

Suggestions for a native
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Suggestions for a Nat. ^o

Most political problems in South end, and sometimes at the beginning, aspect of what we call the native q, the whole question of the relation of native population.

The first point to be noticed, and the relative numbers of the two populations on this basis the last census (1911) the "European" as industry grows. of the Union numbered 1,276,242, while the supply of race numbered 4,019,006. the sources of

Superior intelligence and civilisation have there has European to impose his government on the native races, and to make them instruments in his hands for the development of the resources of the country. For this their physical strength and docility made them peculiarly apt, while, owing to the primitive condition of their lives, their wants were few and their labour cheap.

The abolition of slavery in South Africa did not materially change the attitude of the European towards the native and coloured races. In the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, as European occupation proceeded, the native was regarded under one of two aspects—either as a wild animal, to be exterminated whenever opportunity offered, or, where he had submitted to European domination, as a tamed beast of burden.

This is the point of view from which the native is still regarded by a large section of the people. Their last word on the native question is that the native must be kept "in his place." His "place" is that of a sort of serf, who, as a rule is to be treated kindly, so long as he accepts entire subordination to the will of his master, but who will not get even bare justice, outside a court of law, if he tries to claim it as a right.

This attitude has been maintained in practice, even where the teaching of religion, and a wider view of man's responsibility towards his fellow-men, have made people unwilling to acknowledge, it openly. It has been maintained because of the feeling that to give the native rights which he can enforce against the European, to give him a position in which he can make a claim on the services of the State, is to endanger the supremacy of European civilisation. The numerical inferiority of the European, and memories, still recent, of native wars, have seemed to many to justify a

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With the rise of industries that the old policy of
repression shows its inadequacy. According to that policy
the native is to do all rough and unskilled work. The white
man is the aristocrat, who may condescend, when necessary,
to supervise the labour of natives, but to whom the perform-
ance of any manual labour himself would be a degradation.
I have myself been told by a prominent man in South African
public life that he thought that white men should be
prohibited from working with the pick and shovel in the
streets, because it was degrading to the status of the white
race that natives should see them doing such work. This view
is typical of the man who regards the position of the European
population of South Africa as that of a small but privileged
caste, maintaining itself by superior intelligence, and, where
necessary, by force of arms, among an alien subject race
vastly superior in numbers. Such a conception has always
been an attractive one to those who have grown up under it.
Its weakness is that it cannot last under modern conditions,
and those who try to maintain it can only do so by renouncing
all hope of the future population of the country being
predominantly European.

One of its first results, where there is no longer land
available for the European to occupy, is the creation of what
is called the poor white class—a class who may beg or steal
or live as parasites either on their own race or on the
natives, but who may not work, because the only work they
can do is Kaffir work. Slavery created the same class of
poor whites in the Southern States of America. It is a
product which will everywhere result from the attempt of
the superior race to live on the labour of an inferior race
which is confined by artificial barriers to doing the unskilled
labour of the community.

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evils) very seriously felt. The poor white class were
some and for as relations or dependents of those
who for type. When, however, great industrial
activity arises these evils become more manifest. The poor
whites drift into the towns, and become almost entirely a
parasitical, and largely a criminal class. They sink even
below the standard of the respectable native and coloured
people. At the same time as industry advances the demand
for the native's labour increases. Where industrial enter-
prises are on a large scale, as in the case of the mining
industry of the Transvaal, the employer must have a con-
tinuous supply of labour, and it must be made as efficient
as possible of its kind.

Industrial organisation comes to depend on this basis
of uncivilised and indentured labour. As industry grows,
and the demand for labour increases beyond the supply of
this class of labour in the country itself, other sources of
supply have to be found outside, and from that there has
grown up an importation of natives from outside the Union
to an extent sufficient to maintain a permanent force of
90,000 to 100,000 imported natives always here. The growth
of the mining industry for that reason has not been the
means of offering a great and growing market for European
labour as it would otherwise have done. It employs at present
in the Witwatersrand area 23,000 European and 182,000
natives and coloured. The European labourer, as we have
seen, is practically excluded from unskilled labour. The
native works under indentures, and breach of his contract,
or failure to perform his duties satisfactorily, are punishable
by law. He is thus at the orders of his white boss as no free
labourer would ever be. Moreover, his standard of life is
that of a barbarian. He is content to be clothed in rags,
or in a blanket, and to live in a compound. All these
conditions effectually exclude the white man from competing
with him as a labourer.

