

# Indian Opinion

No. 4—Vol. XXIV.

Friday, January 22nd, 1926.

Registered at the G. P. O. as a Newspaper  
Price Fourpence

## CAPETOWN INDIANS WELCOME MR. ANDREWS

THE Grand Hall, City Hall, was filled to overflowing on Sunday afternoon (10th instant) on the occasion of the Indian welcome to Mr. C. F. Andrews who arrived in Capetown on Thursday the 7th instant. The audience consisted principally of Indians, but there were many Malays and Natives also present, as well as a sprinkling of Europeans. Mr. M. Y. Hawa, President of the Cape British Indian Council, presided.

In opening, a resolution was moved by Dr. A. H. Gool, "heartily welcoming Mr. Andrews to Capetown, and thanking him for the unselfish service that he has rendered to Indian communities all over the world."

### Mr. Andrews' Reply

Mr. C. F. Andrews, in acknowledging the welcome that had been given him, spoke first in Hindustani. Later on he told his audience in English that he had been specially asked to come out at the present crisis by his two great friends, the Poet, Rabindranath Tagore, and Mahatma Gandhi. They had been acutely pained at the turn which events had taken in South Africa, he said, and had regarded the action of the Union Government, in bringing in the new Asiatic Bill, as a terrible breach of faith.

Mr. Gandhi had protested with the utmost insistence much earlier when the Class Areas Bill was introduced, in 1924, by General Smuts' Government.

He stated that a serious breach of faith had been committed, and that the Settlement which had been made in 1914 had been broken. But the present Bill went infinitely beyond the range of the Class Areas Bill in breaking the Gandhi-Smuts agreement. It was also a direct contradiction of all that had been said at every Imperial Conference since 1917.

Probably the worst feature of all, however, in the present Bill, was the wrong contemplated against the ex-indentured labourers in Natal and their descendants. Mr. Andrews stated that, as an old member of the Labour Party in England, and as president of the All-India Trades Union Congress, it filled him with amazement to find the Labour Party in South Africa combining with the Nationalist Government in a Pact to deprive some of the poorest and most oppressed labourers in the world—the ex-indentured Indian labourers—of their hard-won rights.

Certainly an appeal would have to be made to the International Labour Conference at Geneva against this special adverse legislation against Indian labourers, who had undergone all the hardships of the five years' indenture to earn their rights of domicile as settlers.

Now, some of the most firmly established of those rights were to be taken away, by force of legislation, passed over their heads.

The truth was, they were running into this fatal error without warning. The wrong would be done, which would inflame the whole East, without anyone fully realising what had happened.

In India, the Europeans felt the wrong just as much as the Indians. All were united in protesting against the breach of treaty. But in South Africa,

the whole question was going by default. He himself had one wish, to rouse the conscience of his own countrymen to the iniquitous deed which was about to happen. Mr. Andrews stated that the Metropolitan of India, Bishop Westcott, had himself been on the point of coming out at the head of a Christian deputation, of which he himself was to have been a member, but he had been delayed. From this one fact, that the Head of the Church in India, had intended to come out and protest to his fellow-Christians in South Africa, it could be realised how intensely the whole Christian Church in India felt the wrong that was about to be done.

### Dr. Abdurahman Supported

A resolution was also carried unanimously "enthusiastically supporting and endorsing" the action of the South African Indian Congress deputation headed by Dr. A. Abdurahman now in India.

Others on the platform included Messrs. A. Ismail, M. H. Begg, E. Parker, Hajee Hassan, D. A. Nagia, S. Cassimale, Hadjee K. Gool, M. M. Gandhi, Hadjee J. M. H. Gool, F. J. Anderson, Mrs. Abdurahman, Mr. B. J. Belin, and the Rev. Mr. Burgess.

Dr. Gool touched upon the work which Mr. Andrews had done on behalf of Indians in the Fiji Islands and in British East Africa. "Wherever he has come forward to help the cause of the Indians he has triumphed, and I hope his presence among us to-day will mean that our cause will also triumph," said Dr. Gool. Mr. Andrews had always fought for the weak, and that was why they welcomed him and appreciated his great efforts. (Applause.)

