

BOMBAY'S PROTEST
AGAINST
THE TREATMENT
OF
The Indians in South Africa
by the Colonists

A Record of full Proceedings

OF
THE PUBLIC MEETING

Held at the Town Hall

on

Wednesday, the 29th January 1908.

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A public meeting convened by the Sheriff of Bombay, in response to a numerously signed requisition of influential citizens of Bombay, was held in the Town Hall to protest against the treatment meted out to the Indians in the Transvaal. The meeting was as large as it was representative, and the spacious hall was filled to its utmost capacity, several hundreds of people standing outside the hall. The proceedings were characterised with great enthusiasm and as some of the popular leaders entered the meeting room, they were accorded a very warm reception. The proceedings commenced at 5 P. M. and lasted for over two hours and a half.

Among those present were : Sir Jamsetji Jijeebhoy, Bart., Sir Dinshaw M. Petit, Bart., the Hon. Sir Pheroze M. Mehta, K. C. I. E., Sir Sassoon David, Kt., Sir Jehangir Cowasji Jehangir, Kt., Sir Bhalchandra Krishna, Kt., Sir Harkissondas Narotumdas, Kt., Sir Curimbhoy Ebrahim, Kt., the Hon. Mr. C. H. Armstrong, the Hon. Mr. G. K. Parekh, the Hon. Mr. D. A. Khare, the Hon. Mr. Chimanlal H. Setalwad, the Hon. Mr. Ibrahim Rahimtoola, Mr. James MacDonald, Mr. Stanley Reed, Mr. Dwarkadas Dharamsey, Mr. H. A. Wadia, Mr. D. E. Wacha, Mr. Bomonji D. Petit, Mr. Tribhowandas M. Nathubhai, Mr. J. Baptista, Mr. J. A. Khan Bahadur Darashaw R. Chichgar, Mr. Currimdamji Peerbhoy, Mr. Jafferbhoy Rahimtoola, Dr. N. Arak, Mr. Cowasji Jehangir Cowasji, Mr. F. Sorabji Pyarkhan, Mr. Manmohandas Ramji, Mr. Dhanjibhoy B. Petit, Mr. N. V. Maudlik, Mr. Kaji Kabiruddin, Mr. Mahomedbhoy Currimbhoy Ebrahim, Mr. Jehangir B. Petit, and others.

(The Times of India.)

Election of the Chairman.

Mr. Dwarkadas Dharamsey, Sheriff of Bombay, opened the proceedings by reading the requisition sent to him to convene the meeting and called upon those present to elect their Chairman. On the motion of Sir Jamsetji Jijeebhoy, seconded by Sir Sassoon David, His Highness Aga Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah was voted to the chair.

The Chairman's Speech.

The Chairman, who was received most enthusiastically then said :—Mr. Sheriff and Citizens of Bombay ; I am glad to say that we meet here to-day in no partizan or sectional spirit ; but the presence of representative men of every community and race, and the names of those prominent gentlemen who have signed the requisition to the Sheriff, are the proofs of the catholicity of interests that we represent. Again, the representative character of the meeting recently held in London under the presidency of an ex-Viceroy of India, Lord Amptill, shows that not only have the Indian united in protesting against the harsh and unfair treatment meted out to their fellow-subjects in South Africa, but they have been warmly supported in their efforts by distinguished Englishmen of all parties and classes and schools of thought. Neither do we ask for any great or revolutionary change in the policy of the Imperial Government towards an autonomous colony. Nor do we call upon the autonomous colony to open its door to unrestricted Asiatic immigration. Of course, as Asiatics, as Indians, as loyal British subjects, we feel naturally most strongly our exclusion from any country when that exclusion is based on the fact of our "dark skins" and racial prejudices. But gentlemen, there is a wider and bigger question underlying the policy of Self-governing Colonies and America towards Asiatic immigration that is not concerned with the immediate object of the meeting. Some day, no doubt, great economic, moral and political forces, which conditions have brought into existence will naturally that tremendous problem. Meanwhile, we are immediately concerned here with the Transvaal Government that has deliberately passed laws which can have no other object than that of driving out, bag and baggage, such unfortunate

British Indian subjects as are already in that country or compelling them to submit to degrading conditions and go through formalities that at once place them on the level of criminals. Formerly the Boer Government had a very strict law against Asiatics and against Indians, requiring payment of regular fees for holding licenses for trading. That law prevented Indians from owning any real property permanently, and having any real interest in the country. That old law, though as Indians we deny its justice and its humanity, would be ample protection for the White settlers of the Colony against any great influx of Indians and would safeguard Whites against being economically pushed to the wall by Indian competition. But, gentlemen, it is quite clear that the object of the white population in the Colonies is not to prevent other Indians from going there, but to drive away those unfortunate persons, who through their long residence, through thrift and honest labour, and their law-abiding, peaceful and loyal character, have won for themselves the absolute right of residence. Their labour has among other beneficial results, contributed to the economic development of the Colony.

Only a few years ago, for the sake of peace, and in order to show their readiness to meet even the severe demands of His Majesty's High Commissioner, they came forward for voluntary registration because they believed in the assurance of the High Commissioner that once they had registered themselves, their position would be established and that no further registration would be required. But to our utter astonishment and dismay, there has since been passed another most degrading and offensive law—a law that no self-respecting human being can accept or comply with without outraging his feelings. The old law, obnoxious in itself, could be tolerated, even though it closed the avenues of wealth and position to Indians; but this new Transvaal Registration Act deprives us of our manhood and places us on the footing of an inferior race—a stigma which we do not deserve. The Indian soldiers have been a very valuable asset to the State. They have fought worthily side by side with the flower of the British Army and for the flag of England; they distinguished themselves for bravery, won laurels on the battle-field, and

sacrificed their lives in the service of their King and their country. Indian students have held their own with the best products of the English Universities. Indian mathematicians and men of science, and Indian doctors and jurists have proved themselves worthy of their European rivals in various intellectual walks of life. Lord Curzon once called Indian Princes the colleagues and partners of the Imperial Government in the responsibility of governing the country. In any case Indians are not in any way inferior to other races and yet in spite of their proved capacity, if they are treated in a degrading fashion in the 20th century, without a protest from the Imperial Government what is the meaning of the Empire for them? The word Empire loses its significance and real meaning when one subject of His Majesty is so badly treated by the other. What then becomes of the common right and interest and duties of the citizenship of the Empire? Some of those men who are now being driven out, sacrificed health, youth, fortune and lives in the military service of the Empire and fought valiantly under the British flag; and the children of some of those heroes and martyrs, who died for their Emperor and their Government, are now placed in the most humiliating position for no fault of theirs, and they have now to go to prison like thieves or criminals unprotected by the Government to whom they owe allegiance.

If the object of those in authority be only the identification of Asiatics residing in the Transvaal, it can easily be attained by simple registration with all the humiliating conditions removed. We make a sincere appeal to the Imperial Government for the sake of the Empire, for the sake of its life, for the sake of its inner meaning not to abstain any longer from interfering in this urgent matter. Nobody advocates a revolutionary change in the relations of the Mother-country towards self-governing colonies. They can at least appoint a Royal Commission to enquire into all the contested facts and make such reports to the Sovereign as they think fit to satisfy the legitimate grievances of the Indians and also to prevent any wholesale and dangerous influx into the Colony. I think it was Mr. Rhodes who declared some years ago, that there should be "an equal right for every civilized man South of the

Zambesi." This opinion has been endorsed by many eminent authorities ; and the maxim holds good to-day with, perhaps, greater force. If the dangerous example of the Transvaal was followed by Foreign Governments what would become of India ?

If the Imperial Government is unable to remove the unnecessary and unjust restrictions placed on the Indians in the Transvaal then it behoves the Imperial Government in fairness to Indians, to allow such a policy of retaliation as would humiliate such South Africans as come to India, in the same way as they seek to humiliate Indians in the Transvaal. If our Government retaliates, it will be deemed the inevitable result of the action of the Transvaal Government. If the Boars close their doors against Indians, the British Government in fairness to India, should insist on keeping the ring clear of Boars and let us at least retaliate with similar laws in our own country. In my humble opinion if all other means fail, if our reasonable request is disregarded, then certainly retaliation against Colonial visitors should be adopted by way of showing them the injustice of their acts. At this meeting, we must enter our unanimous and emphatic protest against the wrongs inflicted on our fellow-subjects in the Transvaal and appeal to Government, for the sake of humanity, and the Imperial stake involved in the question, and the possible disastrous effects upon British prestige in India, to take prompt and effective measures to redress the grievances which are so unjustly inflicted upon Indians by the Transvaal Government.

