

Indian Opinion

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NOTES AND NEWS

THE Durban Town Council-in-Committee last Tuesday considered the application of the Indian community for a site of 6½ acres for the erection of a High School and a training college for Indian teachers and it was agreed to allocate for this purpose a site of two acres adjoining the Indian Girls' School.

Indians in Natal and especially the Colonial-borns will be pleased to learn that Mr. Albert Christopher will be sailing from Southampton for Durban on December 1, accompanied by Mrs. Christopher and their little child.

Pandit Bhawani Dayal Sanyasi who recently went under an appendicitis operation is progressing favourably at the St. Aidan's Hospital, Durban.

A Reuter's message from East London states:—
The Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, agent of the Government of India, arrived in town this (the 18th inst.) morning, and spent the day sightseeing and interviewing various bodies connected with the Indian community. He was entertained to lunch by the local Rotary Club, when he delivered an eloquent and interesting address on Mahatma Gandhi's life and labours. In the evening he addressed a public meeting in the City Hall, followed by a civic reception attended by a large number both Europeans and Indians. In his address he dealt with the Indian Agreement, which he considered was one of the most statesmanlike achievements in the history of the British Empire and proof that India was worthy of Dominion status. Other speakers included the Mayor (Mr. Norton), Sir Charles Crewe and Mr. John Bowie, M.P.C., who were all garlanded. Mr. Sastri's real eloquence and mastery of language made a very deep impression on his hearers.

At a meeting of the Native Ministers' Association held in Germiston Location at which representatives of the Transvaal Missionary Association were also present, a resolution was unanimously passed condemning the tot system proposed in the new Liquor Bill. It was contended that the tot system would not lessen the drinking evil among Natives, and would not check illicit liquor traffic. The Government, it was urged, should close drinking dens and not open new ones. Natives, it was pointed out by one speaker, were asking the Government for more education and better wages, and instead the Government was giving them more drink.

Mr. H. Pring, Under-Secretary for the Interior, has been appointed to act as Secretary for the Interior from the 14th November, 1927, and during the absence on leave of Mr. C. F. Schmidt.

His Excellency the Governor-General has assented to the Union Nationality and Flags Act (No. 40 of 1927) which has been published for general information in the *Union Gazette* dated November-15.

Writing on Communal tension in India in his journal *The People* dated Oct. 13, Mr. Lala Lajpat Rai says:

"The British police have only established their incompetence in both preventing crime and detecting it. They are influenced by wrong theories which they find very convenient. It is the easiest thing to do to throw squads after squads of Police and Army into the city after the crime has been committed. But the real efficiency of the Police lies only in preventing crime or unearthing conspiracies that lead to it. The Police have in the past shown more than justifiable zeal in tracing and detecting political crimes, but as far as these murders and murderous assaults are concerned their proceedings have been marked by a lukewarmness or apathy or light-heartedness which makes people suspicious of their motives. Lord Irwin would not advance the cause of Communal peace by one inch unless he can instill some of his own anxiety and sincerity into the minds of the Criminal Intelligence Department and the Provincial Executives. The Communal leaders can do nothing unless the Provincial Executives adopt a firmer, stronger and more impartial attitude. They may not be consciously partial but their conduct during the last ten months does give a ground for complaint."

The following extract will no doubt give an impetus to those who are engaged in Social Service Work:

"A Baptist missionary in England on furlough from India told a *Daily News* representative of an invitation he recently extended to Mahatma Gandhi to visit a leper Colony at Orissa. Gandhiji came in a cab—and a loin cloth. He addressed the lepers, and then at the end of his speech asked: "Why should I call those my brothers if I do not mix with them?" And he insisted that each of the poor stricken lepers should be brought to him. Disregarding the signs and marks of this most loathsome of moral diseases, he shook each by the hand patted their heads, and spoke words of comfort to them. "How many men, great or obscure, would do that?" the missionary asked! "How often have we not observed men in the arrogance of their health," comments the *Indian Social Reformer*, "shrink away from their diseased brothers for the fear of contamination! To such Mahatma Gandhi's action should serve as an object lesson. If the gloomy life of these miserable beings can be penetrated by a ray of light by acts such as these, surely, it is the duty of every individual to contribute to it. If instead of thinking of our personal enjoyment on holidays,

we set apart these days to visits to homes for the Blind and the Lepers, what pleasure and happiness it will give them!

