

# Indian Opinion

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## THE COMMISSION'S ACTIVITIES IN JOHANNESBURG

UNIQUE data concerning Johannesburg's population problems is at present being gathered on a huge scale by a staff of inspectors employed by the newly-appointed Transvaal Asiatic Land Tenure Act Commission.

Tens of thousands of properties are being examined for the purpose of determining the racial origin of their inhabitants—black, brown and white. An area of several dozen square miles, including roughly Johannesburg proper and every southern suburb, is to be examined, house by house, to find out how many Europeans, Asiatics, coloured persons and natives each house shelters.

Some authentic preliminary details of this undertaking can now be furnished by the *Sunday Times*. By the end of March, 1933, it is hoped to have the figures complete, and after this the public sittings of the Commission will begin.

Being under the chairmanship of Mr. Justice Feetham, Judge-President of Natal, and including as its members Mr. Donald Stewart, Rand Townships Registrar, the leading authority on Johannesburg's complicated system of land titles as well as Mr. H. Britten, Chief Magistrate of the City, with J. R. Hartshorne, a senior official of the Immigration Department, as secretary, the Commission is regarded as a very strong one.

### Report In 1934

The sittings will last for months, and a report is not likely to be ready before the middle of 1934.

Every township in Johannesburg has been examined with the view to ascertaining which have restrictions against non-European occupation and which have not.

The ultimate object of the inquiry is to regularise the position of the many hundreds of natives, Asiatics and coloured people who have in all good faith for years occupied proclaimed ground in contravention of the law.

In order to make it clear that the information now sought involves no stigma, the staff of the Commission has secured the help of clergymen, missionaries, school teachers and other persons of influence in the areas affected. Explanations of the nature of the survey have been given out in a number of church pulpits since the inspectors started their rounds.

Commencing in the extreme west of the town, the officers are working their way towards Jeppe and beyond. Special maps have been prepared and show that the statistics will come from between 10,000 or

20,000 tenants. They include part of Mayfair, Fordsburg, Johannesburg proper including Hospital Hill and the area as far as the top of Twist Street (Clarendon Circle), Braamfontein, Doornfontein, Jeppestown, Turffontein, and the entire southern part of the city, including the mines.

Useful help has been given by the Coloured People's Welfare Association as well as by certain organisations connected with the Indian community. All the information (which is regarded as confidential) is being tabulated and digested as it comes in to the Commission's headquarters in the Old Fire Station, Von Brandis Square.

Owing to the circulation of manifestly uninformed statements about the investigation during the past weeks and the alleged "using of school children for political purposes," the *Sunday Times* has secured access to details on the form about which objections were made. This states that it is "acquired for the information of the Commission appointed to inquire into the occupation of proclaimed land by coloured persons. Completion of this form does not necessarily imply that the occupant is in *unlawful* occupation." "Coloured persons" is made to include every non-European.

### Information Wanted

The information asked for is the name of the occupant, his race, the address at which he lives, the name and nationality of the owner of the property, the nature of the tenancy, if any, the nature of any trade carried on, the period during which the coloured occupier has been in residence, some details about his predecessor, if these are known, and some facts about registration if the tenant is an Asiatic.

"The object of the data, once it has been co-ordinated," the *Sunday Times* investigator was informed, "is to determine clearly which areas are overwhelmingly white and which are overwhelmingly coloured or Asiatic. On the basis of these facts, supplemented by such evidence as will be submitted by individuals and organisations after next March, the Commission proposes to make its recommendations to the Government for the adjustment of the trouble. Full regard will be had to the rights of the non-Europeans in doing so."

From a sociological point of view the inquiry is already yielding interesting facts notably the comparative scarcity of indiscriminate living-together of black and white, even in slums.—*Sunday Times*.