Gentlemen, there has been such an absolute unanimity of opinion, both English and Indian, as to the justness of the cause that we are pleading to-day ; and there has been such an universal, consistent and warm support extended to it by the English and the Indian Press, that I feel hopeful that our just and righteous appeal will induce the Imperial Government to intercede on behalf of their unfortunate but loyal and honest subjects. I will not now stand between you and other speakers, but with these few remarks, I will now call upon the Hon. Mr. Armstrong to move the resolution which stands in his name.

The Chairman, who received an ovation on rising again to address the meeting, said :--Mr. Sheriff and Gentlemen,— Before proceeding with the business of the meeting it is my duty to read a letter that I have just received from the veteran Indian Patriot, Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji. (Applause) Mr. Dadabhai writes :—“I am very sorry I am unable to be present at the Public Meeting to-day but I am in entire sympathy with its object, and I hope the meeting will be a success.” I have also received a letter from Sir Adamji Peerbhai—(applause)—expressing his regret at his inability to be present at the meeting.

First Resolution.

“That the citizens of Bombay, in Public Meeting assembled, respectfully appeal to his Majesty’s Ministers and the British Parliament to do all in their power to prevent the injustice and ill-treatment of His Majesty’s subjects under the Transvaal Restriction Act and the Immigration Restriction Act in South Africa, which violate the Sovereign’s gracious pledge to place Indians on an equality with the subjects of the British Crown, and which have produced a growing sense of wrong and universal indignation among all classes and creeds in India”.

The Hon. Mr. Armstrong.

The Hon’ble Mr. Armstrong said—The resolution I have now the honour to propose is as follow :—That the citizens of Bombay, in “ Public Meeting assembled,” respectfully appeal to his Majesty’s Ministers and the British Parliament to do all in their power to prevent the injustice and ill-treatment of his Majesty’s subjects under the Transvaal Registration Act and the Immigration Restriction Act in South Africa, which violate the Sovereign’s gracious pledge to place Indians on an equality with the subjects of the British Crown, and which have produced a growing sense of wrong and universal indignation among all classes and creeds in India.

I do not think, Gentlemen, that it requires many words from me to recommend this proposition to you. The present very unsatisfactory—indeed I may say deplorable—position of Indians in the Transvaal claims the active sympathy of every one in this country whatever his nationality may be. That leading citizens in England sympathise with the object of this gathering is quite evident from an important meeting that was lately held in London and I for one with many others of my community very greatly regret the unwise and hasty action of the Transvaal Government in their dealing with a few thousand Indians many of whom have been located in their territory for 15 to 20 years,—some being well-known and well-to-do traders and

shopkeepers and others owners of land and property. The position however is not an easy one to deal with and that is why the resolution I have just moved has been worded by general consent with great moderation. As you all know the inhabitants of the Transvaal apparently think that they are quite within their rights in endeavouring—but unfortunately by most objectionable methods—to protect themselves and their property from undue competition, and when a self-governing Colony, made up of a very mixed population of this kind, it is somewhat difficult for the Imperial Government to intervene. But whatever our views may be as to this we here this evening have every right to demand that Indians who have lived peaceably in a Colony for a number of years should be treated with tact, courtesy and consideration, and what is of equal importance that their position for the future should be clearly defined. (Here here).

Ill-Treatment of Indians.

The "Times" from London, of this mail deals with the question at some length. It begins an article by saying that if the Boer Government chastised the Indians with whips the Transvaal Government are now chastising them with scorpions, and you will remember that it was the ill-treatment of Indians before the war which called forth many protests from Englishmen, leading statesmen in Great Britain. Not only have all the restrictions been maintained but additional disabilities in a very disagreeable form have been imposed. The article goes on to point out that presumably all Indians resident in the Transvaal had registered under the old republican law, but that as some questions arose as to the validity of this registration they voluntarily agreed on Lord Milner's advice in 1903, to register themselves a new with full formalities. This, one would think was amply sufficient, but the present Transvaal Government have ignored these previous registrations, and are now endeavouring to enforce an Act which places Indians in a very invidious position as citizens of this great Empire. Failing compliance, however, powers have been taken under an Immigration Restriction Act, to deport any Asiatic who refuses to register, and this is undoubtedly a most high-handed proceeding when it is borne in mind that Indians

resident in the Transvaal are law-abiding citizens and in every respect thoroughly loyal. But the extraordinary part of the position is that whilst the Transvaal is endeavouring to get rid of Asiatics, the Cape Government allow Indians freedom of commerce as well as the electoral franchise, and this, I think, is a complete answer to any one who might attempt to argue that resident Indians in the Transvaal should not be allowed to remain there except under a most degrading system of registration such as the Government there, is now endeavouring to enforce.

Necessity for Patience.

In dealing, however, with this question, there can be no doubt that great tact and patience are necessary. I feel certain that the sympathies of Government are with this meeting, but nothing should be done or said by us here which will make the position of either this or the Home Government more difficult than it is at present. In time, no doubt wiser counsels will prevail and it is therefore, necessary for us here not to be overhasty—though I admit the difficulty of this when imprisonment is being resorted to wholesale—for as the position becomes better understood it will assuredly improve, and already there are signs that the Transvaal Government is desirous of reconsidering the matter. I must admit, however that the keenness of Indians to leave their own land for other countries has always surprised me, but after all, the point we have to deal with to-day is not a question of emigration but the treatment of old residents in a country which has lately been taken over by the British Crown. I deplore and also I am sure, do all Englishmen in this country the recent Registration and Immigration Restriction Acts of the Transvaal Government; and I heartily sympathise with those who are endeavouring to improve the lot of Asiatic British subjects in a British Colony. Although this meeting has not been called to discuss the question of emigration one cannot but agree with the first portion of a letter which appeared in the "Times of India" a few days ago from Sir Sassoon David that the best and safest remedy for the position now existing lies in the direction of making Indians independent of and indifferent to the attractions of emigration by encouraging them to develop the resources of their own country. Here; however, I part

company with Sir Sassoon, for he goes on to advocate various changes in our trade and fiscal arrangements with some of which I am quite unable to agree. I have always held the view that consumers should be allowed to buy in the cheapest market and when one comes to think of the millions of consumers in this country, it is difficult to see how a policy of protection could be advantageous. It certainly is curious however when one hears, as one has done for the last few years of the great scarcity of labour in every industrial town and in many districts of this country that emigration should continue as it does. There is any amount of work to be done in India and judging from the results of the last few year's profits of well-managed estates the industrial enterprises are very considerable. One would like to see therefore as an indication of the power of Swadeshi much greater efforts made by the natives of India to develop the resources of their own land. To a very considerable extent though I admit not altogether entirely this has been left in the past to Europeans, but there is no reason whatever as the educated classes of this country and especially of Western India are full of energy and resource, why a great deal more in the way of industrial enterprise should not be undertaken by the people of this country. It would not be wise to force ourselves upon the Colonies, and after all if the Colonies do not want us why should we go to them when there is so much good work to be done here and plenty of money to be earned in the shape of good wages.

Gentlemen, the resolution I have moved speaks I think for itself. We do not ask for the impossible or that hasty action of a drastic nature should be taken which might make the position much more difficult. What we request is that the Imperial Government and Parliament should do all that lies in their power to settle this awkward question. That our request will be granted I feel quite certain, and already there are slight signs that some strong influence is at work to improve matters. The resolution also refers to the very strong feeling that has been created and naturally so in all classes in this country by recent events and when every community in India is of one mind as to this, a satisfactory solution becomes only a matter of time. Let us hope therefore that imprisonment will immediately cease,

that those who are imprisoned will be at once released, and that the rights of the individual and of property will be respected pending a full enquiry into the whole matter. I leave this resolution to you gentlemen with the greatest confidence. (Applause).

Mr. H. A. Wadia.