Mr. "Pussyfoot" Johnson, it is stated, intends to visit India next year to conduct a prohibition campaign. He is reported to have said that he considered India to be one of the best countries in which to carry on his work and that he would not be surprised if that country went dry within five years.

The fifth anniversary celebration of the Saraswathi Educational Institute, Port Elizabeth, will be held in the Institute Hall, 2, Rudolph Street, on Sunday the 27th November, 1927, commencing at 9 a.m.

HEALTH BOARDS' IRON HEEL

WE publish elsewhere in this issue a letter addressed to His Honour the Administrator of Natal in connection with the sorry plight of Indians residing in Health Board districts. For some reason or other, it would appear, that Indians in one of those districts have neglected to pay their rates due for the years 1925-6 and with the rates added to them for the years 1926-7 together with the exorbitant interest of ten per cent per month makes the sum so large as to render it most difficult for many of the poorer sections to pay and of course impossible to pay in one lump sum. The Health Board in question, namely, of the Mayville Area has now decided to rule with an iron heel and a number of writs have been issued and dwellings are sold to recover the rates due, these sales resulting, in some instances in the persons concerned being turned out into the streets with their families and children.

The Health Board concerned may be quite justified in taking the action it has taken but one is entitled to plead for justice to be tempered with mercy. Moreover in view of the fact that some of the dwellings do not bring an amount sufficient to meet the writ it would be wise even on an economic point of view to allow the Indians who have allowed their rates to accrue to liquidate the debt in instalments with the assurance that the future rates would be paid on due dates. This was quite a reasonable request to make but the Health Board has evidently ignored it and the reply received from the Administrator, we understand, indicates that the Provincial Administration does not wish to interfere in the internal affairs of the Local Administration. This reply from His

Honour the Administrator is far from satisfactory.

It was pointed out some time back that these Health Boards, far from being miniature boroughs are mere rate collectors, and they do not give the necessary service in return for the rates derived; that the interest of ten per cent per month is exorbitant and to impose such an interest is, in our opinion, morally criminal, if it is not legally so. Even the *Natal Mercury* who has hardly ever a word to say that would go in favour of Indians had suggested that this should be remedied. If, still, this matter is allowed to drift and the Provincial Administration is going to ignore its responsibility there will be just reason to entertain the doubt that the motive underlying these Health Boards is no other than to make it intolerable for Indians to live in those Areas and thus to ultimately oust them.

Mr. Sastri At Port Elizabeth Plea For Simple Justice

Port Elizabeth, Nov. 23.—Speaking at a reception held here, in connection with his visit to the city, Mr. Sastri, the Agent-General for the Indian Government, emphasised that it was no part of the intention of Indians, now, or at any time, to challenge the political supremacy of the white section of the population of South Africa.

"We admit to the full," he said, "your right to maintain the civilisation which you value, the modes of living, the standards of comfort which you have set up for yourselves, amidst discouragement and difficulties which we fully appreciate. We recognise that it will be your right to determine the public policy of this sub-continent and model it to your own ends and the satisfaction of the public interests."

"This being granted, we recognise that, as a natural corollary, there must be certain limitations and restrictions upon the political and municipal freedom of the Indians here, so that this essential requirement may be satisfied. We are anxious to disarm your suspicions in the matter, and that, in any application which may be made for the freedom of the Indian population, in a request for the removal of disabilities pressing upon them, and any petition for facilities enabling them to live a happy, contented and prosperous life, and things must be understood as being subject to this limitation, with no wish to interfere in, or dispute, the political supremacy of the Europeans of this sub-continent."

