my grand-father they have been Prime Ministers in Kathiawar States. Uttamchand Gandhi *alias* Ota Gandhi must have been a man of principle. State intrigues compelled him to leave Porbandar, whereas he was Diwan, and to seek refuge in Junagadh. He there saluted the Nawab with the left hand. Some one noticing the apparent discourtesy asked for an explanation which was thus given: "The right hand is already pledged to Porbandar."

Ota Gandhi was married twice, having lost the first wife. He had four sons by the first and two by the second. I do not think I ever in my childhood felt or knew that these were step-brothers. The fifth of these six brothers was Karamchand Gandhi *alias* Kaba Gandhi and the sixth was Tulsidas Gandhi. Both these brothers were Prime Ministers in Porbandar one after the other. Kaba Gandhi was my father. He was a member of the Rajasthnic Court (now extinct, but in those days a very influential body for settling disputes between the chiefs and their cousins). He was for some time Prime Minister in Rajkot and then in Vankaner, and was a pensioner of the Rajkot State when he died.

Kaba Gandhi had four wives one after another. He had two daughters by the first two. The last Putlibai bore him a daughter and three sons, I being the youngest.

My father was a lover of his clan, truthful, brave and generous, but short tempered. To a certain extent he may have been even given to carnal pleasures. For he married for the fourth time when he was on the wrong side of forty. But he was incorruptible and had earned a name for strict impartiality in my family as well as outside. His loyalty to the State was well-known. An Assistant Political Agent spoke insultingly of the Rajkot Thakore Saheb, his chief, and he stood up against the insult. The Agent was angry and asked Kaba Gandhi to apologise. This he refused to do and was therefore kept under detention for a few hours. But when the Sahib saw that Kaba Gandhi was adamant he ordered him to be released.

My father never had the ambition to accumulate riches and left us very little property.

He had no education, save that of experience. At best he may be said to have read up to the fifth vernacular standard. Of history or geography he was innocent. But his rich experience of practical affairs stood him in good stead in the solution of the most intricate questions and in managing hundreds of men. Of religious training he had very little, but he had the religious culture that frequent visits to temples and listening to religious discourses make available to many a Hindu. In his last days he began reading the Gita at the instance of a learned Brahmin friend of the family, and he used to repeat aloud some verses every day at the time of daily worship.

The outstanding impression my mother has left on my memory is of her saintliness. She was deeply religious. She would not think of eating her food without her daily prayers. Going to Haveli—the Vaishnavite temple—was one of her daily duties. As far as my memory can go back, I do not remember her having missed the *Chaturmas*. She would take the hardest vows and keep them without

finching. Illness was no excuse for relaxing them. I recall her once falling ill when she was observing the *Chandrayana* vow, but the illness was not allowed to interrupt the observance. Living on one meal a day during *Chaturmas* was a habit with her. Not content with that she fasted every alternate day during one *Chaturmas*. To keep two or three consecutive fasts was nothing to her. During one *Chaturmas* she had avowed not to have food without seeing the Sun. We children would in those days be standing, staring at the sky, waiting to announce the appearance of the Sun to our mother. Everyone knows that during the thick of the rainy season the Sun often does not condescend to put in his appearance. And I remember days when at the sudden appearance of the Sun we would hurriedly announce it to her and she would be rushing for a look at him, when the fugitive Sun would be gone having deprived our mother of her meal. "That does not matter," she would cheerfully say, "God did not want me to eat to-day," and resume her round of duties.

She had strong common sense. She was in the know about all matters of State, and ladies of the Court thought highly of her intelligence. Often I would accompany her, exercising the privilege of childhood, and I still remember many a lively discourse she had with the widowed mother of the Thakore Saheb.

Of these parents I was born at Porbandar or Sudamapuri on the 2nd October 1869. I passed my childhood in Porbandar. I recollect having been put to some school. It was with some difficulty that I mugged up the multiplication tables. The fact that I recollect nothing more of those days than of having learnt in company of other boys to abuse our teacher, would suggest a strong inference that my intellect must have been sluggish, and my memory as raw as the cake which figured in the couplet about the poor teacher.

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