I have great pleasure in seconding the Resolution which has just been proposed. We stand face to face with two serious facts—the admitted injustice to our fellow-subjects in the Transvaal, and the amazing importance which has been voiced in varied phrases by those who have in their keeping the destinies of the Empire at large. The injustice was admitted before the war by the Sovereign's Ministers themselves who declared it as one of the causes which necessitated and justified the war (*hear hear*). During the war did India do anything to forfeit her sons' rights? I say advisedly and emphatically that India's conduct added to the claim. It was India that saved Natal (*cheers*). British soldiers recruited equipped and maintained out of India's revenues, stopped Joubert's march to the sea and saved Petermaritzburg and Durban itself from the Boer's invasion. Indian stretcher-bearers one thousand in all, volunteered to do the work of ambulance and so far took such share as was allowed to them in doing their duty to their Sovereign and the Empire. These men served at the fateful battles of Colenzo, Spionkop and Vaalkranz. The Natal Press extolled their services and their behaviour. The Natal Advertiser said that the Indians might have taken up a sulky attitude and said they would not help the enemy but they would not help the authorities either who had shown themselves so antagonistic to them. But they did not do so and went out of the way to give help by subscribing to the war funds liberally, and by their ladies giving their hand work for the comfort of British soldiers, and by their men volunteering to do the ambulance work in every direction (*loud cheers*). The Prime Minister of Natal declared publicly that the part played by the Indian community during the crisis redounded to the credit and patriotism of them all and deserved grateful recognition.

How has that grateful recognition been shown? By strange forgetfulness and cruel persecution. Every anti-Indian Act passed by the Boer Republics before the war was unearthed and enforced with a rigour and vigour unknown before (*cheers*) and with a callousness which the Boers had not dared to indulge in. And in addition there was a series of new Acts and Ordinances in all South Africa which I have not the time to enumerate, conceived in selfishness, carried in shamelessness, and enforced with the strictest severity (*cries of shame*). Of these the last two and the worst are those mentioned in the Resolution, viz., the Amended Asiatic Act under which the Registration Ordinances were enacted and the Immigration Restriction Act. The intention and effect of compulsory registration under the former Act must be interpreted and rightly interpreted to be the compulsory abasement and compulsory degradation of all Asiatics including our fellow-subjects in the Transvaal (*cheers*). Conditions were laid down which had been reserved and justified before in the case only of convicted criminals and indentured bondsmen (*shame shame*). This the British Indians have resisted and resisted rightly. There were 13,000 Asiatics liable to compulsory Registration. Of these 12,000 were British Indians. Ninety-six per cent. of these 12,000 united in passive resistance to the Act. This proves at once the reality and the extent of the injustice (*hear, hear*). The way in which our countrymen have behaved with perfect unity, Hindus and Mahomedans and Parsees all forgetting the petty differences that divide us, all with one mind and heart and soul withstanding what they all felt would be national humiliation and national degradation makes them entitled to our gratitude (*loud cheering*) and we are all proud of them. The Immigration Restriction Act gave the Transvaal authorities the power which was indispensable to the enforcing of the Registration Act successfully. They could not put in jail 11,000 passive resisters. They therefore wanted the power to deport them physically. As long as the British Immigration Act remained without the Royal assent, the Transvaal Government took no steps. His Majesty's assent was published on the 27th December and on the 27th December, Notices were issued to the leaders of the passive resistance to appear before the

Magistrate. They all appeared and pleaded guilty to the charge that they had continued to live in the land without registration. They were all ordered to leave the country and among them was Mr. Gandhi (*loud and continued cheering for some minutes*). Mr. Gandhi and some leaders were told to leave within 48 hours (cries of *shame, shame*, which lasted some time). No, Gentlemen, Mr. Gandhi himself asked for the 48 hours because he wished to resist and to show that they would not leave the country and were prepared for the further punishment (*cheers*). Some others who had business dealings were given 14 days for leaving the country. Mr. Gandhi and the leaders did not leave and they were sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour which the Government has altered to simple imprisonment. They are in prison now (cries of *shame*). Will the meeting bear with me for a moment if as one identified with Kathiwar for more than 30 years I speak personally of Mr. Gandhi who was born and bred in Kathiwar. I knew his father 30 years ago when he was Minister of one of the First Class States—Porebunder—in the Province. And they who knew the father are rejoiced to see revived in the son and displayed by the son on a wider field and in more trying times the qualities that distinguished the father in his narrower role, wise-thinking moderate counsel, calm courage and simple straitforwardness. Those who have been watching Mr. Gandhi's work will know how true this is (*loud cheers*). Let them deport Mr. Gandhi and those with him as undesirables to their own shame. South Africa will be the poorer for the loss of them (*cheers*). India will be immensely the richer for their gain (*continued cheers*). Such has been the grateful recognition promised by these forgetful men. Such has been the treatment of men whom Mr. Chamberlain himself admitted to be a law-abiding, peaceful and meritorious body with undoubted industry and intelligence and with indomitable perseverance. These very virtues are their chief crime (*loud cheers*). The white man cannot compete with them and they must be punished and deported. What else have they done? No one has asked for unchecked and uncontrolled Asiatic Immigration. All that the British Indians in the Transvaal have claimed is the common right inherent in mankind, the right which they as inheritors of a great past and of an ancient civilization, and as subjects of

the greatest modern Power, have refused to concede, *viz.*, to live in honour and in peace in the land of their adoption, in territories which owe allegiance to our Sovereign (*cheers*). Can British statesmen refuse to recognise the justice of this claim? Are they prepared to allow the sacred pledge of the Sovereign to be set aside? No Sir, they cannot deny the injustice, but they have proclaimed their powerlessness. They say they can only protest and persuade but they cannot direct or dictate for fear of this handful of colonials. One wonders if H. M.'s Ministers realise the results of the course that has been pursued. We have assembled here to bring home to the mind and conscience of the Ministers and of Parliament the disastrous results which we foresee and wish them to provide against. (*Hear, hear*) And in our appeal to them may we not also include the statesmen in all the Colonies? They and we all stand on one common platform in our desire to see the British Empire endure in unimpaired strength and in increasing prosperity (*cheers*). Let us ask them how this can be, unless the component parts of the Empire act in mutual accord and good will, mindful of each other's necessities, careful of each other's susceptibilities, respectful of each other's rights and resolved never to allow any risk to the security and the interests of the Empire as a whole for the particular interests or selfish purposes of a part? Where, otherwise would be the cohesion of the Empire? (*loud cheers.*) Shall the colonials be on one side, with India on the other with her three hundred millions wronged and indignant to-day, disaffected to-morrow, rebellious in the end? (*continued cheering.*) It has been said that the general feeling of India in this regard is due to the agitator's work. No mistake could be greater. No amount of disloyal agitation, if it existed, could do the work, the dangerous and deplorable work that shall be done by the silent spread of the story of shame and wrong which the despoiled and deported emigrant will bring back from South Africa to his home in many a village in all parts of our country (*cheers.*) Can British statesmen for one moment doubt that when that story spreads, our people's faith in the Sirkar's justice will not be shaken to its depths? Can they believe for one moment that our people's faith in the Sirkar's power will remain what it was? It will not be the work of the agitator but the working out of a great

moral-law—as ye sow so shall ye reap. You cannot sow injustice without reaping rebellion (*cheers.*) Therefore it is that your Highness has come to preside here this evening and we have assembled in this great meeting as loyal subjects of our Sovereign and devoted well-wishers of His Empire (*loud cheers*) to beseech His Majesty's Ministers and the Imperial Parliament to do all in their power to prevent, while there is yet time, the sowing of this vast injustice—injustice to three out of every four subjects of the King Emperor in all his dominions—for otherwise the day may come when they shall find themselves powerless to prevent the loss to the Empire of all that India brings to it of strength and glory and greatness. (*Loud and continued cheering.*)

The Hon. Mr. Ibrahim Rahimtulla.