"I think it is the highest thing that I can say about him that he stands first as a Christian; by his work and his life he shows that he follows after Christ, who is and was an Asiatic," added the speaker.

"The one great point for which I stand on this platform," went on Dr. Gool, "is that we must show definitely to the people that we are united." Every Asiatic, he said, took up the position that they could only get what they wanted in South Africa by showing a united front. (Hear, hear.) They as Indians, however, had shown to the world that however much they were trampled upon there were still men among them who had proved themselves traitors to the cause of India and the down-trodden by "stabbing the cause of the Indians in the back."

Here he referred to those who "wrote to the newspapers which supported the anti-Asiatic legislation in such a way as to try and prove that there was dissension among Indians."

"If there is dissension," he said, "the proper place to get rid of it is here on the platform, and not in the papers, which are biased and prepared to make mountains out of molehills." No member of the British Indian Council had made any reply to the various letters sent to the *Cape Times* because they felt that the only way to get at their people was from the platform, and not through the papers. (Hear, hear.)

"We are here to-day," he said, "to show that we are united, and that we support the Indian at large,

the deputation in India to-day, and the choice of the leader of that deputation." (Loud applause.)

He emphasised that they were objecting to the principle of the Asiatic Bill, and said in reference to the Government: "They are afraid we are right; they are not prepared to give us a conference because they think they will have to submit to the ideas of justice and righteousness to the Indian."

## Notes and News

**T**HE *Manchester Guardian*, in a leading article, expresses the view that "the measures discriminating against Indians which are now taking shape in South Africa may well cause alarm in our own country." It cites the history and development of the African colonies in an effort to demonstrate that historically and by the fact of their being invited to the country, that the title of the Indians to be in South Africa is incontestable.

The Labour Party Conference held at Port Elizabeth has adopted a motion pledging support to the Government's Asiatic Bill.

A proposed Indian bazaar at the corner of West and President Streets (Johannesburg) figured recently before the Licensing Court. Twelve Indians made application to occupy the premises, which were described as "broken down buildings." Mr. Emanuel Gluckman, who appeared for all 12 applicants, admitted that the premises were very old and not in a good state of repair, but this was not the only objection. The owners of the property had entered into an agreement, however, for the purpose of erecting new shops on the premises, and on this account he asked for the applications to be favourably received. "We have examined the premises," interjected Councillor Fearhead, "and we are satisfied the rooms are not suitable." In reply to Mr. Gluckman, the chairman (Councillor Palmer) said that the court had carefully considered the whole of the applications, and under Section 11 of the Ordinance it directed that the licenses be suspended pending the erection and completion of buildings according to plans approved by the Council.

An application by Hulembe Ali, an Indian, for a certificate to enable him to obtain a general dealer's licence for the business of greengrocer and fruiterer on Stand 940, Queen Avenue, Brakpan, has been refused by the Brakpan Town Council. The Committee had recommended that the locality, or the premises, were not such that it was desirable that the business contemplated should be carried on by the applicant. It was also recommended that in the opinion of the local authority the applicant was not a fit and proper person to hold such a licence, or to carry on such a business, having regard to the provisions of the township title.

We take the following from the *Rand Daily Mail*:

The Town Council of Rustenburg held a special meeting to consider applications for trading licences under the powers conferred by the new law. Most of the existing licences were granted, but all new applications, mostly from Indians, were refused. In some instances two or three Indians applied for a licence for the same building, and these were ordered to stand over for further information. Without doubt there are more than sufficient licences issued here at present, especially considering the view of the poor crop prospects this year.

The Rural Licensing Board of Wolmaranstad under the provisions of the General Dealers' Control Ordinance, held recently its second meeting at the local Magistrate's Court. Seventy applications were granted. Four Europeans were refused, and five Indian applications were turned down. The local authority, acting in pursuance of the same Ordinance in connection with licences falling in their province, dealt with 24 applications, of which 15 were granted and nine refused. The refused applications were all by Asiatics.