Necessity and Wisdom

"But the question arises, 'Would you be justified in ordering the lives of the Indians amongst you?' Would you be justified in ordering their lives, in going further than may be necessary in order to secure this essential? Would it be wise, would it be in accordance with the highest civilised rule, would it be in conformity with the highest standards set up by Great Britain in the various parts of the Empire? Would it be right to raise bars and barriers which are not necessary to maintain your supremacy, but which seem only designed to deny the Indian—sometimes wholly, sometimes partially—the opportunities and facilities which are necessary for his full development?"

"He has no right to attack your politics, or alter your institutions to his own benefit. But is it necessary to bind him with shackles and fetters which deprive him of the opportunities to which, as a citizen of the British Empire, as one who swears allegiance to the Throne of Great Britain, he is entitled? Is it necessary to impose limitations on him as to the profession he might follow, or on the education he might wish to receive? Is it, or is it not, a part of the aims of every civilised Government that every citizen, except he be of evil character, or disloyal conduct, should be allowed to become himself fully?"

"I believe that the ordinary canons of right and justice would give the answer without reservation in the affirmative to that question."

There was, Mr. Sastri added, the promise held out by Sovereign of Great Britain on dozens of public and solemn occasions, there was the course consistently held by a long period of Imperial rule by Great Britain—a course which could not be deviated from by a hair's breadth—which required that no one would be denied that which was necessary for developing himself.—(Applause).—Reuter.

Iron Heel of the Health Boards

Indians Rendered Homeless

The following is a copy of a letter addressed to His Honour the Administrator of the Province of Natal, Pietermaritzburg on the 14th November, 1927, by the Hon. Secretary of the Natal Indian Congress:

Sir,—I have been directed by my Committee to write to you in regard to the rates that are due and payable by the Indian community to the various Health Boards existing in the peri-Durban area.

In most cases, the rates remaining unpaid are for the year 1925-6, and the rates added to it for the year 1926-7 together with the exorbitant interest of ten per cent per month amount to sums which are beyond the means of the Indians to be paid in one lump sum. My Congress now understands that a number of writs has been issued in the Mayville Area and buildings are sold to satisfy the rates due. In some instances, these sales have resulted in the persons concerned being turned out into the streets with their large families.

My Congress fully realises the position of the Health Boards who have given ample time for these rates to be paid but for some reason or other, the matter was allowed to drift to a position which has become very grave so far as the poorer section of the Indian community is concerned.

I am also requested to respectfully urge that the rate of interest be considerably reduced and that legislation be brought as carefully as possible to give relief in this respect.

My Congress ventures to suggest that in all cases where it is found that the Indian is unable to pay in one sum, he be allowed to liquidate the debt in instalments on the understanding that the future rates be paid on due dates. This will obviate the necessity of disposing of their houses, their only place of shelter, which are in some cases extremely insufficient to meet the amount of the writ.

I therefore trust that you will be pleased to give the matter your earnest consideration.

I beg to remain, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Sgd.) V. S. C. PATHEE,

Joint Hon. Secretary.

European Population Of The Union

Part I of the "Report on the Fourth Census of the Population of the Union at May 4, 1926" which is just published under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior gives the European population as at May 4, 1926, at 1,676,660—an increase of 157,172, or 10.34 per cent, for the quinquennial period. The percentage increases for the four provinces of the Union are:—Natal 16.13, Transvaal 11.99, Cape 8.53, Orange Free State 7.65. Thus Natal has a lead in the Provincial percentages and Transvaal comes next.

The Durban figures are as follows:—

| | Males. | Females. | Totals. |
|--|--------|----------|---------|
| Durban Borough. | 26,053 | 26,030 | 52,083 |
| Suburbs of Durban (Health Board Areas). | 7,946 | 7,894 | 15,840 |
| | 33,999 | 33,924 | 67,923 |

Asiatic Trading At Paddock

Europeans' Protest

The Paddock correspondent of the *Natal Mercury* writes:—

At a well-attended meeting of the Paddock Farmers' and Poultry-keepers' Association, held in the local hall, the following resolution, proposed by Mr. R. M. McIntosh, was unanimously adopted:—