The Hon'ble Mr. Ibrahim Rahimtulla, in supporting the proposition, said that in the able speech which the Hon'ble Mr. Armstrong delivered, he asked them to be moderate and patient and to wait the result of the strong protest and representation that have gone to the British Parliament from all corners of the vast Empire and he expressed a confident hope that the appeal thus made to the sense of British justice would not fail and that in this case justice would be done to their fellow-countrymen in South Africa. Mr. Armstrong admitted that under the circumstances of the case, it was difficult to restrain themselves from giving expression to their feelings of disappointment in this matter. They were all aware of the facts of the case. Two hundred of their fellow countrymen in the Transvaal had been imprisoned and were now lying in jail. (Cries of shame)! They had been forced to leave their houses and all for what purpose? What was the fault of those Indians who were treated in this manner! Their only fault was that they manfully resisted the degradation thus proposed to be imposed upon them under the Registration Act. That was their fault. If they had succumbed they would have been treated in a different way. They would have been treated as imbeciles, weak and worthless men. If they manfully stood for their rights then they must go to jail.

It was difficult in speaking on a question of this kind, to restrain oneself and to be moderate. He could not but say that the excuse pleaded, to the effect that the British statesmen were helpless in the matter, was a lame one. They could have refrained from recommending His Majesty's Government to sanction the legislation. If they had thought that the feelings throughout the Empire would become highly incensed, that the most sober minded citizens of Bombay would ask retaliation and boycott— (hear, hear and applause)—they would have refrained from sanctioning an unjust legislation. When they saw that the tension had become high, it was a mistake to have sanctioned the Legislation. He hoped that in a few days some action would be taken which would set the matter right. He for one had great confidence in the sense of justice of the British nation. The official and non-official world of the country was united in remedying evils that had resulted from this legislation. He hoped that within a few days their appeal would bear fruit and that the united voice of India would not go in vain, (Applause.)

The Hon. Mr. D. A. Khare.

Sir, from what we have heard to-night and what we heard and read before there is no doubt that in this Transvaal matter almost unbearable grievances do exist. No body in the world can doubt that the treatment given there to our fellow-countrymen is most shameful. It is also equally plain that the British statesmen have acknowledged the existence of these grievances. The question is how to redress them. Sir, it should be remembered that the unjust treatment of British Indians by the Transvaal Government was mentioned by responsible statesmen as one of the prominent reasons why Great Britain went to war with the Transvaal. Do not those self-same grievances now exist? Nay, do not the present grievances exceed in severity those that our people were labouring under when the British Government declared war on the Transvaal? If the war was considered to be the proper remedy at that time let England now declare a war against the Transvaal. That is the only

logical position. But will the Government declare a war now? I say no. We are asked to be moderate. But is it possible under these circumstances to be moderate? If one were to speak out what one feels I for one would perforce have to say many many things one had better leave unsaid. The real point is we are not wanted in the Transvaal because we are not Europeans.

It has been said by my friend, the Hon. Mr. Armstrong that if we developed our industries here all British Indians will find sufficient scope for their energies and their desire for wealth. In short he told you to be Swadeshi. That is all right. But I ask why should we not go to foreign countries and be swadeshi as well in this country? The Indians have been generally taunted by Europeans as wanting in initiative, wanting in enterprise as people who are always very fond of idling and sticking to their own homes and villages; and here now we go to foreign countries, travel over great distances suffer great hardship and not only succeed in business but set an example in morality and steadfastness. With what future in store for us? We are driven out of those countries and forced to fall back on our own homes. And why should we not go out as do the subjects of the Empire go out? Are we not subjects of the British Empire? Are we not citizens of the Empire? Remember that we have been expressly given the rights of equality in every respect by the Proclamation, which was promulgated at the end of the dark days of 1857 and 1858. The gracious Queen, our late Sovereign, has expressly conferred a charter upon us and are the promises of that charter to be broken? That they have in various ways been broken has been admitted expressly by British statesmen but nothing can exceed the present breach of those solemn promises. And we are told to be patient and considerate and moderate!!! I say, Sir, we must needs be moderate; we cannot afford to be otherwise. How are the Transvaalers superior to us? We have inherited a very ancient civilization and we are if not superior at least the equal of other people in all respects except in the matter of physical force. Remember in this matter the hearts of all people in this great country beat as one. People of different creeds and races and nationalities all feel this shameful treatment accorded to us in the Trans-

vaal to a degree, the intensity of which cannot be properly described. We are told to be Swadeshi and I say we ought to go also for industrial boycott and passive resistance. At all events our people in the Transvaal have shown what we Indians are capable of when we feel that our rights as citizens of the Empire are violated and it shows that we here are also capable of the same sacrifices when we entertain a similar feeling. Let no body forget that. Let it not be supposed that we here cannot do what our brethren in the Transvaal are doing and you, Sir, have in your opening made a suggestion which we all should take up. Let us retaliate. Let our Government retaliate. Let a bill be introduced in the Supreme Legislative Council embodying the principle of retaliation. Then will England see that we are in earnest. I am sure such a bill has no chance of passing into law. But the mere introduction of such a measure will be a sufficient indicator of what we mean. We must show that we mean to retaliate in all possible ways. Gentlemen, it is said that there is disaffection already existing in some parts of the Empire. I do not like that any disaffection should exist anywhere. But I ask, is what is being allowed to be done in the Transvaal calculated to minimise that disaffection or to increase it in volume ?

Sir, all I can now say is, and one must needs speak with restraint, that unless we show that we are as determined as our kith and kin in the Transvaal are, to resist the trampling of our rights, we shall go to the wall. Let us take that great lesson set to us by our fellow subjects to heart and act upon it. Sir, I have great pleasure in supporting the resolution.

The Hon'ble Mr. G. K. Parekh.

I have much pleasure in supporting the Resolution. After the able and eloquent speeches that have been addressed to you by the Chairman and the other speakers that have preceded me I do not think I would be justified in detaining you long. Our claim is essentially a claim of justice. If the subjects of any other European Power were treated in the same manner as the Indian British Subjects of His Majesty are treated in South Africa, it would have

resented it and the treatment regarded as proper ground for going to war against the Colony ; the British Government itself assigned the treatment of His Majesty's Indian Subjects as one of the main grounds of war against Kruger's Government. As the subjects of the British Crown, we are entitled to claim that His Majesty's Government would give us the same protection which any strong Government would have given to its subjects. The British Government would not allow a self-governing British Colony to treat their subjects in a manner in which they would not allow any foreign Government to do. But the case of the Indian in South Africa is even stronger than this. They have long been settled in the Colony. They have acquired immovable properties in it. They have a vested interest therein. They are entitled to be allowed to continue in the enjoyment of these rights without being subjected to treatment which any self-respecting community would regard as most degrading. It is for the purpose of getting such rights upheld that we fight and the fight in such a righteous cause cannot fail to be successful.

Mr. N. M. Samarth.

Mr. N. M. Samarth said that he was fully alive to the difficult and delicate position in which the Imperial Government was ordinarily placed in its dealings with a self-governing Colony, but in the case of this Transvaal legislation which subjected British Indians to degrading restrictions, he thought the difficulties of the Imperial Government had been exaggerated a great deal by the able mover of the Resolution the Hon. Mr. Armstrong. In answer to him it had already been pointed out by the Hon. Mr. Ibrahim Rahimatoola that when Self-Government was granted to Transvaal, an express reservation was made in favour of the Imperial Government's power of disallowing in their discretion any legislation which related to Asiatics. That being so, it was not a correct position to take that the Imperial Government was powerless to interfere with the legislation of an autonomous Government like the Transvaal. But even if there were no such reservation, he maintained that it was not within the legislative competence of any self-govern-

ing Colony to pass such an Act as the one against which they had met there to protest. It was quite open to any self-governing Colony to resort to any legislation in its own interests provided that legislation affected all classes of His Majesty's subjects alike, without distinction of caste, creed or colour. But if it resorted to legislation, as the Transvaal authorities had done, which differentiated one class of His Majesty's subjects from others and placed that class on a lower footing, imposing humiliating disabilities upon it, and those too based on race prejudice, then it clearly overstepped its legitimate legislative limits, circumscribed as those limits were by the Royal Proclamation of 1858 which was binding upon all the Members of the Empire. He maintained that it was beyond the constitutional competence of even a self-governing Colony to pass any law which violated or purported to contravene the pledge of equality of treatment to all the citizens of the Empire alike, which was contained in the Proclamation of 1858. It was this open violation of the Royal pledge by the Transvaal authorities in the laws which they had passed and the failure of the present Ministry to put its foot down firmly on such legislation that had made the question an Imperial question of great gravity and had made the situation one of great anxiety. Not only the reputation of British rule but the honour and prestige of the British Throne were at stake. The great British nation was on its trial. Was it going to see that the Royal word was kept and the glory of their gracious Sovereign preserved unsullied and unimpaired, or was it going to crawl and lick the dust at the feet of the Transvaal Government, regardless of all sense of national dignity and national honour? That was the real question which England was called upon to answer at the present juncture. And upon the answer which England gives to that question, will largely depend the future development of the political temper of His Majesty's Indian subjects.