According to the (London) *Times*' correspondent in Calcutta, although Bengal and the Bengalees are not affected by the proposed Indian legislation in South Africa, that Province is greatly excited about it, and the Corporation of Calcutta, which is predominantly Swarajist, has passed a resolution in favour of retaliation, it being urged that South Africans should be debarred from employment and Corporation contracts, and that goods from the Union should be boycotted.

In reply to Mr. Thurtle, Labour Member for Shore-ditch, (in the House of Commons) who asked for the average amount spent per head on White, Indian, and African children's education respectively, in Kenya Colony, Mr. Amery, Secretary of State for the Colonies, said that the figures were as follows:—

	No. of Papils.	Expendi- ture. £	Cost per head £ s. d.
European ... ..	554	23,107	41 14 2
Indian ... ..	1,475	11,768	7 19 7
Native and Arab ...	22,269	34,743	1 11 2

Mr. Thurtle got no satisfactory reply from the Government as to why it costs so much more to train a European child than it does an Indian or an African.

In the course of his presidential address at the African National Convention held at Bloemfontein recently the Rev. Mahabane said that the fervent wish of his heart was that the New Year might herald the liberation of their race from the thralldom of European domination. After dealing at length with the Government's proposals as enumerated by General Hertzog at Smithfield, he summed up by saying that the only common feeling for the heterogeneous races contributing the population of the Union was the one based on the Rhodes formula—equal rights for all civilised men south of the Zambesi. That connoted equal citizen rights, equal franchise rights, equal rights in the acquisition of land, equal rights in the defence of the country, and equal rights of labour in the industrial sphere. What was wanted, he said, was mutual toleration and confidence amongst races. Such a state of affairs, he declared, could only be brought about by means of a round table conference between representatives of both sides of the colour line, more especially on great occasions like the present.

A Mombasa message says:—For burglary and injuring three Indians who attempted his capture a Nairobi native has been sentenced to five years and 18 lashes.

A Rector's message from Calcutta reports that a special tribunal has found the nine Bengalis who were arrested following the discovery of a bomb factory in the suburbs of Calcutta, on November 10, guilty, and sentenced them as follows:—Three to transportation for a period of ten years; four to five years rigorous imprisonment, and the remaining two to three years' imprisonment.

During the week ended January 8, gold (bullion

and coins) was exported from South Africa as follows:—To United Kingdom, £598,224; to India, £1,011,884.

A Renter's message from Madras says:—At a meeting of sympathisers with the cause of Labour presided over by Major Graham-Pole, it was resolved to establish an Indian Fabian Society to carry on Socialist propaganda on the lines of the Fabian Society in England, with the object of providing various unions in India with a common Socialistic platform and of paving the way for the formation and consolidation of an Indian Labour Party on the lines of the British Parliamentary Labour Party.

## THE BISHOP OF PRETORIA'S LETTER

[By C. F. ANDREWS]

**T**HE workers for righteousness in South Africa of whatever nationality must be very thankful to the Bishop of Pretoria for his courageous and noble letter in which he declares frankly and openly that he believes a pledge has been broken. He will be no party to such a breach of promise and therefore writes publicly to the Press in order to deliver his soul from falsehood and wrong. He quotes from two texts in the Old Testament. One of these says: "He that promiseth to his neighbour and disappointeth him not, though it were to his own hindrance—he shall never be moved." The other says: "Righteousness exalteth a nation." These moral laws, he says, must be placed before all political expediences. Whatever happens, promises must not be broken.

This is the simplest issue of all, and the Indian cause in South Africa has its foundation upon this one vital principle. Promises were given and exchanged: it is essential for the stability of human progress that these promises should not be broken. We have all learnt by heart the meaning of the phrase the Bishop uses—"a scrap of paper." The South African Nationalist Government is about to make "a scrap of paper" of all the engagements and pledges given to the Indians, with regard to the preservation of their rights in South Africa, and the Bishop of Pretoria refuses to be a party to it.