"That Colonel Rethman, M.P.C., be requested to ask the Administrator at the next meeting of the Provincial Council (1) how many new general dealer's licences (2) how many butcher's and (3) eating-house licences, and (4) transfers of such licences have been granted to Indians during the last five years in Alfred County? And further that the Administrator be asked under Section 5 of Ordinance 4 of 1923, to dissolve the present Rural Licensing Board for Alfred County and appoint a new one, on the following grounds:—

"That Rural Licensing Boards, as constituted to-day, were appointed in place of one licensing officer with the definite object of restricting and controlling the granting of further new licences to Indians. This, we contend, has not been done in this County, and in particular at Paddock, Plains and Ovibi Flats, where no less than seven new licences and two transfers have been granted to Indians. This is viewed with great alarm by this Association and the residents within these areas.

"That the only remedy is to remove the present Board, who are not safeguarding the interests of Europeans in allowing this wholesale influx of Indian traders to this County.

"In the village of Paddock alone there are to-day four Indian licences, where there used to be one—which, at this rate, will soon vie with Umzinto and Stanger and other Indian villages. Further, we feel that the Licensing Board does not protect existing licence-holders—as instanced by the granting at one time at Paddock and Plains of three butcher's licences, which are now defunct, and substituting two more when it is apparent that this area can support only one."

Several members, including Colonel White (Vice-President), Mr. F. Jessop and Mr. Merriman strongly supported the motion, and during the discussion it was stated, inter alia, that residents were absolutely at a loss to understand the actions of the Licensing Board in granting these licences *hokus-bokus* and regardless of well-founded opposition. Among others, the case of a local Indian, Mahomed, was quoted. Mahomed, it was stated, obtained a new butcher's

licence a few weeks ago, notwithstanding the fact that his shop had not yet been erected. The application was opposed by European witnesses, and it was advertised in some corner in the *Natal Farmer* instead of being published in a daily newspaper, while the notice was posted up in a wattle plantation. It was stated that the premises were quite unsuitable for a butchery, being too close to the public hall, presently being used as a public school, and in the vicinity of the hotel, etc. Another point brought out was that, in the opinion of residents, the applicant was unsuitable to hold the licence, and that there was no necessity for the licence.

The meeting decided to get up a numerously signed petition against the renewal of the licence next month, and to arrange for a strenuous opposition before the Board.

The Royal Commission

Further Protest in India

A Reuter's message from New Delhi dated Nov. 21 states :—

The Punjab Khilafat Committee is unanimously in favour of the boycott of the Statutory Commission. Members of the Committee are demanding a plenary round-table conference.

The Punjab Congress Committee has also resolved in favour of the boycott.

A meeting of the depressed classes in Poona, on the contrary, passed a resolution of appreciation at the appointment of all Europeans on the Commission.

Bill For Appointment Passes

A message from London dated Nov. 22 states :—

The House of Commons to-day passed the second reading of the Government of India Statutory Commission Bill, without a division.

The personnel of the Commission will be debated on Nov. 25.

A message from Calcutta states :—A monster meeting, presided over by Sir Abdul Rahim, and attended by representatives of all communities, passed a resolution recording their indignation at "the calculated affront offered to India's national self-respect by denying her fundamental right to determine her own national constitution," and urging all public bodies, especially legislative ones, to refuse to be in any way associated with the Statutory Commission. A later message from Bombay states that the President of the All-India Moslem League has issued a manifesto stating that its signatories cannot participate in a Statutory Commission on which Indian and British statesmen are not invited to sit on equal terms.

A Reuter's message from London states :—Under the instructions of the President, the general secretary of the Indian National Congress, Pandit Motilal Nehru, has written to Mr. George Lansbury, the well-known Labour leader, asking him to consider the advisability of withdrawing the Labour members from the Statutory Commission in connection with the Reforms Scheme and desisting from all efforts at compromise. In the course of his letter, Pandit Nehru writes :—"It is evident that the compromise proposals do not meet either the demands of India or of the Labour Party itself, as expressed in their various resolutions. India expects Labour to stand firm by her, and I take the opportunity to inform you that any proposals falling short of some suitable form of full Responsible Government will not satisfy the Congress."