Three results follow from this of great importance as
regards the position of the native. He learns industrial
habits and acquires a certain amount of skill. He learns
that he has a value as a factor in the civilisation of the
European—a value which gives him a certain standing as
against the white man, and makes the white man in certain
circumstances more or less dependent on him. He learns
also the power of money, and becomes accustomed to having
his desires, lawful and unlawful, ministered to by Europeans,
whom his money makes for the time his servants. All this
is an education of a most practical sort, more effective in
the long run, and for the race as a whole, than the education
of the mission school.

Meanwhile the position of the poor white becomes more prominent and demands public attention. Attempts are made to solve it by providing work at artificial rates of pay—artificial because the only market for unskilled labour is dominated by the uncivilised man. Other attempts are made by paternal Governments to help these people by placing them on the land with an equipment provided by the State. Now some of these people would no doubt in any case be a burden on the State. In every community there is a certain proportion of men and women who seem to be incapable of being useful members of society, and who, in one form or another, have to be maintained by the others. The majority, however, of these so-called poor whites are men who, in an ordinary European community, would be supporting themselves by one form or another of manual labour. Here they do not do so, because they have grown up in a community which has always looked to the labour of an uncivilised race for its unskilled work. At first this was regarded as a natural and even a providential arrangement. The white man regarded himself as of a superior caste, and the other as his natural servant. In the end, however, he finds that, as industries develop, the service of the uncivilised race has set a standard of cost for unskilled labour which excludes civilised conditions altogether. Not only is the white man excluded by the economic pressure of the lower standard, but the conditions of civilisation are equally excluded. The uncivilised man, or one who will be content to work on his terms, has become indispensable, and if he cannot be found in sufficient numbers inside the country he must be sought for and brought from outside.

At this point the policy of repression has already broken down. Its demoralising effects on the European race have already been described. They are those which in all ages have struck communities which have tried to found their social existence on the labour of an inferior race. Notwithstanding these, however, if, under some system akin to slavery, a hard and fast legal barrier could have been raised between the native and the European, the system might have lasted a long time. The history of slavery in the United States of America shows us how hard it is to root out a system of this kind, which appears to those who live by it to be a necessary condition of their industrial prosperity, and, indeed, to be sanctioned in a way by the law of nature itself. Under modern conditions, however, that is impossible. The native labourer now is not merely a chattel. His contact with industrial life as we have seen is in itself an education to him. It trains his faculties, teaches him the value of them and gives him the aspiration to rise by his own effort. The process is a slow one, and in the mass of individuals affected hardly noticeable from without. But the level slowly rises.

like the water of the tide, till the shock of his rigate or remo comes to be felt inside the circles which the EU ways tend imagined were to be reserved for himself. The ski what pker finds that his position is being assailed by the infle, by iste. The very restrictions by which he has attempted the hackle the native, so that he shall remain ignorant, unciv^t sed and subservient, are now found to give the native in^r certain economic advantage, and threaten to undermine the fabric which has been raised upon them.

The first instinct of the European in the face of this encroachment is to turn to his old policy of repression. He appeals to custom, to race-patriotism, to colour prejudice, to build a barrier between the skilled and unskilled occupations which the coloured man shall not be able to pass. It is because he sees all these defences slowly but surely going down that he is driven to seek some other policy, based upon a conception of the relations between the two races which will be more in accordance with the facts of human nature.

The new policy to which men seem to be turning here is that of segregation. It is necessary, therefore, to examine it to see how far it is free from the defects which have led to the breakdown of the old system. Historically it seems to follow naturally on the abandonment of the policy of repression. In the Southern States of America it was at one time, in the theories of public men, a sort of panacea for their social troubles. There the victory of the Northern States in the Civil War abolished negro slavery at a stroke, and made all men theoretically free and equal before the law. The abolition of slavery, however, in this summary fashion, could not abolish the sentiments and the social and industrial customs which had grown up with it. The result was a "negro question" similar in its cause to that of South Africa, but more violent in its immediate symptoms. Segregation then became a favourite policy with many. The negro was to be confined to certain reserves, or even to be shipped back to Africa. As time went on, however, and the relations between the two races adjusted themselves to the new conditions of freedom, the so-called negro question has become much less acute, and little is now heard of segregation policies.

