

Indian Opinion

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SOUTH AFRICAN INDIAN NATIONAL CONFERENCE

EMERGENCY CONVENTION AT JOHANNESBURG

The following public appeal and invitation is being circulated throughout the Union:—

Fellow Countrymen.—In view of the critical situation facing the entire Indian Community in the Union at this hour by reason of recent developments arising out of the recommendations of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Indian Trade and Commerce, and in view of the declaration of the Government that a Commission is to be appointed forthwith to enquire into the whole Indian question within the Union it has been felt that so serious and important movement on the part of the Government ought and can only be answered by the combined South African Indian Community, as it will be readily seen that no particular section of the Indian Community can undertake the responsibility of speaking and answering for the entire Indian Community in the Union. Moreover the extreme importance of the matter to be considered by the Commission makes it imperatively necessary that for once in the history of this sub-continent the whole Indian population should rise to a man and act with one heart, voice, and mind.

With this all important motive it has been decided that an emergency Conference be held forthwith at Johannesburg. It is extremely fortunate and augurs well for the success of the proposed Conference that it will be held on the four days announced by our Government as public holidays i.e., from the 3rd to the 6th August, 1919. It is hoped that representatives and delegates from all existing bodies or otherwise throughout the Union will respond to this urgent call of duty. Immediately on receipt here of the number of representatives and delegates attending from the various provinces, which information must reach the Joint Secretaries not later than the 26th inst., the necessary arrangements will be made for their reception and accommodation.

Adverting to the importance of the Conference, it cannot be too forcibly emphasised that the Indian community as a whole, stands at this hour on the brink of final destruction, unless concerted action is immediately taken to combat the evil. This is the most momentous hour in the life and history of the Indians in the Union. One national demonstration of the nature proposed might, with the help of Providence, be the means of turning the balance in favour of the community, while a moment of thoughtlessness, inertness and lack of initiative might doom the fate of our voiceless people for ever. This appeal therefore goes to every intelligent and self-respecting Indian throughout the Union to rise equal to the occasion, if only once in his life to assert and stand by the many Imperial Proclamations and assurances that have in the past been made to the Indian nation, and recently repeated and reaffirmed in connection with the Indian Empire's glorious participation in the present war, which was waged for the sake of freedom and liberty of the world at large, and ended in the supreme victory for the Allied arms. It is hoped by means of this Conference to safeguard the rights and privileges that have been so dearly won for us by the fallen heroes of Mother Hind. If we do not rise to this momentous occasion, then indeed will those heroes have laid down their lives in vain.

A sincere and hearty response is expected from all the provinces, as it is hoped that this Conference will be the means of our national consolidation and progress within the Union.

We beg to remain,
Yours obediently,

E. I. PATEL, Chairman.

N. A. CAMAY,

P. K. NAIDOO, Joint Secretaries.

Emergency Conference Committee.

NOTES AND NEWS

In the House of Commons on May 26, Mr. Amery stated that the Bill before the South African Assembly did not interfere with the existing trading rights of Indians. He understood that it concerned the evasion of existing legislation, in regard to ownership of property. He had communicated with Lord Buxton and so far as he was informed, there was nothing in the Bill which would justify his approaching the Union Government in the matter. He understood that the rights of land ownership hitherto acquired by Indian companies were not interfered with.

A correspondent at Maritzburg writes that he has been informed by the Postmaster there that only twelve pence are paid out in India for one Pound sent from South Africa, but that at any moment, there might be a change to more or less.

The chief reason for the rise in the value of the rupee from 1s. 4d. to 1s. 8d. is attributable, according to a writer in Indian exchanges, to the high price of silver. The world's production to-day, he says, is something like 180,000,000 of which about half is taken up by other countries and the other half, say 90,000,000 other ounces, is taken up by India. The whole of this enormous order is in the hands of one man—the Secretary of State for India. It he declares that he is not going to buy silver for the next twelve months except at 1s. 4d. the sellers would have no option but to give him at that price or close down half their mines.

We regret to hear of the death, on the 20th ulto, of one of the leading Indian citizens of Port Elizabeth, Mr. R. R. Naidoo, at the age of 48. The deceased was the President of the British Indian Council for the year 1916, and also Patron of the said Council for the year 1917. He leaves a widow, son and daughter, son-in-law, and grand daughter to mourn their loss.

Bombay, July 4.—Mr. Gandhi, in a letter to the Press (says Reuter), urges the Englishmen in India to create such emphatic public opinion as to shame Europeans in South Africa into doing the right thing for the people of India. The writer also urges a united protest to strengthen the hands of the Government of India to protect Indian settlers in the Transvaal from impending extinction. The *Bombay Chronicle* expresses the hope that the Viceroy will put himself at the head of a movement to let the Europeans in South Africa know that India cannot tolerate the proposed wrong.