## SHAMEFUL IF IT IS TRUE

**T**HE Transvaal Asiatic Land Tenure Act Commission is nowadays making great overtures in Johannesburg. When the Commission saw that a large number of coloured people have not filled in the D.I. 29 forms issued under this Act and it is not receiving the required information, it has issued new forms and by publishing notices in local papers it instructs the coloured people living on the proclaimed land to fill in the forms and supply the Commission with the necessary information. The Commission has not stopped there. It has engaged a staff of inspectors and on the proclaimed areas they are visiting house by house distributing forms and advising the people who are affected to fill in the forms. We are surprised to learn that the Commission has secured the help of clergymen and missionaries who work amongst the Coloured and Native population. These clergymen and missionaries preach to the members of their congregations that they should submit to the Transvaal Asiatic Land Act and fill in the forms issued under it. We are at a loss to understand how these missionaries who are followers of Jesus Christ and who preach to their congregations to follow Christ's teaching, can advise them to submit to this humiliating Act and to fill in the forms. The fundamental teaching of Jesus Christ is of universal brotherhood. All men are children of one God and therefore they are members of one family. No one is superior or inferior. Whether the colour of the skin of men is black, brown or white, they are all equal in the eyes of Jesus Christ. How can the missionaries who follow this teaching of Jesus Christ and who preach to others to do likewise, advise their followers to submit to the Asiatic Land Tenure Act? This Act lays down racial discriminations. It establishes the principle of segregation. It insults the self-respect of the coloured people as it forbids them to live on the proclaimed land. According to this Act the coloured people will be asked to live and trade in certain set aside areas and the very physical presence of a coloured man on the proclaimed land except on the set aside areas, will be considered a crime. Why should the Asiatics and coloured people who have been residing on the proclaimed land for years be now compelled to live in

certain set aside areas? For these and various other reasons we have protested against this Act and have advised our countrymen not to submit to it. We would like to ask the missionaries who preach to the members of their congregations to submit to this racial legislation, whether they themselves would be prepared to submit to such humiliating legislation were it to be applied to them? Will they submit to an Act which may compel them to live in certain set aside areas only and if they dare to live in forbidden areas they could be punished under it? If Jesus Christ were to come to-day to Johannesburg and if he dares to live on the proclaimed land because he is an Asiatic, he has to fill in the D.I. 29 form and will be compelled to live in exempted areas only! As the position is exactly the same as we described it under the Transvaal Asiatic Land Tenure Act, what is the real duty of the clergymen and missionaries who are engaged in advising their followers to submit to such a humiliating Act? Their clear duty is to ask their followers not to submit to this Act and suffer the consequences in the same way as Christ suffered for the principles he cherished. The Commission has gone a step further. We understand that the teachers in the Government Indian and Coloured schools have been given instructions from their superior officers to the effect that they should explain to the children what the Asiatic Land Tenure Act is. They have been supplied with the D.I. 29 forms and asked to deliver them to their parents. If it is true it is shameful. We know for certain that it is a fact. The Government servants are not supposed to take part in politics in this country. We are sorry to learn that the children who are learning in the schools are in this way dragged into politics. We cannot understand how Mr. Justice Feetham who is a man of international reputation, can take such a step. One could see from this, how anxious the Government is to enforce this law. We have many times warned our countrymen not to submit to this Act and we warn them once more never to submit to it? Rather die than submit even though the Government of India, through its Agent, co-operates with the Commission.

## Congress Reception To Agent-General

Appreciation of what is being done by the Agent-General to the Government of India, Kunwar Maharaj Singh, and his wife, the Kunwarani, in their short stay in Johannesburg was shown by the crowded attendance at the reception arranged by the Transvaal Indian Congress in the Trades Hall.

In welcoming the distinguished guests, Mr. C. K. T. Naidoo, who presided, said that they were examples of the cultured Indians in South Africa of whom no country in the world need be ashamed.

The Indian gifts of flowers to the guests were not omitted, and the beautiful design of the garlands reflected the hearty good will of local Indians.

"While we may differ in politics," said the chairman, Mr. Naidoo, "this is not an occasion for political discussion."

Messrs. P. K. Desai, S. M. Nana, D. M. Nursoo, V. S. C. Pather, Z. B. Parekh and the Rev. B. L. E. Sigamoney all joined in the welcome.

Replying, the Agent, Kunwar Maharaj Singh, said he did not think it was the time for speech-making, far more interesting things were happening in Johannesburg just now. For instance, who would win the big fight, Stribling or McCorkindale? He could hear the chairman, as a good South African, say McCorkindale. (Laughter.)