Messrs. Hajee Sumar, Hajee Esa and Kamruddin of the Transvaal also addressed the meeting in Gujrathi and Urdu narating their personal experiences in thrilling language and created and profound impression.

Second Resolution.

Sir Dinshaw M. Petit Bar then moved the second resolution which ran as follows :—

“That the Chairman be authorised to forward a copy of the foregoing Resolution to the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for India, and His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor General of India.”

Sir Dinshaw M. Petit, Bart.

Sir Dinshaw M. Petit Bart said : The Committee that organised this meeting has entrusted to me the next Resolution, and I feel very thankful to them for doing so because thereby they have given me an opportunity to give vent to my feelings on this important subject, feelings of indignation with which Indians of all creeds and classes are broiling within themselves at the very humiliating and insulting treatment their brethren are receiving in the Transvaal. Receiving, gentlemen, not at the hands of people of a foreign Government or of a country under an alien rule but at the hands of a people who are subjects of the same Sovereign and in a country where flies the same flag as ours! The country of the Transvaal when it was governed by a Republic presided over by Mr. Kruger was harbouring a few thousands of our Indian people and their treatment in those days was far better than what is meted out to them to-day under the British rule! And yet gentlemen, it seems strange but still it is true that the treatment they were receiving in those days was characterised by some of the most responsible British Statesmen of the time as one of the misdeeds of the Republic. If the treatment of those days was characterised as a misdeed by what name are we to call the shabby and cruel treatment that one portion of fellow subjects is giving to another? And then what name should we give to the attitude assumed upto now by the Home Government in allowing such a thing to take place! To be able to recognise, as your Government, one that rightly glories in being the first and foremost in abolishing the slave trade, has been a source of great pride and satisfaction to Indians. But I question whether if we are to be allowed the further

enjoyment of this sense of pleasure and pride we should be permitted to be treated as so many criminals and pariahs. The Indians as a rule are an exceedingly loyal people and we have no doubt they will always remain so as long as they are treated with that consideration and regard which ordinary rules of civility and equality demand. But when all such considerations are cast to the winds, when their feelings are not given the least regard, and when they are treated as if they belonged to some sort of lower creation, unfit to enjoy the same rights of citizenship as other people then it becomes a task, I should say a very hard task, for them to continue to show the same feelings of loyalty as before and loyalty is a thing of great value all the world over but nowhere it is an asset of greater value than in India where a Government has to rule a people of 300,000,000 souls. And it is a matter of the greatest surprise and regret that the British Government with all its foresight and vast knowledge of the human race should have allowed in this manner a small and newly-born colony to trifle with the loyalty of so many millions of its Indian subjects. I beg to move :—

“That the chairman be authorised to forward a copy of the foregoing Resolution to the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for India, and His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India.”

Sir Currimbhoy Ebrahim seconded the resolution.

Mr. James Mac-Donald.

In supporting the resolution said he would just like to make one statement and that was that he held that wrong was being done to the Indians in South Africa for this reason that they were British subjects, and he took it that those who were working to get them out were no more British subjects than the people of India here. He understood that most of those who were white men, were not what they understood now by the term thoroughly white. He took it that they were gathered from all parts of Europe—and he believed that to be so—and that they

were now the potential enemies of the British Government. (Hear hear.) That was to say that they might any day rise in opposition to the British Government. He thought it was not fair that those who were loyal British subjects should be driven out of the country in which they had lived for a number of years by those who had not the same claim as British subjects. He wished to say no more except this that the meeting had his heartiest sympathy. (Applause.)

Mr. Stanley Reed

Your Highness, Mr. Sheriff and Gentlemen, in supporting the resolution I wish to associate myself entirely with the object of this meeting and with the speeches that have been made. To me, and to the majority of my fellow-countrymen, the policy of the Boer Government in the Transvaal towards British Indians lawfully resident in the Colony has caused pain and indignation.—(Hear, hear)—and we ask the Imperial Government to leave no stone unturned in order to secure the revocation of the obnoxious clauses in the recent legislation. (Applause.)

Mr. Jahangir Bomanjee Petit.

In supporting Resolution No. III said—I have much pleasure in supporting the proposition which has just been moved and seconded.

It is but right that we should raise our most emphatic protest against the absolutely unwarranted and disgraceful restrictions imposed upon our countrymen in South Africa. This has been embodied in the preceding Resolution. The speakers to that Resolution have already very fully and effectively enumerated all the many shameful disqualifications with which poor Indians are branded in a self-governing Colony under the oegis of England. I will not, therefore, refer to them, but I venture to read to you an extract from a local paper which has described the lot of an Indian in South Africa in the following terms.—

1. You shall have to live outside the town.
2. Shall have to carry a pass going from one place to another.

3. Special Pass for going out after 8 at night.
4. To bed & the lights out with the curfew bell at 9.
5. Must not come in contact with white people.
6. Must not drive in a licensed cab.
7. No admission to shops controlled by white people.
8. Must not buy any drink.
9. No accomodation in Hotels.
10. Special tram cars for the coloured people.
11. Only special third class carriages & that also in particular trains. Here I may add that white people are not allowed to travel 3rd class.
12. Special wayside to walk on.
13. Not eligible for the Franchise.
14. Cannot hold any land etc. etc.

The proposition which I am now supporting authorises the Chairman to forward this protest for redress & justice to the highest authorities in the realm; and I am perfectly certain you will accept it in a manner that will be expressive of your deepest sorrow & strongest indignation.

Ladies & Gentleman, when one refers to these regulation it is difficult to speak with restraint or moderation. When the Boer war was declared, we were gravely told by the English Press & by the Ministers who were in charge of the help at that time that one of the principal objects of that war was to remove the unfair & unjustifiable restrictions placed by the Boer Government on the Indian subjects of His Majesty the King Emperor, which constituted an insult to the British Empire. How painfully, I ask, have we all realised the utter hollowness of these utterances? After the war & the subsequent annexation we had expectantly looked forward to a more human treatment in South Africa. Am I wrong in saying that we have got stones when we wanted bread?

It is no exaggeration to say that the restrictions imposed upon the Indian Subjects of His Majesty in South Africa after the war are infinitely more rigorous, insulting and disgraceful than they ever were before. I cannot help adding that the Registration Act which the newfangled

Parliament of General Botha has passed with the sanction of England in the teeth of the severest opposition, in spite of the repeated appeals & prayers of British Indians resident there, flouting all public opinion, both in this country and in England, is unworthy of the name and unworthy of the traditions of England.

To me, it is, Ladies & Gentlemen, as it must undoubtedly be to you all, a matter of great surprise that responsible members of the Cabinet should endeavour in their public utterances to justify a piece of legislation which is at once so degrading and so reactionary. At such a juncture we feel & feel deeply the want of strong men like Gladstone and Pitt at the head of the Government. We refuse to believe that the present Government and the English people are unable to compel a self-governing Colony to legislate in a manner that will not involve an infringement of the promises given to the Indian people by the British Parliament and the British Sovereign. We decline to take them seriously—be they Birrells or Elgins, Selbournes or Rees who tell us that English public opinion is so impotent as to take lying down such deliberate and open violation of the very spirit of the British Constitution, viz. equal treatment within the Empire to all citizens of the Empire.

We are in season and out of season reminded that not without but within the limits of the Empire which counts us among its subjects, we are bound to give to the Government our *unalloyed allegiance and unfeigned loyalty*. May we ask if these are the methods of invoking those feelings of allegiance and loyalty?

But I make bold to say and challenge contradiction that in spite of such treatment, the whole of India is loyal to the throne of England. We would also like to say that we regard the policy of England as a policy of righteousness and a policy of justice; only, it would cost us a painful mental effort to do so.