It was a brave thing to do at this time, because the Indian cause, being that of a small and oppressed minority, is not a popular cause. It was brave also, because the Bishops and clergy of the Transvaal have only recently courted unpopularity among the white people by taking up the cause of the native and the coloured people and protesting against inhuman treatment. Thus a large section of the white people were already angry at the attitude of the Transvaal clergy of the Anglican Church. It would have been quite easy for the Bishop of Pretoria to say: "Our duty is toward the native African; we must not take up any other cause and confuse the native issue." This would have been an attitude to adopt which must have come a hundred times to the Bishop's mind before he ventured on the step which he actually took by deciding to add to the

unpopularity regarding the 'native' question fresh criticism regarding the Indian question.

I think that I may be permitted to tell a story in connection with this, which to my own mind adds greatly to the value of the Bishop's act. After taking the chair at two meetings of clergy that I had addressed on the subject the Bishop wrote in his own hand-writing and showed me a statement he had made for the Press similar to that he has now published. I endorsed every word he wrote and found it remarkably accurate, but at the same time I advised him to check every statement I had made and to study the subject thoroughly before he published under his name anything at all. I told him how in my own case a too hurried publication of something on the Opium Question had led to an inaccuracy remaining undetected that caused me endless trouble afterwards.

The Bishop took my advice and waited nearly three weeks. When he did actually publish his statement in the *Cape Times*, the *Pretoria News*, and the *Johannesburg Star*, it came with far greater force and also hit the right psychological moment. Therefore, I could not be too thankful that I had urged him to delay a little longer in the first instance, when he was on the point of publishing three weeks ago.

It needs to be added that the very fact that the Bishop of Pretoria has hardly come into contact in any intimate way with the Indian community, owing to his work lying almost entirely apart, makes it all the more a matter of courageous insight into the moral situation, that he wrote so faithfully and truly, without being overcome by an initial prejudice against external aspects of Indian life in the Transvaal, that were the reverse of attractive to him.

## Asiatics no Asset

In the course of his address in the Masonic Hall, Jeppe, (Johannesburg) on the 15th instant, Mr. Leslie Blackwell referred to the Asiatic question. He declared that the 15,000 Asiatics in the Transvaal were not an asset; nor were they good citizens. A large proportion of their wealth went to India, and many of them were not honest traders. It would be a great advantage if such people were not in our midst. They undercut the white traders and had brought ruin to many of them in the country towns. He was not out for repressive or arbitrary measures; but he would go far to see that Asiatics would conform with the European standard of trade and living. If the object of the new Bill was to bring pressure on the 150,000 Asiatics in South Africa to leave the country, he would be against it. He would favour a scheme of voluntary repatriation on the basis of free passages and a bonus. He was told by Nationalists that the idea was to hound and persecute them so that they would find life intolerable here. He did not think any country would be wise to adopt such a policy. It must be remembered, too, thousands of Indians were born here, and that they were consequently South Africans. It would be going too far wantonly to set these people by the ears and so foment discontent in India. In the Transvaal there was the right to segregate these people, because of their different habits of life. It would be extremely unwise to take drastic steps such as had been mooted.

## Smuts-Gandhi Agreement Controversy

### Government Point of View

The following is the first of a series of articles written by the *Cape Times* commencing from the 13th instant:—

A charge of breach of faith is being brought against South Africa in respect of the Areas Reservation Bill, popularly known as the Asiatic Bill. There are three "counts" in the charge:

(1) That the segregation provisions of the measure constitute a breach of the Smuts-Gandhi agreement of 1914.

(2) That the Bill is inconsistent with the undertakings given by Union statesmen at Imperial Conferences since 1917.

(3) That the restrictions imposed by the Bill on the acquisition of land in Natal by Indians break the pledges given by the Natal Government to Indians brought into Natal under the indenture system.