The important question for us, however, is: What does segregation mean in South Africa? At present it is not easy to fix those who use the word to any precise statement of what it means. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Native affairs have publicly declared in favour of a policy of segregation, but they have not yet explained what they understand by such a policy. Nothing could be more undesirable and even dangerous than vague and ill-considered public utterances on such a subject, by men in the position of Ministers of State. It is necessary, therefore, before public

begins to rage on the subject, to try and get a
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word is used in its ordinary sense, it must mean
actual physical separation of the two races. Now that can
only be accomplished by a division of the country into
separate areas, some of which are to be reserved for the
residence of the European, and others for the residence of
the native. Further, in order to prevent a recurrence of
the old conditions, the native areas must be closed against
the Europeans, to the same extent as Basutoland is now closed,
and the European areas must be closed against the native.

It is clear that, whatever the advocates of segregation
mean, they cannot mean a general separation of this sort
applied throughout the Union. According to the last census
there are over 500,000 people of the Bantu race
living and earning their livelihood in towns of 2,000
inhabitants or more throughout the Union. This figure may
be taken as showing roughly the extent to which the native is
dependent on working for the white man in urban areas
alone, some of them living permanently in these areas, and
others having their families in the country or in native
territories, and coming to work in the towns for longer or
shorter periods. Are all these people to be moved off into
the new native areas and kept there? How is it to be done?
and how are they to live when they get there? Some of them
will still have their tribe to fall back upon, though there
are probably very few tribes whose lands would be adequate
to support their members without the earnings of those who
go out to work for the European. But large numbers have
long ceased to belong to any tribe, and live independently
all the year round on farms or mines or in towns. How are
they to live when deprived of the means of livelihood to
which they have become accustomed? It is unnecessary to
examine the proposal further. The mere statement of what
it would involve condemns it as impossible.

It is clear, therefore, that any policy of segregation,
which proposes to be reasonably practicable, does not mean
what the ordinary usage of the word would seem to imply,
viz., an actual physical separation between the European and
native people. But, it may be asked, if it does not mean
that, how is it going to help us? If, even under
a segregation policy, the native is still to be among
us in his thousands and hundreds of thousands,
to do the unskilled labour of the farms, the mines, the
factories and the shops, are not all the evils which arise from
the use by the European of an inferior race left untouched?
The mere fact that the native is not to be allowed to acquire
land or a permanent residence outside the native reserves (if

such a policy could be carried out) will not mitigate or remove these evils. On the contrary it will in many ways tend to increase them, because it will tend to set back what progress towards civilisation the native has already made, by driving the semi-educated and civilised native back into the primitive ways of the kraal. Indeed, if this is all that segregation means, it is only the old policy of repression in another form.

Segregation alone, therefore, seems to be inadequate as a policy on which to mould the relations of the European and native races of South Africa. It fails because in practice it is impossible to separate and keep apart in different areas of the country the European and native races. The demand of the European for the service of the native and the demand of the native for work to satisfy the wants which an industrial life has created in him, are too strong to be denied. But, even if there were no such practical difficulty, is it desirable as an ideal? It seems to me undesirable for two reasons. In the first place the native would have no security that the reserves set apart for his occupation would be respected, if for some reason they became objects of desire to the European. The treatment of the North American Indians is a melancholy warning in this respect. In South Africa prominent public men have already advocated a policy of "breaking up" the existing natives reserves, and it is one which finds much popular support. A complete policy of segregation would involve the establishment of much more extensive reserves than those now existing, and it is hardly to be supposed that they would be allowed to stand. In the second place the idea that within his own reserve the native would "develop along his own lines" is plausible but unsound. You cannot have two different types of civilisation in a country separated by an arbitrary boundary. The only lines on which the native can develop at all in civilisation are those of civilised life as we know it. In fact he can only become civilised by becoming part of our civilisation, being trained in habits of industry and learning to use his faculties for his own maintenance with the help of such instruments and knowledge as he is capable of applying. There is no middle way between allowing and helping him to grow gradually into membership of our civilisation, taking therein the part for which his faculties fit him, and leaving him in his barbarism. In so far as segregation means effectively and permanently cutting off the native from this path to civilisation, it means creating reserves of barbarism in the country, which would be a standing menace to the European and would lead inevitably to war.

Segregation, therefore, in the sense of an actual territorial separation of the races, is neither possible in practice, nor, if it were, is it a policy on which the relations of the two races could be permanently based. It would produce a state of things which could not last. But, as has

already been seen, if it does not mean a complete separation of the races, but proposes to allow the native to take part, as he now does, in our industrial life on the farms and in the mines, and all our other vocations, it does not touch the evils which it is supposed to cure.