A deputation of the Durban and District Indian Rice Committee waited upon the Minister of Finance (the Hon. Mr. Orr) in the Durban Chamber of Commerce. There were also present the Chief Magistrate, Protector of Indian Immigrants, and a few others.

Mr. C. P. Robinson, M.L.A., introduced the deputation. After which Mr. Leo R. Gopaul, as spokesman, briefly and ably informed the Minister the causes which led to the inflation of the price of rice, thereby causing widespread discontent and distress among the Indian community.

The Minister received the deputation sympathetically, and in reply notified that he will be returning shortly to Pretoria, and will consult his colleagues on the various aspects of the question. He will in due course advise the secretary to deputation as to what the Government intended to do in the matter.

Speaking at Troyville, Capt. Leslie Blackwell, M.L.A., urged that the time had come for the Europeans of the Rand to deal with the Asiatic menace, says a Reuter telegram from Johannesburg.

After giving figures designed to show the extent of Asiatic trading in the Transvaal, the speaker said he was convinced the Asiatic was a parasite, and did not add one penny to the wealth of the community. In crime the Asiatic specialised in illicit gold dealing, liquor dealing, and insolvency. The solution of the problem lay in confining the Asiatic to tropical East and Central Africa. He came to the Transvaal unwanted and uninvited.

Continuing, the speaker said that during the war Indians took advantage of the position to break the letter and spirit of the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement of 1914. The dribbling of Indians across the border had to be stopped. (Applause.) Both English and Dutch should join hands to decide their own destiny in regard to Asiatics.

SOUTH AFRICAN CONFERENCE

AS will appear from the circular, appearing on the front page, issued by the Chairman and Secretaries of the Emergency Conference Committee, an "Emergency Convention" has been called, to be held in Johannesburg from the 3rd to 6th August next. It is felt, by the organizers of this movement and Indians generally, that the time is opportune for a united demonstration of the whole Indian population of the Union. This necessity has arisen because of the present attitude of the Government in passing legislation, conforming the old racial laws of the Kruger Government against which the British Government strongly protested. In fact, one of the causes of the Boer War was the unjust treatment of British Indian residents, forgetting, conveniently, the past history of this country, and ignoring altogether the principles laid down by prominent statesmen of the Allied Governments during the recent war in regard to just treatment of small nations, or weak and unrepresented peoples, the Union Government has allowed the reactionary forces to hold sway while principles are flung to the winds. Even the Governor-General has allowed the Imperial Government to believe that the recently passed Asiatics Act did not interfere with the existing trading rights of the Indian community, and that there was nothing in the Bill, now passed into an Act, to justify the Imperial authorities approaching the Union Government in the matter. From the statement made in the House of Commons, printed in our "Notes," it would appear that a false impression has been created regarding the ownership of land in the Transvaal. Members of the House would no doubt understand that rights which Indians undoubtedly enjoyed under the company laws were not interfered with by the present Act. If so, it is another example of "gulling the British public."

But what Indians have to realise is that they must be their own saviours or tamely submit to the process of extermination advocated by Sir Abe Bailey, Capt. Blackwell and men of that stamp whose intention is to squeeze every independent Indian out of the country and then, by way of consolation, allot portions of the swamps of East and Central Africa for a settlement for South African Indians. In view of the proposed Government Commission to enquire into the whole Indian question in South Africa, the present is the identical moment for a joining of forces. The fixing of the Emergency Convention during the public holidays set apart for the Peace Celebrations serves a double purpose.

It is convenient for people to gather together during the interval from business, and such a demonstration, held at a time of rejoicing by the European community, will be appropriately marked by Indians as a time for serious consideration regarding their future. It is doubtless that we cannot feel inclined to make merry when our very existence is at stake.

We hope, that our brethren in Natal and Cape will also realize the seriousness of the situation and will go in large numbers to attend the proposed Convention, for, in doing so, they will not only be assisting Transvaal Indians but they will also help to stem the tide which is set against the whole Indian community of South Africa.

ASSAULT ON AN INDIAN

TRAM CONDUCTOR FINED

J. W. Baker, a train conductor, was recently charged in the First Criminal Court with assaulting Mr. A. Royeppen, an Indian schoolmaster of South Coast Jurktion.

From the evidence led, it appeared that on May 31st the accused ordered several coloured people off a car proceeding to Unibilo. An argument followed, and mid-way between Moore and Blake Roads the car pulled up, and P. C. Paull saw the accused strike the complainant a blow on the face. He approached the accused and told him he had no right to strike people, and latter found Mr. Royeppen in a drooping position bleeding freely from a wound in the face.

Mr. Royeppen, in his evidence, stated that when he boarded the car the conductor ordered him off. He could not get off, as the car was in motion, and he asked the conductor for his number. He jumped off when the car stopped, and the accused struck him on the eye and mouth.