In a short series of articles these "counts" are examined in the light of the available documentary evidence. The first article, printed below, deals with the Smuts-Gandhi agreement.

The Smuts-Gandhi agreement was the agreement entered into between General Smuts, who was then Minister of the Interior, and Mr. Gandhi in 1914 which ended the Indian Passive Resistance Movement. It is contained in three letters which passed between Mr. Gandhi and General Smuts' secretary, Mr. Gorges. The three letters will be found textually in the schedule to the "Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Disabilities of British Indians in the Transvaal" which sat in 1919. For our present purpose it will suffice to quote the pertinent passages from these letters.

The agreement is expressed in Mr. Gorge's letter as follows:

"With regard to the administration of existing laws, the Minister desires me to say that it always has been, and will continue to be, the desire of the Government, to see that they are administered in a just manner with due regard to vested rights.

"In conclusion General Smuts desires me to say that it is, of course, understood, and he wishes no doubt on the subject to remain, that the placing of the Indians' Relief Bill on the Statute Book of the Union, coupled with the fulfilment of the assurances he is giving in this letter in regard to the other matters referred to herein and touched upon at the recent interviews, will constitute a complete and final settlement of the controversy which has unfortunately existed for so long and will be unreservedly accepted as such by the Indian community."

That letter was dated June 30. Writing under the same date Mr. Gandhi accepted the agreement in the following terms:

#### Mr. Gandhi's First Letter

"The passing of the Indians' Relief Bill and this correspondence finally closes the Passive Resistance trouble which commenced in the September of 1906 and which to the Indian community cost much physical suffering and pecuniary loss and to the Government much anxious thought and consideration.

"As the Minister is aware, some of my countrymen have wished me to go further. They are dissatisfied that the trade licence laws of the different Provinces, the Transvaal Gold Law, the Transvaal Townships Act, the Transvaal Law of 1885, have not been altered so as to give them full rights of

residence, trade and ownership of land. Some of them are dissatisfied that full inter-provincial migration is not permitted, and some are dissatisfied that on the marriage question the Relief Bill goes no further than it does. They have asked me that all the above matters might be included in the passive resistance struggle. I have been unable to comply with their wishes. Whilst, therefore, they have not been included in the programme of passive resistance, it will not be denied that some day or other these matters will require further and sympathetic consideration by the Government. Complete satisfaction cannot be expected until full civic rights have been conceded to the resident Indian population.

"I have told my countrymen that they will have to exercise patience and by all honourable means at their disposal educate public opinion so as to enable the Government of the day to go further than the present correspondence does. I shall hope that when the Europeans of South Africa fully appreciate the fact that now, as the importation of indentured labour from India is prohibited and as the Immigrants' Regulation Act of last year has in practice all but stopped further free Indian immigration and that my countrymen do not aspire to any political ambition, they, the Europeans, will see the justice and indeed the necessity of my countrymen being granted the rights I have just referred to."

#### "Vested Rights"

The third letter was addressed by Mr. Gandhi to Mr. Gorges on July 7, and began: "I have now got a moment to submit my note on the Gold Law. As you know, after maturer consideration, I refrained from pressing for the insertion of a special clause defining vested rights in connection with the Gold Law and Townships Amendment Act, because I felt that any definition in the correspondence might result in restricting the future action of my countrymen. However, so far as my interpretation of vested rights is concerned, I think that I should reduce it to writing. General Smuts was good enough to say that he would endeavour to protect vested rights as defined by me."

There then follows this definition:

"By vested rights I understand the right of an Indian and his successors to live and trade in the township in which he was living and trading, no matter how often he shifts his residence or business from place to place in the same township."