One word more, Ladies and Gentleman, and I have done, England and the Colony of South Africa are both Christian Governments; Are you, I ask both these, acting

in a manner which is calculated to promote good will and contentment among mankind? Are you, I ask, carrying out the dictates of your religion? Are these the practical results of the teachings of your prophet whom you choose to call the "Prince of Peace" and the "son of God"?

The policy adopted by South Africa in regard to Indians with the sanction and support of England, is, I repeat, barbarous, un-British, un-Christian, and such as, if continued, will hasten the destruction of the Empire.

With these words, Ladies and Gentlemen, I beg to support the proposition and commend it to your unanimous acceptance.

Mr. D. G. Padhye.

Gentlemen,—In supporting this resolution I will make one remark and will make it with no feelings of ordinary despair and painful surprise. Unhappily for us and also for the best interests of the Empire there have arisen, even since the benign sceptre of the royal line of noble England was substituted for the merchants' yard as the fountain source and controlling authority in the Government of India, several questions in regard to which the Indian heart was stirred to its utmost depth and led to the mournful conclusion that after all, the day is still far distant when we Indians could expect a full redemption of those sacred pledges of justice and equality, which were solemnly given by the noble Queen and her farseeing responsible ministers, almost by way of compact, after the great crisis of the Mutiny had been tided over, to no small extent by Indian help—that we could expect no better treatment than that of conquered people held down under unyielding political servitude. And now this inhuman treatment of our countrymen in the Transvaal, coming as it does as the climax of the fatal policy of denying to us even the minimum rights of humanity pursued for years in South Africa, brings home to us in the most clear and heart-rending manner the galling conviction that in spite of our loyalty, in spite of our services and sacrifices of blood and treasure, we are bound to lose, whenever and wherever the question of colour arises and

Our moral dues and indefeasible rights come in conflict with the prejudices or even the most unmitigatedly self-seeking interests of any section, howsoever small and unworthy, of those who claim a greater affinity of skin and colour with the ruling race. How sad it is to contemplate the contrast between the noble assurances and statesmanly declaration of Lords Canning and Derby and Her late Majesty Queen Empress Victoria's Proclamation, and the moral courage with which they were in the first few years after the Mutiny honestly translated into action—how sad it is to contrast these with the cowardly surrender of their right to veto the Transvaal Registration Act by His Majesty's present ministers and their heartless complaisance at the inhuman manner in which the just opposition to it by the persecuted Indians is being relentlessly crushed? And when we compare the antecedents of the persecuting Boers and those of the persecuted Indians, what a contrast does that present, the one a people loyal to England for generations and counting amongst them veterans of battle fought for England and others who had even in the great war waged to secure for England uncontested supremacy in South Africa served in Ambulance and stretcher bearers' corps, and the others a race at open war with England for two centuries, naughty and bellicose and still certainly not the most peaceful and loyal subjects of His Majesty—neither can their little out of the way and mountainous territory in spite of its gold mines add to the Empire a fraction of the strength or the glory of "the brightest jewel in His Majesty's crown." Another glaring contrast I should like to call your attention to, Ladies and Gentlemen, lies between the manifestly overwhelming, the grotesquely parochial and the morally indefensible high pretensions of the Boers, on the one hand, and the wonderfully modest and immoderately moderate demands made by the Indians in the Transvaal. They claim that the land must be a whiteman's land. Even Mr. Harold Cox who seconded the principal resolution at the Caxton Hall meeting protested strongly against this unnatural monopoly, which would not only shut up the Transvaal to Indians but make short work of the aboriginal tribes of the land, the very intrusion on whom by white races can be defended only on grounds on which it would be a sin to exclude the law-abiding Indians

who carry there the blessings of peace, not the horrors of a war of aggression. And here let me give the best thanks of the Indian people to the manly stand-made on behalf of the Labour party by Mr. Frank Smith and Mr. Dewsbury for the immortal and glorious principal of perfect equality between all classes of His Majesty's subjects to the Empire, irrespective of caste, creed or colours. Their motion got 23 supporters as against 35 opponents, whilst the bulk of the large audience at the Caxton Hall meeting declined to vote doubtless on account of their sympathy with the amendment moved by these two worthies. The Indians in the Transvaal number only a few thousands and only a few hundreds could come and settle per year. What then becomes of the declaration of Mr. Rissik—does he come from Russia—that it is a question of life and death to them. They accept the principal of voluntary registration and restriction on future emigration—concessions to which India, so freely allowed to be exploited by every foreigner that chooses, will never consent—and the demand of our country men is only that they should not be subjected to such degrading conditions as that they should have to furnish particulars as to :—

“ The full name, race, caste or sect, age, physical description, residence, occupation, place of birth, date of first arrival in the Transvaal, where resident on May 31, 1902, father's and mother's name, wife's name, sons and male wards under the age of eight years, their names and ages and relationship with their guardians, impressions of thumb, index, middle, ring and little fingers of both hands and the simultaneous impressions of the four fingers on each hand.” and in that the registration certificates must at all times be carried on the person of the holders, and are liable to be demanded of them by any policeman, White or Kaffir, who may see fit to do so.

In one word, their only demand is that they should be treated not as criminals of the lowest type but as human beings having some claims to the indefeasible natural rights of man. That is the contrast between the preposterous pretensions of the haughty Boers and the ultra moderate demands of the peace-at-any-cost Indians. Equally glaring

is the contrast between the vindictive retaliation of the Boars and the peaceful and scrupulously passive resistance of the Indians, who only say "we won't go through the degrading form of the registration, we will suffer the penalties enjoined by law—we will be ready to be fined, to be imprisoned, to have all of us dismissed from Government and Municipal employ, to have ourselves expelled. And to such punishments—to such vindictive persecution are the Indians subjected in numbers sickeningly increasing. The sufferers numbered first the redoubtable Gandhi, than all officers of the British Indian Associations and the Hindu society and now in a week they number 300. Are all these the agitators whom alone Mr. Smuts said Government intended to lay their strong hand upon? But the saddest of all reflections, the most bewildering of all the contrasts between right and wrong, I have mentioned, is between the utter indifference of the Imperial authorities in this time of crisis and the high issues of imperial importance, upon which the fate of the Empire hangs. Can an Empire subsist long which violates the first principles of union by allowing one very extensive set of subjects to be oppressed by a narrow-minded section or rather faction of bellicose and erstwhile rebellious farmers? And can an empire remain an empire where the grant of self-government means abnegation by the Imperial Government of its high prerogative to ensure at least minimum natural and political justice between subjects and subjects? Let the authorities to whom this resolution is to go pause and ponder.

The Resolution was put to the vote and carried unanimously.

Third Resolution.

“That this meeting wishes to express the deep sympathy of the people of all classes and creeds in this country with their suffering fellow subjects in South Africa, their admiration of their moderation, courage and self-sacrifice.”

Sir Bhalchandra Krishna Bhatavdekar Kt.

In proposing the resolution Sir Bhalchandra Krishna Kt. said :—

Gentlemen,—The resolution which I am asked to move is of a less contentious character than the one you have just adopted. It, in fact, follows as a sequence of the first resolution. Our countrymen settled in the Transvaal are suffering from manifold hardships and indignities and it is fitting that we should express our sympathy and fellow-feeling for their suffering. Gentlemen, what aggravates the impropriety of the sufferings is the fact that the hardships and penal legislation were caused not by a foreign Government but by one which claims to be a unit of the same British Empire of which our country is a member. The Transvaal Government before the war imposed on Indians, resident in the country, certain regulations which were then resented by the British Government and were treated as one of the causes of the war. Lord Lansdowne, Colonial Secretary in 1899 observed : “A considerable number of the Queen’s Indian subjects are to be found in the Transvaal and among the many misdeeds of the South African Republic I do not know that any fills me with more indignation than its treatment of those Indians. And the harm is not confined to the sufferers on the spot ; for what do you imagine would be the effect produced in India when these poor people return to their country to report to their friends that the Government of the Queen Empress, so mighty and irresistible in India with its population of 30 crores, is powerless to secure redress at the hands of a small South African State.” Mr. Chamberlain was equally grandiloquent. The Transvaal is no longer a separate, but a British Colony, and the Indians resident there are as much

His Majesty's subjects as any other white residents of the land. Why should not Lord Elgin, the present Colonial Secretary, who was like Lord Landsdowne at one time our Governor-General, feel with equal indignation for misdeeds of the Transvaal Government as against their Indian subjects? Surely if the British Government calls itself Imperial it should have the power to enforce its will against any subordinate Government. It is difficult to think that the British Government should not have the will since the hardships are as real to-day as they were ten years ago. Are we to suppose that the countrymen of Wilberforce and Clarkson and of Gladstone and Bright have degenerated from those high ideals of humanity, justice and fairness which animated Englishmen of the early Victorian era? The meeting at Caxton Hall under the presidency of Lord Amptill gives an assurance that the old sympathy and earnestness of fellow-feeling for oppressed nationalities is still a living force in England and we need not despair of getting our wrongs redressed when we are assured of such a large volume of English public opinion on our side.