What, then, is the alternative policy? The truth is that in a matter such as the relations between two peoples, at different stages of civilisation, belonging to races which cannot assimilate except to the detriment of both, and destined to inhabit the same country, there is no short and easy road. There is, however, one conclusion which experience here as well as elsewhere amply demonstrates, and that is that it is fatal to a civilised race to live in daily contact with and in dependence on the services of an uncivilised subject race. If the civilised race is to save itself it must either put its subject and servient race away from it, or it must do what it can to raise that race in freedom, in civilisation and in self-respect. In South Africa, as has been seen, we cannot put away the subject race from us. There is, therefore, only the other course left to us, and that we are bound to take in our own most vital interests, apart from any consideration of what we owe to others.

We need not look far afield for illustrations of the statement that the very weakness of the inferior race has a fatal influence on the superior. Take, for instance, what is known as the illicit liquor traffic. For industrial purposes we bring or attract some hundreds of thousands of natives to live along the Witwatersrand. Immediately there springs up a section of the European population which lives by ministering to the natives' craving for strong drink. Then the State steps in to protect decency and order, and makes such traffic unlawful, and, as ordinary penalties are found to be ineffectual to stop it, prescribes a minimum penalty of six months' imprisonment with hard labour. This, of course, does not stop the traffic, but it fills our prisons and reformatories with European men, women and children, many of whom are permanently added to the criminal population. No one who knows anything about the condition of the poorer white population in Johannesburg can fail to be alarmed at the demoralisation which this traffic is causing among them. Some hold that the law is too severe, and merely serves to create criminals. Others say it is improperly administered, and does not reach the real transgressors but only the poor, who are their instruments. But these are merely symptoms and not the disease itself. The real demoralisation and degradation is the constant temptation to the civilised race to minister to the lowest desires of the uncivilised. And, so long as for our own purposes, and from a mistaken idea of our own interests, we keep the uncivilised people

uncivilised, deny them education and ^{ing}, shut them off from any prospect of rising in the scale of self improvement, expect nothing from them but their day's work, and give them nothing but their day's wage, it is idle to think that we can prevent them from learning the vices of civilisation, or prevent civilised men from debasing themselves to gratify them. Stringent laws may partly protect the native from these evils, but the only permanent cure is that we should teach him to protect himself, and the more he learns to do that the less will his presence be a source of degradation to the European.

The same principle runs through all our relations with the native, viz., that his ignorance and weakness, which we encourage from a mistaken idea of our own interests, are in reality the greatest danger to ourselves. The white worker prefers native helpers because they must obey all his whims and will not resent injustice. The result is that in time he becomes a less efficient workman and becomes incapable of handling white men. The householder for the same reason must have his native houseboy. He cannot use white servants because they are "independent." Towards the native he allows the same careless familiarity as he would to an animal, and the result is the inevitable "black peril," and an outcry for savage punishments to repress it. The same thing runs into business and professional life, wherever the ignorance and subjection of the native are exploited by Europeans for their own profit. The menace to European civilisation from the native in South Africa under present conditions is not the active competition of a rival, but the demoralising effect of a system which leads the European to rely on the natives' weakness and ignorance. Such a system tends slowly but surely to lower the standard of the European till the lower grades of the European are physically less efficient and morally little better than the native. It also tends to protect the European people, to their own disadvantage, from the stimulating effect of an influx of men of their own race.

In all these matters we have an instructive object lesson in the Southern States of America. There, as here, the first and natural instinct of the white population was to protect its own position by keeping the negro down. The attempt failed there, as it is failing here. The problem there, however, is solving itself, because the rapid increase by immigration of the European population has made the negro population comparatively insignificant in point of numbers from a national point of view. The nation is therefore relieved of that feeling of apprehension for the future which makes South Africans unable to give up their first instinct to depend upon a supremacy maintained by force and by denying to the inferior race its natural desire to rise. As

that has passed, public opinion has turned towards a policy of greater freedom for the negro, better education, more opportunity, and so far from the position of the white man being impaired thereby it is found to be both stronger and more secure. It does not lead to social equality, because that is ruled by a natural sentiment which tends to keep each race to itself. It does not lead to race mixture, but on the contrary diminishes it. It enables the negro to take that place in the community for which his own powers fit him in competition with the white man. Conditions in South Africa are no doubt different from those of America, but the fundamental facts of human nature are the same, and those who look forward to the future population of South Africa being predominantly European must learn that it is only by working with these facts and not against them, that their ideal will be attained.