#### The Indians Accused

This is the agreement of which the Indians declare the Areas Reservation Bill to be a breach in the spirit if not in the letter. The first time that the interpretation of this agreement became a matter of dispute was, curiously enough, when the Indians were accused of breaking it. The accusers were the anti-Asiatic extremists. Between 1914 and 1919 the Indians in the Transvaal had been evading Law 3 of 1885, which debarred them from owning land, by forming private limited liability companies for the purpose of acquiring land. This evasion of the law was characterised by the anti-Asiatics as a breach of the spirit of the Smuts-Gandhi agreement.

It was a foolish accusation, but it is interesting to recall the attitude taken up by the Indians in rebutting it before the Asiatic Inquiry Commission. They then declared, quite justly, that in defining vested rights Mr. Gandhi was "referring to rights in connection with the Gold Law and Townships Amendment Act only." There was, they contended, too, no reference in the correspondence to the acquisition of land by Asiatics either individually or by means of companies.

In a word, the Indians interpreted the agreement at that time with meticulous strictness and in its

narrow sense, to-day they are endeavouring to give it the widest possible meaning.

### Another Attitude

That was in 1920. The year before, when the Indians appealed to Parliament for relief in regard to certain legal decisions by which the formation of companies for the purpose of evading the law was forbidden, they took up yet another attitude. Parliament appointed a Select Committee to go into the matter. Mr. Gandhi's definition of vested rights was one of the points at issue. The Indians contended that it meant the inherent rights of the whole Indian community whether the rights were being exercised by any particular man or not, and included even the inherent rights of the unborn.

This contention the Committee did not uphold. They decided that "vested rights" must be the actual existing rights of individual men, and not potential rights.

The definition was again gone into by the Asiatic Inquiry Commission in 1920, and they came to the same conclusion.

"The provisions of the Gold Law and Townships Act of 1908 were not strictly enforced, with the result that between 1908 and 1914 a considerable number of businesses had been established by Indian traders in several places in spite of the law.

"These must have been the vested rights, unlawfully acquired without interference by the Government which General Smuts and Mr. Gandhi had in mind during the negotiations."

### A Misunderstanding

It is quite clear from all this that the term "vested rights" had application only to the Gold Law. How came it then that it was understood in India to have a very much wider application? The report of the Asiatic Inquiry Commission gives the following explanation:

"It appeared that the terms of Mr. Gandhi's letter on July 7, 1914, in which he gives his definition of the term "vested rights" were not known to the general body of Indians in the country or to the Government of India until it was disclosed in 1919 during the proceedings of the Select Committee.

"They had always understood that by vested rights General Smuts meant such rights as Asiatics had enjoyed before and since 1898 and still enjoyed in 1914."

It is unfortunate that this misunderstanding still seems to persist, despite the fact that first the Select Committee and then the Asiatic Inquiry Commission revealed the correct meaning of "vested rights" by disclosing Mr. Gandhi's own definition.

But even if Mr. Gandhi had not defined the term, it seems difficult to see how the undertaking expressed by General Smuts himself could be interpreted in the way that it must be if the Areas Reservation Bill is to be regarded as a breach of the agreement.

### Not for all Time

In the first place when General Smuts spoke of "a complete and final settlement of the controversy," he would have to be taken to have meant that all and every aspect of the Indian question was settled and finished with for all time. Such an undertaking would have to be bilateral, for no settlement could be final if either side contemplated the possibility of a resurrection of any controversial point at all.

But it is clear from Mr. Gandhi's letter of June 30 that many matters were, in his opinion, left unsettled by the agreement; and he declares that he contemplates "that some day or other these matters will require further and sympathetic consideration by the Government." Again, in his July letter, he explains that he hesitated at first to define vested

rights for fear of "restricting the future action of my countrymen."

If further proof were needed, in a farewell message to his countrymen before he left for India he assured them that the settlement arrived at does preclude them from agitating "as has been" clear from my letter to the Secretary of the Interior of June 30," for the removal of other disabilities.

In the second place, when General Smuts talks of administering existing laws in a just manner with due regard to vested rights he would have to be understood to have meant that at no future time would any legislative action be taken whereby the potential rights of any Indian would be in any way affected. By no distortion of the English language could this interpretation be possible.