Gentlemen, the grievances of our countrymen are not imaginary or sentimental. Their demands are not high or immoderate. They do not ask for any equality of rights or political privileges. They do not claim to have an unlimited capacity for making settlements. The fears of swamping the whole population expressed by Mr. Birrell and Sir West Ridgeway are not well founded. The Transvaal Indians make the modest demand of being allowed to live in peace. They are old residents, about 13,000 in number, some of them having permanently settled there for as many as twenty years. They have invested capital, set up tread and business, have built houses, and are owners of other landed property. They have performed the duties of citizenship quite as loyally and bravely as any of the whites. In the late war, under the leadership of Mr. Gandhi they organised a volunteer corps for ambulance work, and rendered such active and useful service as called forth warm public recognition. They voluntarily submitted themselves to the Registration Law under the late administration. Having thus been fully assured of their status of citizenship they are under the new Registration Law called upon for fresh

Registration, and under degrading conditions. The finger mark we are familiar with in India is that of the thumb which is recognised as a substitute for a signature in the case of an illiterate person. But the Transvaal Registration Act requires the impression of all the ten fingers and an additional mark of the four fingers on each hand. The Registration certificate has to be carried at all times on the person of the holder and is liable to be demanded by any policeman at any time. There are other disabilities which are pronounced by many English sympathisers as degrading, insulting and humiliating. The particulars require under the Registration Law and the manner of identification insisted upon are highly resented as treating the Indians like criminals or ticket-of-leave men. The differential character of the law makes it more insulting and this differential treatment by the State has its reflex action on the white population at large who treat Indians with indignity, in all the daily affairs of life, in railways, tramways, and other occasions of intercourse. Mr. Ritch of the South Africa British Indian Committee writes :—"The British Indians in the Transvaal were domiciled there before British annexation.

Many of them are men of culture with considerable business. Their signatures are considered good enough in business transactions and their identity is well known. To contend that such man already holding Registration certificates taken out by them voluntarily should be compellable under legal sanction to carry a pass produceable to any policeman, white or kaffir who may ask it, and to furnish his name, race, caste or sect, age physical description, residence, occupation, place of birth, father's and mother's name, wife's name, sons and malewards under the age of eight years, their names age and relationship with their guardians, and also the impression of the thumb, index, middle, ring, and little fingers of both hands, and simultaneous impressions of the four fingers of each in order that they may be sufficiently identified, must indeed appear to the man in the street to be absolute nonsense." Other writers have written with equal feeling. Suffice it to say that the complaint of the Transvaal Indians is recognised

by many competent critics as not unreasonable. Their claims, too are very modest. Mr. Gandhi the leading spokesman of the Transvaal Indians proposed a compromise and undertook to get all Indians to agree to it, and to register themselves in a month's time if the Act were suspended. He declared that the main object of the Indian leaders was to eliminate the element of compulsion from the system of Registration. Modest as were the Indian claims they were refused and the Transvaal Government determined to enforce the Registration Law by resorting to prosecutions. There are as many as 200 British Indians in gaol, 120 under notice to leave the Colony and 20 more under notice to appear before the Magistrate. There is a threat held out of wholesale arrests, imprisonments, deportations, and all manner of penal measures. Mr. Smuts the Colonial Secretary for the Transvaal, has declared that the Law will be rigorously enforced. We are told the white population of the Transvaal unanimously support the Government and the infection has apparently spread to England. The British Government, though profuse in their sympathy with the Indians, find themselves helpless and profess inability to interfere with the action of the Colony. There is I am told an express stipulation in the Constitution granted to Transvaal that no measure will be enforced against Indians which will not also apply to the European population. In view of such a stipulation it is difficult to understand why the British Government should not more actively interfere to protect the Indians from harassment. Even soldiers who have settled there on specific promises of freedom from molestation are denied protection. The work of our friends in England, however, may be trusted to bear fruit sooner or later. The Caxton Hall meeting will not be without its influence on the policy of the British Government. There is a report in the papers that the Transvaal Government is relenting, and that it has realized seriousness of the situation involving as it does the imprisonment and deportation of the whole body of the British Indians in the Transvaal. It is said that the Act is proposed to be suspended and that a Judge of the Supreme Court will be appointed to examine the objections to the Registration Act and devise a system which will not offend the susceptibilities of Asiatics. This, if true, follows the lines

of the compromise suggested by Mr. Gandhi. The report is contradicted by Smuts and it is not safe to build any expectations on it. But if the Transvaal Government is earnest in befriending and conciliating the Indians, they cannot do better than accept the undertaking made by Mr. Gandhi. The Indians have no intention of defying the law or the power of the Government. They have only sought to express their disapproval of a particular piece of offensive legislation and seeing that the disapproval extends to a large body of their subjects, the Government would do well to retrace their steps. It is no exhibition of weakness for a strong Government to yield to its subjects wishes in a righteous cause. Let me hope that the report of promised conciliation will prove to be true and that the Transvaal Government will soon earn the grateful thanks of its Indian subjects as well as their sympathising fellow-countrymen in India. The brave stand made by Mr. Gandhi and his fellow-workers in the Transvaal the sacrifices they have made, and the hardships they have suffered, deserve our warm acknowledgments. We, Hindus, Parsees, Mahomedans and all the different communities which constitute the public of Bombay all unite in offering our profound sympathy to our fellow-countrymen in South Africa.

Mr. Joseph Baptista.

Mr. Joseph Baptista in seconding the resolution said:—

You are all aware that only the other day England went to war with the Boer to secure for the British Colonists some of the cherished rights of citizenship. In that great struggle England did not fare well at first. The soldiers were besieged in various places, and at Ladysmith the situation was critical, steadily gravitating towards surrender. It was in this hour of need and anxiety that India came to England's rescue. It was universally acknowledged at the time that the readiness and repidity with which the British Soldiers were despatched from Bombay enabled the British generals to save the situation, avert a national disaster and eventually march in triumph into the Boer Capital. Bombay may therefore, well claim to have rendered signal services to the British Empire in the hour of trial. But that is not all.

Thousands of Indians served England in the humble capacity of camp followers, thousands fought, bled or died on battle-fields for the British colonists. And yet we are assembled here to-day to express our sympathy with the sufferings of our people caused by the conduct of those very Britons for whom they fought and shed their blood. Such the gratitude of a civilized and Christian people fit to be entrusted with self-government according to the verdict of the Mother of Parliament.

You will probably remember what Mr. Balfore, then Prime Minister, said. He said "those who accuse England of attacking a free people, will see in the future of Transvaal what British ideas of liberty will do." Well, what has it done for our people? (A voice. Nothing!) No, not nothing! It has robbed us of the most elementary right of British citizenship; it has forbidden us to work or trade on terms of equality with the white man; it has forbidden us to travel in the first class with white men; it has subjected us to other odious restraints which make one's blood boil with anger and indignation. And yet British Ministers appeal to the cold canons of non-interference with a self-governing Colony. But do you know what Englishmen would do if they were similarly treated? Do you know what would happen if, for example, China was to exclude Englishmen from the shores of Cathay? Why British cannons would forth with thunder at the very gates of Peking, or British Ministers would have to flee for their very lives. In the House of Commons and in the streets of London there would be lathi-play that would look uncommonly like a Civil War. No Englishman would submit to such degradation. Let us learn a little of the ways of Englishmen. Do not be satisfied with anything short of perfect equality irrespective of colour or creed. Remember in the sufferings of our people our own honour is involved. Our honour would be sullied by acquiescence in the policy of exclusion—Is there any man with a spark of manliness about him who would allow his brother or sister to be excluded from any part of the Empire like a leprous outcaste. Therefore be men. Nothing but perfect equality. Long life to Gandhi and his stalwarts!