Mr. Sorabjee Rustomjee's Wedding

Mr. Sorabjee Rustomjee's wedding took place in Bombay on November 18, with Miss Khorshedbai Sorabjee Poonewala of Muradabad. A Reuter's message states that a distinguished assemblage was present at the wedding. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu honoured the couple by placing round their necks garlands of handspun yarn from Mahatma Gandhi. Numerous cable messages blessing the couple were sent from his friends in South Africa.

Mr. Sorabjee has sailed with his wife from Bombay last Wednesday for Durban.

Mr. Dick Presented With a Purse

Officials of the Congress were responsible for organising a very successful function held in the Durban Town Hall on Saturday Nov. 12, in honour of Mr. G. W. Dick, who recently retired from the post of Principal Immigration Officer for Natal, says the *Natal Witness*. There were a number of prominent Europeans as well as a representative gathering of Indians present.

Mr. Paruk presented a purse of 150 sovereigns, collected from the Indian community. Among the speakers were included Mr. Sastri, Mr. J. W. Godfrey and Mr. R. K. Khan.

After expressing his thanks for the honour done him Mr. Dick in the course of his remarks said that his retiral would be a blessing in disguise when he hoped to work for the good of the community, both European and Indian.

A well rendered musical programme was provided by the Lawrence Trio.

The Story of My Experiments With Truth

[BY M. K. GANDHI]

Part III. Chapter XIX.

A MONTH WITH GOKHALE—III

The terrible sacrifice offered to Kali in the name of religion enhanced my desire to know Bengali life. I had read and heard a good deal about the Brahma Samaj. I knew something about the life of Pratap Chandre Mazumdar. I had attended some of the meetings addressed by him. I secured his life of Keshub Chandra Sen, read it with great interest, and understood the distinction between Sadharan Brahma Samaj and Adi Brahma Samaj. I met Pandit Shivanath Shastri and went in company with Prof. Kathavate to see Maharshi Debendranath Tagore but as no interviews with him were allowed then, we could not see him. We were, however, invited at a celebration of the Brahma Samaj held at this place, and there we had the privilege of listening to fine Bengali music. Ever since I have been a lover of Bengali music. Having seen enough of the Brahma Samaj, it was impossible to be satisfied without having seen Swami Vivekanand. So with great enthusiasm I went to Belur Math mostly or may be all the way on foot, I forget now which I loved the sequestered site of the Math. I was disappointed and sorry to be told that the Swami was ill and could not be seen and that he was at his Calcutta house. I then ascertained the place of residence of Sister Nivedita and saw her in a Chowringhee mansion. I was taken aback by the splendour that surrounded her, and even in our conversa-

tion there was not much meeting ground. I spoke to Gokhale about this and he told me that he did not wonder that there could be no point of contact between me and a volatile person like her.

I met her again at Mr. Pestonji Padshah's place, I happened to turn up just as she was talking to his old mother, and so I became an interpreter between the two. In spite of my failure to find any agreement with her I could not but notice and admire her overflowing love for Hinduism. I came to know of her books later.

I used to divide my day between seeing the leading people in India regarding the work in South Africa, and visiting and studying the religions and public institutions of Calcutta. I once addressed a meeting presided over by Dr. Mullick on the work of the Indian Ambulance Corps in the Boer War. My acquaintance with *The Englishman* stood me in good stead on this occasion too. Mr. Saunders was ill then, but he rendered me as much help as in 1896. Gokhale liked this speech of mine and he was very glad to hear Dr. Roy praising it.

Thus my stay under the roof of Gokhale made my work in Calcutta very easy, brought me in touch with the foremost Bengali families and was the beginning of my intimate contact with Bengal.

I must needs skip over many a reminiscence of this memorable month. Let me but mention my flying visit to Burma and the Foongis there. I was pained at their lethargy. I saw the golden pagoda. I did not like the innumerable little candles burning there and the rats running about the sanctum of the temple brought to my mind thoughts of Swami Dayanand's experience at Morbi. The freedom and energy of the Burmese women charmed me, and the indolence of the men pained me. I also saw, during my brief sojourn, that as Bombay was not India, Rangoon was not Burma, and that as we in India have become commission agents of English merchants, even so in Burma we have combined with the English merchants, in making the Burmese people our commission agents.