Nor did General Smuts possess the power to make such a promise. How could he for all time, limit and restrict by any promise the right of all future Parliaments to legislate as they might choose and the right of all future Prime Ministers of the Union to introduce such legislation as they might think fit?

(To be Continued.)

## Natal Indian Congress

### Formation of Branch at Clairwood

A very large and enthusiastic meeting of the members of the Natal Indian Congress took place in the Clairwood Indian School on Sunday the 17th instant, for the formation of a branch of the said Congress. Many of the officials of the Congress attended. Mr. V. Lawrence (Vice-President of the Congress) presided and explained the object of the meeting and that portion of the Constitution whereunder branches could be formed.

Mr. M. Beethasee Maharaj acted as Secretary and explained in Hindi.

The following resolution was then proposed by Mr. M. E. Sigamoney, seconded by Mr. Bismathsingh and supported by Mr. K. R. Harryviz:—

"This meeting of the members of the Natal Indian Congress resident in Clairwood and South Coast Junction Districts hereby resolves to form a branch of the said Congress to be called the Clairwood and South Coast Junction District Branch of the Natal Indian Congress." This was put to the meeting and carried unanimously.

The meeting went into electing the officials for the branch as provided for under the Constitution and the following gentlemen were chosen unanimously viz:—M. Shabally (Chairman), Rughbeer Bhawani, M. Veerasamy Govender, and I. A. Tootla (Vice-Chairmen), M. E. Sigamoney (Hon. Secretary), G. R. John (Hon. Treasurer), and Harry Pillay, Anoop Goordeen, Lutchman Ganesh, Kalyanjee Kathad, K. M. Reddy, S. Ramauthar, Bismathsingh, H. M. Haffeejee, M. P. Naidoo, Jetha Sunder, and Babu Jaldareesingh, (Committee) with power to add.

Messrs. M. Beethasee Maharaj, S. Emammally, Satyadev, B. A. Maghrajh, M. T. Moodley, spoke congratulating the members of the above-named districts on the formation of a branch and wishing it a prosperous and successful career. Mr. Michael Sigamoney the newly elected hon. Secretary of the branch thanked the officials of the Congress for having attended and helped them to establish the branch and exhorted all the members of the branch to put their heart and soul into the work of the branch and make it a success.

Messrs. J. S. Giffen and L. H. Labovitz who are from the Cape Province also attended the meeting and the former gave a short discourse on the Asiatic Question as viewed by the people of the Cape Pro-

vince and assured the meeting that they as members of the Jewish race who had suffered persecution at the hands of other nations had their full sympathy in our cause, and that he had brought a message from the Indian community of the Legislative Capital giving the South African Indian Congress their moral and financial support in their struggle in fighting the Asiatic Bill.

The meeting then dispersed after the Chairman had thanked the members of the branch for having decided to form the branch and Mr. Giffon for the sympathy he had expressed on behalf of his race and after a vote of thanks to the chair had been passed.

#### Formation of Branch at Ladysmith

News has just come to hand from Ladysmith that at a mass meeting held there over 100 members were enrolled and thereafter a meeting of members was held at which a branch of the Natal Indian Congress was formed and the following officials were elected viz.:—I. A. Karwa (Chairman), R. Singh, S. E. Moola and V. P. Chetty (Chairmen), M. K. Chetty (hon. Secretary), and Syed Amod (hon. Treasurer.)

### South Africa's Honour at Stake

In a letter to *The Star* (Johannesburg) Mr. C. M. James writes:—

Sir,—It is no light charge which the Rev. O. F. Andrews brings against us in his article on "Looking for a Way Out" in your issue of Dec. 31, and it cannot be disregarded by any true South African. It is a direct challenge to the honour of South Africa, representing, as it does, the judgment of some 300,000,000 of the people of India alone. These people are by no means all ignorant "coolies," but number among them men and women of as high a standard of life and thought as are to be found anywhere in the world; a people in whose religions and philosophical writings are to be found an ethical beauty and a profundity of thought unsurpassed in the world's literature.