Head Constable Mallinson said the complainant was a harmless and respectable citizen, and an old man of small physique compared with the accused. There was something to be said for the accused, who appeared to have seen some war service, but this did not excuse him for losing his temper.

Mr. Hime, in fining the accused 30s, said he could sympathise with the tram conductors in what they had to contend with, but they had lawful means of obtaining redress for the disobedience or insolence of passengers. In this case the accused lost his temper, and forgot himself entirely, striking a respectable old Indian with very little or no provocation.

Conductor Baker apologised for the incident.

ASIATICS (LAND AND TRADING) AMENDMENT ACT

Following is the text of the Asiatics (Land and Trading) Amendment Act (Transvaal) 1919, as appearing in the *Union Gazette Extraordinary* of the 3rd inst. His Excellency the Governor-General having given his assent—

Be it enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, the Senate and the House of Assembly of the Union of South Africa, as follows—

1. Those provisions of sections one hundred and thirty and one hundred and thirty-one of Act No. 35 of 1908 (Transvaal) which relate to the residence on or occupation of ground held under a stand licence on proclaimed land by coloured persons and any provisions similar thereto contained in the conditions of any deed of grant or freehold title in a Government Township

(as defined in Act No. 34 of 1908, Transvaal) issued under the last-mentioned Act shall not apply—

(a) to any British Indian who on the first day of May, 1919, was, under the authority of a stand licence lawfully issued, carrying on business on proclaimed ground, or on any stand or lot in such township, or to the lawful successor in title of any such Indian in respect of such business; or

(b) to any person *bona fide* in the employment of such a British Indian or his successor in title, so long as British Indian or successor in title continues so to carry on business on the same ground or stand or lot on which, or on any other ground or stand or lot in the same township in which it was being carried on on the first day of May 1919.

Provided that nothing in the section shall be construed as abrogating any exceptions contained in the said sections one hundred and thirty and one hundred and thirty-one or in the conditions aforesaid.

2. Those provisions of Law No. 3 of 1885 (Transvaal), and any amendments thereof heretofore enacted which prohibit a person belonging to any of the native races of Asia from being an owner of fixed property in the Transvaal subject to certain exceptions specified in such amendments shall, subject to the same exceptions, be construed also as prohibiting any registration of a mortgage over fixed property in favour of a person belonging to any of the native races of Asia, otherwise than as security for a *bona fide* loan or investment in the ordinary course of business, and also prohibiting the ownership of fixed property in the Transvaal by any company or other corporate body in which, one or more persons belonging to any of those races have a controlling interest and the registration of such a mortgage in favour of such a company or corporate body otherwise than as security as aforesaid.

The provisions of this section shall apply as from the first day of May, 1919, provided that in respect of any fixed property acquired by any such company or corporate body before the first day of May, 1919, the aforesaid provisions of Law No. 3 of 1885 (Transvaal) shall be construed as if this Act had not been passed. Any such company or other corporate body which may have acquired the ownership of fixed property since the first day of May, 1919, shall dispose thereof within a period of two years from the commencement of this Act, or within such further period as any superior court having jurisdiction where the property is situate on application may allow, and on the failure of such company or other corporate body so to dispose of such property then and in that case such property shall, on the petition of any member of the public be sold by order of such a court.

3. This Act may cited for all purposes as the Asiatics (Land and Trading) Amendment Act (Transvaal), 1919.

Original Correspondence

The Editor, INDIAN OPINION.

Sir—When Mr. Bone took up St. Aidan's College, I read an article in your paper about what he was going to do. He said that he was going to teach Tamil, etc. My son goes to the college, and they are not doing anything. The same as carried out by the previous Principal is being done. Letters in print read very well about what one has to do, but to do them is another thing. Let Mr. Bone show he is a man of action, not words. Further I suggest that the parents should take a little more interest in the schools. Because if we do not take interests the Government and the Missionaries will do what they like. Yours, etc.,

PARENT.

JAPAN AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

RACIAL EQUALITY

A plenary session of the Peace Conference was held in Paris on April 28, when the report of the League of Nations Commission was considered and the text of the Covenant of the League of Nations was adopted. Baron Makino, the principal Japanese delegate, took the opportunity (says *India*) of submitting the following remarks to the Conference on the subject of national and racial equality—

I had first, on February 13, an opportunity of submitting to the Commission on the League of Nations our amendment to the Covenant, embodying the principle of equal and just treatment to be accorded to all aliens who happen to be the nationals of the States which are deemed advanced enough and fully qualified to become members of the League, making no distinction on account of race or nationality.