On my return from Burma I took my leave of Gokhale. It was a wrench to be separated from him, but my work in Bengal or rather Calcutta, had been finished, and I had no occasion to stay any longer.

Before I settled down I had thought of making a tour through India travelling third class and of acquainting myself with the hardships of the third class passengers. I spoke to Gokhale about this. At first he ridiculed the idea, but when I explained to him what I hoped to see he cheerfully approved of it. I first planned to go to Benares to pay my respects to Mrs. Besant who was then ill.

I had to equip myself anew for the third class tour. Gokhale himself gave me a metal tiffin box and got it replenished with sweetballs and *puris*. I purchased a canvas bag worth twelve annas, and got a long coat made of Ohhaya wool. The bag was to contain this coat, a dhoti, a towel and a shirt. I had a blanket too to cover myself with and a water jug. Thus equipped I started on my journey. Gokhale and Dr. Roy came to the station to see me off. I had asked them both not to trouble to come but they insisted on coming. 'I should not have come if you had gone first class, but now I must come,' said Gokhale.

No one stopped Gokhale from going on to the platform. He was in his silk turban, jacket and dhoti. Dr. Roy was in his Bengali dress. He was stopped by the ticket collector but on Gokhale telling him that he was his friend, he was admitted.

Thank you very much for the good wishes I started on my journey.

Transvaal British Indian Association

Mass Meeting

Whereas, on the 5th November, 1927 a requisition duly signed by over 700 members of the Association was duly served upon the Joint Hon. Secretaries, calling upon them, in terms of rule 27 of the constitution and regulation, to convene a Special General Meeting of members for the purposes set forth in the said requisition

and whereas in violation of the said rule the said Joint Hon. Secretaries have failed, refused or neglected to comply with the said requisition, and failed, refused or neglected to convene a Special General Meeting

And whereas the members of this Association are by reason of the foregoing being subjected to injury in regard to the affairs of the Association and their communal interests

Notice is hereby given that a mass meeting of the Indians of the Transvaal Province (over the age of 16 years, all such being *ipso facto* members of the Association) will be held on Sunday, the 18th December, 1927, at 2 p.m. at the Good Hope Bioscope Hall, corner of Commissioner and Nugget Streets, Johannesburg, for the following purposes:—

1. To consider the conduct of the present officers and committee, and to pass such resolutions in regard thereto, as the meeting may determine.
2. To elect by vote officers and members of the committee either in addition to those presently holding office or in substitution of them or any of them.
3. To consider and vote upon the proposal that the Transvaal British Indian Association re-affiliate with the South African Indian Congress.
4. To consider and discuss and vote upon any other matter arising out of or incidental to the foregoing.

Tel. Add.,
"ORGANISER"
P.O. Box 2538,
Johannesburg.

N. R. PATEL,
Vice-Chairman of the Transvaal British Indian Association. (At the request and instance of members and signatories to the requisition.)

South African Indian Congress PRELIMINARY NOTICE

The Eighth Session of the South African Indian Congress will be held at Kimberley on the 30th and 31st December 1927 and 1st and 2nd January 1928.

A. I. KAJEE,
HON. GEN. SECRETARY.

સાઉથ આફ્રિકન ઇન્ડિયન કોંગ્રેસ
પ્રારંભિક નોટીસ

સાઉથ આફ્રિકન ઇન્ડિયન કોંગ્રેસની આઠમી વાર્ષિક બેઠક તા. ૩૦ અને ૩૧ ડિસેમ્બર ૧૯૨૭ અને તા. ૧લી અને ૨જી જાન્યુઆરી ૧૯૨૮ ના રોજ કીમ્બર્લીમાં મળશે.

કાર્યક્રમ હવે પછી જાહેર થશે.

એ. આઈ. કાજી,
આમ. જનરલ સેક્રટરી