But the gravity of the accusation is not to be measured merely by the numbers or status of the accusers. The question is whether it be true or not: Is South Africa attempting to repudiate its word of honour? It is useless to pretend that because the pledges were given by a Government no longer in power they have ceased to be binding. On that basis any nation would be at liberty to repudiate its obligations by the simple expedient of changing its Government. No, the pledges were given in the name of the people of South Africa, and it is in the name of the people of South Africa that they are to be honoured or repudiated. The Government is the accredited agent of the people; and as such it acts for the people; its actions are the people's actions. Your honour and mine is involved in their repudiation or fulfilment.

Do we doubt that the effect of the draft Asiatic Bill is, to repudiate those undertakings? Our national honour demands that we should be quite sure on the point. The indictment is too grave to be merely brushed aside with a bare denial. If we value our self-respect as a nation and the respect of the other nations of the world we must be prepared to submit the question to an impartial tribunal and abide by its decision. It is not a matter of domestic policy in which our own interests alone are involved. It is a question of obligations undertaken and accepted in all good faith, and it is sound law and common morality that disputes arising out of an agreement between two parties should be settled either by mutual consent or by reference to arbitration. By acquiescence in the refusal of the Gov-

ernment to modify its present attitude and adopt one or other of these courses, we, as citizens of South Africa, are tacitly subscribing to the doctrine that might is right and allowing a grave challenge to our national honour to pass unanswered as the price of our silence.

### Anti-Asiatic Movement in Transvaal

#### Fiery Speeches at Ermelo and Jeppe

An anti-Asiatic meeting held at Ermelo on Sunday last week was largely attended. Fully 500 people were present, many of whom had travelled miles in the afternoon.

Among the speakers were Colonel Collins, D.S.O., M.L.A. for Ermelo, and Mr. Simon Bekker, the Nationalist candidate for Ermelo, at the last election.

Mr. J. W. Pet presided.

Colonel Collins said the Asiatic question was one on which on more than one occasion almost, meant war between the old South African Republic and England. There was a deputation in South Africa now from India which had been sent over to investigate and report on the matter. There had also been a Congress in India, where some very foolish speeches had been made.

In connection with the Bill dealing with the Asiatic question now before Parliament, Colonel Collins said he thought that, in addition, the people should take steps and approach the Government to protect those people in the outside districts and smaller towns. He said that the law did not really cover the question of the Indian trader in the country. They should be asked absolutely to prohibit the white man from leasing ground to Indians outside a municipality or township. In Ermelo the gradual encroachment of the Indian had become a serious matter.

#### No Room for the Indian

Mr. Simon Bekker spoke strongly, and said he thought it impossible to segregate the Indians. If they could not compete with the white man in commerce they would go to the land and compete in other lines where they would crowd the white man out. "The Indian must understand by our attitude that there was no room for him in South Africa, and the white man must make the position clear to him." He added: "We must get rid of the Indian no matter what the cost. While we are busy in Parliament trying to bring pressure on the Bill, the Indians are bringing equal pressure on the British Government to protect the Indian in South Africa."

Continuing, Mr. Bekker said he thought that the Indians who were born in India should be paid to return. "Many Indians," he went on, "would be glad to go for a sum of £50."

The meeting, in a resolution, expressed a wish that Colonel Collins, M.L.A. for Ermelo, should give his full support to the Class Areas Bill now being introduced in the House of Assembly. It was further trusted that Colonel Collins would use every endeavour to have legislation passed to repatriate as many Indians as possible under a scheme of compensation by arbitration, with authority to the Government to raise a special loan for this purpose if required, as the meeting realised that the presence of Indians in the Union of South Africa was undesirable.

Mr. Alexius Smuts, the ex-Mayor of Ermelo, moved a further resolution by which those present bound themselves not to deal with Indians. Both resolutions were carried unanimously.