### Progress In Education

Speaking in a more serious vein, the Kunwar observed that gatherings such as this showed them that there was a great future before them. He had been to the Government Indian School and was agreeably surprised at the large number of the children attending who in time would—to quote a previous speaker—act as torch-bearers of Indian culture and civilisation.

It was essential for the progress of the Indian community that there should be education advancement for girls as well as boys.

"I am," he said, "in full accord with the statement that political progress depends upon social progress."

### Unemployment

The Agent-General referred to the contents of a letter he had received from the office of the Minister of Labour intimating that if the Durban Town Council accepted the department's scheme, employment would be found for about 600 Indians in Durban.

This was the result of consistent work on his part in interviewing the authorities and drawing attention to the distress among unemployed Indians. He had also been informed that the Durban Corporation had taken steps to relieve the severity of distress among Indian unemployed. These were sighs, despite a feeling of pessimism at times, of hope for the future.

"I have looked forward to this gathering," said Kunwar Maharaj Singh in conclusion, "with pleasure, and have been amply repaid by your hospitality."

### The Kunwarani's Reply

The Kunwarani, who also replied, was obviously touched by the warm expressions of welcome.

"It makes one realise," she said, "one's own omissions, and that one does not deserve a quarter of the kind things that are said. My heart is full of affection for you all, for are we not members of a family?"

"If I sometimes refer too much to our faults it is because I feel deeply. If I say anything that may offend, it is only that I am extremely anxious to help. I feel that in order to advance we must also be alive to our faults. I do hope that in our

short stay in South Africa we shall succeed in assisting in some small measure your cause."

Dr. M. Mayadas also briefly returned thanks.

## Indians And Post Offices

### Supreme Court Judgment

The right of Indians to be served at the same counter as Europeans in the Pietersburg Post Office was upheld by a full court of three judges—the Judge-President (Mr. Justice De Waal), Mr. Justice Tindall, and Mr. Justice De Wet in the Supreme Court, Pretoria.

The matter had been brought before Mr. Justice Barry in chambers by an Indian, I. G. Rasool, and his lordship had decided in favour of Rasool and against the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs and the Postmaster-General. Against this decision the Minister and the Postmaster-General appealed.

Mr. Justice Tindall, giving judgment, said the issue in the appeal was whether the Postmaster-General had authority to withhold from non-Europeans service at post offices except in a separate room reserved for non-Europeans. Before December, 1931, Indians desiring to be served at the post office at Pietersburg had been served at the same counter as Europeans, while natives were served in a room partitioned off and entered by a separate door, above which appeared the words "Native Post Office."

Thereafter this notice was altered to "Non-Europeans," and postal officials refused to serve Indians at the European counter. These steps had been taken by the local postmaster under instructions from the Postmaster-General.

It was successfully contended before the judge in chambers, said his lordship, that the instructions made a discrimination based on race or colour between classes, and were outside the powers of the Postmaster-General.

### Postmaster's Affidavit

The first point taken on appeal was that the learned judge ought to have upheld an objection that the procedure by way of petition was inappropriate. In the present matter it was alleged in an affidavit made by the postmaster that the arrangements referred to were essential for the smooth and prompt working of the post office.

Circumstances were conceivable, said his lordship, in which friction between two sections of the population might necessitate the provision of separate accommodation for them in post offices. If the existence of such circumstances had been suggested in the present case, the hearing of evidence might have been necessary and proper procedure might have been by action. But the allegations of the postmaster's affidavit did not raise such an issue, and his lordship held that the judge in chambers had been correct in deciding the matter on petition.

The main question at issue was whether the discrimination involved was unauthorised. Cases in the present court had laid down that discrimination based purely on race or colour was discrimination unequal in its operation, and in the absence of authority from the legislature, a local authority or official was not entitled to make such a discrimination.

"I do not consider it necessary to decide that under no circumstances whatever would the postal authorities be entitled to require different sections of the population to utilise separate counters," went on Mr. Justice Tindall. "This question does not now arise. All that I decide in the present case is that on the admitted facts the appellant is not entitled to make the differentiation made, namely, that between Europeans and non-Europeans. The appeal must therefore be dismissed with costs."