Public men in South Africa to-day profess to be in search of a "native policy" which is going to solve all their difficulties. Such a solution, however, is not to be found in any formula or short cut, but in a slow and painful revision of our attitude to the native. We must treat him as a man and not as a thing or an animal. His ignorance and weaknesses we must regard not as conditions to be perpetuated and used by us for our own ends, but as evils to be removed as soon as possible. We must, in short, devote our energies to raising him in the scale of civilisation, not by giving him political equality which he does not understand and could not properly use, but by teaching him to improve and make the best of the conditions in which he finds himself to-day. Where he is living on the land he must be taught to use the land, so as to get a better living from it than he does to-day, and he must be given reasonable security in the occupation of it. Where he has been brought into the industrial centres he must be freed from the indenture which binds him to his employer by the penalties of the criminal law. Only then will there be the motive on his part to render good service, and on his employer's part to improve his conditions of service, which exists in the case of ordinary free labour, and which makes the labourer more than a mere instrument in the hands of the employer. He must be allowed to share in the influence of education and religion, so as to have an outlook beyond the satisfaction of his physical needs and the performance of his task. He must not be prevented by law or custom from rising to higher occupations when his powers enable him to do so.

All this is a process not of a day but of years, but it is a process in which we shall be working with the forces of nature instead of trying to dam them up by artificial restraints and boundaries. We can only look at best for a gradual elimination of the troubles from which we suffer, and

the meantime to keep these two races in contact, so that their daily lives should be so intermingled that they should not acquire land in reserves. Native labour should not be used in domestic service which brings them constantly into familiar contact with the towns. Natives in towns should live not, as in the local towns, in hovels which are not enough for his animal nature, but have enough security to put up decent houses, and where sanitation will be required.

Above all we must do what is possible to continue our present policy of attracting the uncivilised native from wherever we can find him to work under indentures in our industrial centres. His labour may be cheap in its money price, but it costs us very dear in the long run. Every additional draft of uncivilised natives whom we bring to work here under indentures is an additional weight in the balance against the establishment of free conditions of labour, under which alone it is possible for the European and the native to take their places in a civilised community.

Two objections are usually put forward to any proposals similar to those made here. They are: (1) That such proposals will lead to social equality of the two races and therefore to race mixture; and (2) that to educate and civilise the native is to strengthen his position as against the European, and therefore to lessen the chances in favour of South Africa being ultimately inhabited by a population predominantly European.

The first of these two objections is not borne out either by history or by reason. History, both here and elsewhere, shows that race mixture takes place most when social inequality is greatest, *i.e.*, under a state of slavery. The large population of mixed race which we have now in South Africa may be traced either to the period of slavery, or to unions which take place, not on a footing of equality, but by the weaker race being used to serve the passions of the stronger. To give the native self-respect and a proper pride in his own life will do more to stop these irregular unions than all the repressive laws on the Statute Book. The two races do not tend naturally to mix, and there is no reason to suppose that the rise of the native in the scale of civilisation will remove the barriers to social intercourse which nature seems to have placed. It is the weakness of the lower race and not its strength that leads to mixture. This point of view is well put by an American writer.

“It is for this reason has utterly by our deeper degradation its futility. I would indicate that certain self-protective discriminations, were necessary still, especially in numbers and the negroes are formidable in numbers and the negroes have left them with a real race standpoint which his own self-respect wholly undeveloped. But the remedy is not perpetuation of repression, but opportunity for those of the white man's baldly aware are the perpetual attitude of the policeman over his treacherous population in giving the negro a treasure too; as he becomes slow learner of his treasure, he himself becomes also a policeman again guard as a man and as a race above his own. Keep him ever in his bankruptcy and his destitution, without a bribe to attract him or a treasure to conserve, and these millions will become conscious of their race only to disown it and to betray it—a despairing and devouring menace to the wholesome stability of our own life, and a noisome indictment of the perversity or the incapacity of our statesmanship.”*

The second objection raises the question of the claim of the European race to be the predominant element in the population of South Africa. To this extent the objection is well-founded—that if the native goes on advancing in civilisation and industrial efficiency, even at his present rate of progress, and the European remains outnumbered to the extent which we find at present, the question is decided against the European. There is one thing only which can save the European position, and that is a change in the numerical balance. It is for this reason that a policy of European immigration on a large scale is of vital interest to South Africa. Nothing else will save it for the European race.

The policy of repression is one of despair, with no issue but degeneration and assimilation for the mass of the European population, and, for the few who keep apart, a position of superiority indeed, but the position of a small aristocracy in an alien nation. We, to-day, have to make the choice, and it is high time that the issues were placed clearly before the people, so that they may not choose in ignorance of what they are doing.

Johannesburg, October, 1912.

*Murphy, “The Basis of Ascendancy,” p. iii.