Mr. Bomanji Jamsetji Wadia.

Mr. B. J. Wadia in supporting said :—

In supporting this Resolution I wish to say only a few words. We have all heard from the previous speakers the story of the heroic struggle which our countrymen in South Africa are carrying on against a policy of humiliation and oppression to which they are being subjected in a colony which calls itself British, and we cannot but sympathize with them in this their hour of trial. It has been often said that the Indians are a patient and long suffering people, but even patience and sufferance have their limits, and we can only imagine the real situation of affairs in that land when they are all prepared to brave any amount of misery and hardship rather than submit themselves to the indignity that is sought to be inflicted on them under the guise of good intentions. It is, however, some consolation to find that this agitation is carried on by Hindus, Mahomedans, and Parsis with equal enthusiasm, and this large assembly itself, representative of all classes and communities, is a further proof of that unity of aims and desires which in spite of as many obstacles and difficulties, does exist amongst us, and is bound to grow in intensity as the days roll on. The loyalty of the Indians has not been disputed for one moment but I should really like to know on what ethical grounds a Government can claim the loyalty of its subjects when it refuses to extend to them the corresponding protection which they have a moral right to expect. The Indian question in South Africa has been a burning one for years past, and before self government was granted to the Transvaal it was the duty of the Imperial Government, as suzerain both of India and the Transvaal, to see that the interests of the Indians, some of whom had settled in the country even before the Boer war, were properly safe-guarded, and not handed over to the tender mercies of the colonists. The Government neglected this duty, and to-day it is not at all edifying to contemplate that neither the King Emperor nor a Liberal Cabinet can do anything to help the Indian settlers in maintaining their dignity and the integrity of their rights and privileges as citizens of the British Empire unimpaired. But it is the proud privilege of us

mortals to talk where we cannot act, and accordingly we find Mr. Winston Churchill indulging in vague platitudes about the "constitutional right" of the Colonists to do this and do that, all of which he may himself find one day to be "terminological inexactitudes", and Mr. Birrell too is asking in amazed innocence as to what the British workmen would do if the shipyards and collicries of the north were filled with Indians. According to him it would be perfectly right and legitimate to boycott Indian labour, and I suppose the people of this country would retaliate by saying that it is also right and legitimate for them, if they so wished it, to boycott British goods which are after all the products of British labour. And who would blame them in the matter when it is the People of Great Britain who are ready to set the noble example? However this is an aspect of the question on which I do not wish to enlarge this evening. We can all understand the motive of self-preservation which is said to actuate the Colonists, or for the matter of that would actuate the people of any other country, but the preservation of self does not necessarily mean the degradation of another, and if the sole object the anti-asiatic legislation is merely to prevent a fresh influx and not to molest those who have already settled down as peaceful citizens, it ought not to be too difficult to arrive at some compromise which would be consistent with the honour and self-respect of both sides. Let us all hope that such a compromise will soon be arrived at, but until that day comes our countrymen will be perfectly justified in carrying on their vigorous, but constitutional agitation, and in carrying it on they will have the sympathy not only of Indians of all classes and communities, but also of Englishmen, and if I may presume to say so, of the entire civilized world.

Mr. G. K. Gadgil.

Mr. G. K. Gadgil B. A. Barrister-at-Law, in supporting the forth Resolution said as follows :—

I have much pleasure in supporting the resolution which has been so ably proposed by our worthy townsman Sir Bhalchandra Krishna and seconded by my friend Mr.

Baptista who has instilled the gravity of the situation into your minds with such vigour. Gentlemen, I deem it a high privilege to have been allowed to associate myself with a proposition that expresses our deep sympathy with the sufferings of our brethren in the Transvaal who are waging such a sturdy struggle against this iniquitous Law. This resolution seeks to represent the feelings in your minds at this moment: and it describes them as deep sympathy. I believe the word "sympathy" is too poor an expression—too poor a description of the feeling uppermost in your bosoms, at any rate uppermost in the hearts of the youngmen assembled here. It is indignation, it is deep resentment that is aroused in our minds by the indignities that are being heaped up upon our countrymen by this obnoxious regulations that we are met here to denounce. Many of the younger men in this audience must have their thoughts rivetted in Pretoria and Johannesburg and they must be longing to be bodily there at this moment to cast in their lot with their incarcerated brethren, to suffer their sufferings and to share in their fights. Gentlemen, we have been asked by the Hon'ble Mr. Armstrong to be sober and patient to be moderate in our Expressions. But such a call demanding under such circumstances a sobriety of view and conduct would to my mind appear to the younger generation at least, naturally unnatural. We are however prepared to wait. We shall try to be restrained in our speech though such a feat has now become difficult even to sober-minded men alike our worthy president of to-day, and esteemed citizens like Sir Sassoon J. David and Messrs. Jamsetji A. Wadia and Barrister H. A. Wadia who are much senior to us in life. In sheer despair and as the last resort they have suggested or advocated retaliation and boycott, in one form or another. I endorse everything that has fallen from my friend Ms. Baptista. The present ministry has shaken our confidence in their rectitude and high sense of justice or fair-play. Have they not procured the Royal Assent to these degrading Acts? Did they not lose a splendid opportunity when they passed the Transvaal Loan (Guarantee) Bill in Parliament? In spite of the vigorous protests raised by our friends like Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Harold Cox while this Loan Bill was on the legislative anvil of the House of Commons in August last, the present Cabinet threw away

the best chance they had of imposing terms and conditions on the Transvaal for the protection of the right and above all the honour of His Majesty's Indian subjects resident there

In face of such disappointments, gentlemen, we are asked to be temperate in the expression of our feelings. I shall obey that behest and ask you, as this resolution does, to extend your deep sympathy with the sufferings of our fellow-countrymen in South Africa. We have yet hope—yet some faith in the British sense of justice. With these words, and again invoking only your deep sympathy, I most heartily commend this resolution to your cordial acceptance (cheers.)

Mr. Kazi Kabirad also supported the resolution.

Fourth Resolution.

“The best thanks of the meeting be tendered to the Sheriff for having kindly convened the meeting.”

Sir Harkisondas Narotumdas Kt. proposed and Mr. Bomanji D. Petit seconded that the best thanks of the meeting be tendered to the Sheriff for having kindly convened the meeting and it was carried by acclamation.

The Sheriff briefly acknowledged the compliment.

THANKS TO THE CHAIRMAN.

The Hon. Sir P. M. Mehta,

The Hon. Sir P. M. Mehta in moving a vote of thanks to the Chairman, said that the importance of the occasion could not be exaggerated. It was for several reasons a fortunate thing that they had secured His Highness the Aga Khan to preside on the occasion. He was a gentleman occupying a high and privileged position amongst the Mahomedans and besides being highly educated had travelled much, thought a good deal, and was qualified to give weighty opinion on a question of the day. He also possessed genuine sympathy for the people. In regard to the question they had assembled to express their opinion that day, Sir Pherozesha said that he would venture to say that on that occasion they were really fighting the battle of the East against the West. (Hear, hear.) They were fighting for the cause of the peace, harmony and progress, which in future they hoped might exist between the East and West. (Here, hear.) It had been said that sober politics, or practical politics required that the white races should be allowed to keep out of their preserve any of the coloured races. But he thought that the white races should reflect that it was one of the most curious positions which they assumed because after insisting upon getting into the countries of the coloured races of the world, was it for them to say that they would not allow coloured races to come into their preserve? The moral law could not be defied or violated with impunity any more in the political than in the social or private world. If they took up this position and said they had a right to exclude from their preserves the coloured people, a time would come when the same arguments and reasons might be urged against them by the coloured races for preventing them from entering their countries and their homes. All over Asia they found that that white races were fighting for the open door. Every white man insisted upon entering the country of the "dark people" but when it came to the question of small territories of the white races the claim was set up that in

practical politics they were justified in turning out coloured people. That was the question which was involved in the subject before the meeting and which gave importance to this meeting (Loud applause.)

Sir Cowasji Jehangir Kt. seconded the proposition which was carried by acclamation.

The Chairman having briefly replied, the proceedings terminated.