The Judge-President and Mr. Justice De Wet concurred.

Mr. A. A. Roberts appeared for the Minister and the Postmaster-General; Mr. I. Curlewis for Rasool.

## Asiatic Land Tenure Act

The allegation that propaganda is being carried on in favour of the Asiatic Land Tenure Act in Johannesburg Indian schools was made at the reception to the Agent-General, Kunwar Maharaj Singh, and the Kunwarani, held under the auspices of the Transvaal Indian Congress at the Trades Hall.

School children, said the Rev. B. L. E. Sigamoney, were being taught to influence their parents to fill in the form required in terms of the Act. "The commission," he declared, "is using the schools for distributing pamphlets and indirectly forcing children to get their parents to complete the necessary forms."

The secretary of the Land Tenure Act Commission, Mr. J. R. Hartshorne, interviewed by the *Star* representative, said that the forms were simply sent to the schools to be distributed.

## Agent-General At Samaj

"We have gathered here this evening," said Mr. R. V. Patel, the chairman of the Transvaal Hindu Seva Samaj, at a crowded meeting at the Patidar Hall, Newtown, Johannesburg, "to welcome one who is well known all over India as a capable administrator, one who is highly respected abroad as an indefatigable and staunch advocate of equality of Indians overseas, one who has toured East Africa and other colonies of the British Empire and won golden opinions for his splendid work, and one who has been sent to South Africa as India's agent to look after the interests of Indians. I mean our honoured guest of the evening, Kunwar Maharaj Singh."

The names of the Kunwarani and her sister, Dr. Mayadas, were also associated in the welcome.

Referring to the objects of the society, Mr. Patel said the Samaj was a social body, established eight months ago, with the sole motive of attempting to supply the social needs of the Hindu community. The Samaj (society) had been successful in securing a Hindu ward which was going to be erected in the General Hospital by donating £1,000, and its immediate intention and ambition was to erect a hall, build a temple and have a library for the Hindus. The chairman, Mr. Patel, was supported in other welcoming speeches by Messrs. P. K. Desai, who thought the Kunwarani might be able to do independent work—"a second Mrs Naidu" untrammelled by service regulations, D. L. Mistry, Z. Parekh and others.

Replying in Hindustani, Kunwar Maharaj Singh assured all present of his fullest support to any movement directed towards the uplift of Indians in this country.

On that day, he said, he had attended the bazaar in aid of the Indian ward at the Pretoria Hospital, and he was glad to acknowledge the donation of over £1,000 to the hospital by Mr. Cassim Adam. In Durban there was a bequest from Mr. R. K. Khan of over £40,000 in aid of hospitals and dispensaries. He hoped that their examples would be emulated by Johannesburg Indians.

Appealing to the women to help in the education of their children, both girls and boys, the Kunwarani said that they must support her. "I cannot stand alone, you must progress with me."

## The Kunwarani's Appeal

The Kunwarani Maharaj Singh made an eloquent appeal for assistance for the Indian community at the Goodwill Club lunch, at the Carlton Hotel, Johannesburg, and asked the members to be more helpful, courteous and sympathetic to their neighbours, the Indians. The term "dirty coolie" was often used, but she felt it was used in ignorance.

"Go ahead and find out for yourselves what difficulties your neighbours are working under, and what injustices, to say the least of it, they suffer," she said. "You have left your Indian neighbours to be ill-treated and to die at the wayside."

"It is in your hands," she said, "whether you intend to preach goodwill irrespective of caste, colour and creed."

The Kunwarani spoke of the plight of Indian women. For the girls there were no educational facilities, and there was no hope for them unless they were assisted in that respect.

"There is no girls' school in this province," she said. "A few of them attend the boys' school, but there they are naturally at a disadvantage. The Indian also feeds the coffers of the Provincial Government. The taxpayers' money goes to educate the white children, and very little is done for our girls and boys. I am hoping to start a small recreation club for Indian girls at Durban, and would greatly like to do so here."