On that occasion I called the attention of the Commission to the fact that, the race question being a standing grievance which might become acute and dangerous at any moment, it was desirable that a provision dealing with the subject should be made in this Covenant. We did not lose sight of many and varied difficulties standing in the way of a full realisation of this principle, but these were not insurmountable, I said, if sufficient importance were attached to the consideration of serious misunderstandings between different peoples, which might grow to an uncontrollable degree.

It was hoped that the matter would be taken in hand on such an opportunity as the present, when what was deemed impossible before was about to be accomplished. Further, I made it unmistakably clear that the question being a very delicate and complicated nature, involving the play of deep human passion, the immediate realisation of the ideal equality was not proposed, but that the clauses presented enunciated the principle only and left the actual working of it in the hands of different Government concerned—that in other words, the clause was intended as an invitation to the Governments and peoples concerned to examine the question more closely and seriously and to devise in a fair and accomplishing spirit means to meet it.

Attention was also called to the fact that—the League being, as it were, a world organisation of insurance against war—in cases of aggression nations suitably placed must be prepared to defend the territorial integrity and political independence of a fellow member—that this meant that a national of a State member must be ready to share military expenditure for the common cause, and, if needs be, sacrifice his own person.

In view of these new duties, I remarked, arising before him as a result of his country entering the League, each national would naturally feel, and in fact demand, that he be placed on an equal footing with the people whom he undertakes to defend, even with his own life. The proposed amendment, however, was not adopted by the Commission.

On February 14, when the draft Covenant was reported at a plenary session of the Conference without the insertion of our amendment, I had the privilege of expressing our whole-hearted sympathy and readiness to contribute our utmost to any and every attempt to found and secure an enduring peace of the world. At the same time I made a reservation that we would again submit our proposition for the consideration of the Conference at an early opportunity.

At the meeting of the Commission on April 11, I proposed insertion in the preamble of the Covenant of a phrase endorsing the principle of equality of nations and the just treatment of their nationals. But this proposal again failed to be adopted by the unanimity, although it obtained, may I be permitted to say, a clear majority in its favour. This modified form of amendment was the outcome of an attempt to conciliate the view-points of different nations.

WHAT JAPAN WANTS

Now that it has been decided by the Commission that our amendment, even in its modified form, would not be included in the draft Covenant, I feel constrained to revert to our original proposal and to avail myself of this occasion to declare clearly our position in regard to this matter. The principle we desire to see acted upon in future relationship between nations was set forth in our original amendment as follows:—

"The equality of nations being a basic principle of the League of Nations, the High Contracting Parties agree to accord, as soon as possible, to all alien nationals of States members of the League equal and just treatment in every respect, making no distinction, either in law or in fact, on account of their race or nationality."

It is our firm conviction that the enduring success of this great undertaking will depend much more on the hearty espousal of loyal adherence that the various peoples concerned would give to the noble ideals underlying the organisation than on the acts of the respective Governments that may change from time to time. In an age of democracy peoples themselves must feel that they are the trustees of this work, and to feel so they must first have a sure basis of close harmony and mutual confidence.

If just and equal treatment is denied to certain nationals it would have the significance of a certain reflection on their quality and status. Their faith in the justice and righteousness which are to be the guiding spirit of the future international intercourse between the members of the League may be shaken, and such a frame of mind, I am afraid, would be most detrimental to that harmony and co-operation upon which foundation alone can the League now contemplated be securely built. It was solely and purely from our desire to see the League established on a sound and firm basis of good will, justice, and reason that we have been compelled to make our proposal at this moment.

In closing, I feel it my duty to declare clearly on this occasion that the Japanese Government and people feel poignant regret at the failure of the Commission to approve of their just demand for laying down a principle aiming at the adjustment of this long-standing grievance, a demand that is based upon a deep-rooted national conviction. They will continue in their insistence for the adoption of this principle by the League in future.

THE SITUATION IN INDIA

AS VIEWED IN ENGLAND

Dr. Rutherford writes in the *Daily News*—

Sir,—For the picture you point of "The Peril in India" in your leading article to-day every lover of liberty must be profoundly grateful.

The question now is whether, after what has happened, the Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme of Reform has the slightest chance of success. I have myself grave doubts whether, even if there had been no coercive legislation, it would have satisfied legitimate Indian opinion. But howsoever that may be, coming after the glorious sacrifices of India in the war for freedom can anyone wonder that the introduction of the "Back Bills" (as the Rowlatt Bills are known in India), has aroused a storm of indignation, and given birth to a perfectly natural suspicion in the minds of Indians that the British Government has never intended to keep faith with them?

The only possible way of dissipating this impression is to withdraw at once the obnoxious legislation, and to press forward with the least possible delay the reforms so long promised and so long postponed.

It is too late to hope that these reforms, in their final form, would be based on the broad and statesmanlike principles which were adopted by Lord Durham for Canada and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman for South Africa with such conspicuous success?