There the girls could meet, and in addition to games, they would read and do some advanced work. In the hospitals there was no chance of Indian girls being trained as nurses. There was not even what could be called an Indian bed in the new Pretoria hospital. The Indians needed leadership.

The Kunwarani mentioned that Indian boys could qualify only as far as the 6th standard. She paid a tribute to the few devoted European people who were working for Indians against great odds, and said that, travelling round the country, there were so many problems that at times she and her husband felt overwhelmed.

"But I am rather an optimist," she said. "I have faith in the ultimate good nature and goodwill of the South Africans, and of you women who control the central pulse of nations."

## Service At Cathedral

A service of Holy Communion for all races was held recently in St. Mary's Cathedral, Johannesburg. Hymns were sung in five languages—English, Zulu, Sesuto, Sothwana and Xosa. There was a representative congregation and about 200 people received the Holy Communion together.

The Bishop (the Right Rev. Dr. A. B. L. Karney) was the celebrant, and he was assisted by the Dean (the Very Rev. W. A. Palmer); the Rev. Bernard Sigamoney (an Indian priest) and the Rev. Greenstock Nyovane, L.th. of the Bantu nation.

[We publish the above and congratulate Bishop Karney on the united service, but it is farce when out of 365 days in the year, only on one day a true Christian front is shown. Let the Bishops of Pretoria and Johannesburg remove the barrier that exists in their dioceses which will not allow non-Europeans to attend services in White Churches at the same time and which exists largely in the country districts. Special services in a Christian Church for the Bantus or Indians are against the teachings of Christ.—Ed. I.O.]

## Indian School At Newtown

### The Agent-General's Visit

Speaking at the annual display exhibition of work of the Government school for Indians at Newtown, the Agent-General, Kunwar Maharaj Singh, impressed upon the pupils, both boys and girls, their duty in keeping up the honour of the Indian community. One way of doing this was by always telling the truth. He asked the children to repeat the words, "Always speak the truth," and he then translated it in Hindustani.

"This is all I want of you and if you do that in everything you do, you will stay in this country, respected by all, for ever and ever."

Another thing, the Agent-General emphasised, was education of Indian girls. There were 600 boys as compared with 60 girls, and asked the boys what they had done to their sisters.

"Have you drowned them?" (Laughter.) "Have you killed them?" (Laughter.) "Hands up those boys who want their sisters to come to school."

At this a large number of hands went up.

### Excellent Work

The Agent-General thanked the doctors who had given their services to the school clinic instituted by the principal, Mr. S. Zwarenstein, and thanked the teaching staff.

"I wish," he added, "there were more parents present to see the good work that is visible on all sides."

Kunwarani Maharaj Singh said parents should support the school as a mark of appreciation for what the teachers were doing for the education of their children. She would have liked to have seen the school crowded with parents to-day.

"It is rather disappointing," she said, "not to find more girls here. If I see more girls at school I will be better pleased."

## The Maritzburg Indian Unemployment Relief Committee

The work of the Maritzburg Indian Unemployment Relief Committee for the past one year was reviewed at a public meeting held in the H.Y.M.A. on Wednesday the 7th October. The meeting, at which Rev. A. J. Choonoo presided, was well attended. A large number of unemployed Indians were present.

The secretary (Mr. S. R. Naidoo) in his annual report observed:—

In November of 1931, in view of distress and poverty caused through unemployment among Indians in Maritzburg and its neighbourhood, the Maritzburg Branch of the Natal Indian Congress convened a public meeting to decide as to what steps should be taken to give relief to those who are affected by the prevailing causes of unemployment. At this meeting a representative committee was formed with the object of giving relief and finding work for the unemployed.

Since the formation of the committee, members of the Committee actively engaged themselves in the work of relief. Altogether 25 meetings were held during the year. Many members of the Committee failed to attend meetings and neglected their part of work. This unfortunate inactivity threw the burden of work on a few members of the Committee who were placed at a disadvantage in carrying out the work.

In November 1931 the Committee commenced to collect funds. Later a deputation interviewed the Mayor (Councillor P. H. Taylor) for a grant for the purpose of carrying on relief work. The City Council made a grant of £100 which was expended in the purchase of provisions for the unemployed. The Committee, and no doubt the Indian community, appreciate the generous consideration shown by the Council in making the grant.

Numerous deserving applications to the Committee for relief necessitated the raising of funds to cope up with the demand. In conjunction with the Maritzburg Indian Health and Strength Club a variety concert was staged, which brought a revenue of £13 13s. 8d. to the funds. The concert was much appreciated by the public, who patronised it, and the artists who took part did their work creditably. To them and those who assisted, our grateful thanks are due.

On June 18, a street collection in aid of relief funds was, on the application of the Committee, authorised by the City Council. Prominent European and Indian ladies collected, and the total amount derived was £54 3s. No word of praise is sufficient to these ladies and young Indian girls who did splendid work in collecting a fairly good sum of money, which occasioned no little surprise at the results achieved considering the bad times.

At the commencement, for a month or so, supply of provisions was given on orders placed with storekeepers. This did not work well and proved unsatisfactory. Through the courtesy of Messrs. Cassim Suleman and R. N. Moodley their depot in Otto Street was made available to us on a small charge based upon the amount of goods purchased. Provisions were purchased at the lowest market price, and personal distribution was made to the unemployed. This method of relief proved much satisfactory, and savings on cash purchases were effected.

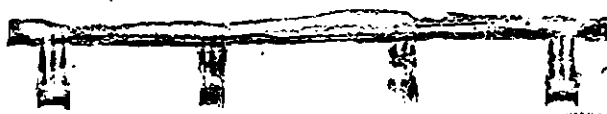
Dry provisions such as rice, mealie meal, dhol, sugar, salt, and in some cases potatoes, onions, and vegetables, and clothing were distributed. Distribution commences on the first Monday in each month and lasts until 3 or 4 days. Several cases of emergency were also provided with rations each month.

There are on the Relief Register 271 cases.

The following table shows the number of cases dealt with every month and supply of rations given:

1931	Month	Number of families to whom rations have been issued.
	December	56
1932	January	60
	February	72
	March	88
	April	102
	May	105
	June	121
	July	106
	August	105
	September	100
	October	102
	November	113
	December	150
		1285

The work of the Committee included the finding of work for the unemployed. It is difficult to find work for the unemployed although there are hundreds of Indians who are anxious to do any kind of relief work, as long as they can keep the wolf from



the door. Unemployed Indians want work, and do not desire to be a burden on public charity.

The very appalling distress, starvation and poverty which unemployed Indians are undergoing to-day are beyond description. The authorities should be urged to find a place for Indian unemployed in any scheme of relief work.

On November 28 a "raid" was conducted on Indian shops in Maritzburg and many of the Indian storekeepers donated provisions and groceries. The total quantity collected was 10½ bags of rice, 17 bags of mealie meal, 3 bags of salt, 1 bag of dholl, 3 bags of flour, 3 bags of potatoes and onions, and sundry articles. The Committee expresses its gratefulness to all those who cheerfully donated articles of food.

The Relief Committee has made an application to the City Council for a further grant, and it is hoped that help will be given to enable the Committee to continue its work of assisting those who are placed in unfortunate circumstances.

A letter has also been addressed to the City Council to favourably consider the question of employing Indians on relief work.

I am happy to feel that the Relief Committee has been doing good work in assisting the suffering humanity, and they are to be congratulated on the success that has attended their efforts. I am deeply sensible of the help that I have received from the Chairman of the Committee (Rev. A. J. Choonoo) in my duties as Secretary. I am also not unmindful of the co-operation I received from Messrs. F. Zareeb, R. Manickam, R. P. Naidu, Umar Singh, G. Zachariah, V. George, M. D. Pillay and other willing workers.

Mr. R. N. Moodley was ever ready in placing his car at our disposal whenever urgent relief cases had to be investigated, and relief given. Our sincere thanks are due to him.

### Resolutions

The meeting passed the following resolutions:—

1. This mass meeting held under the auspices of the Maritzburg Indian Unemployment Relief Committee, respectfully begs to point out that no cognisance is taken by the authorities of the distress prevailing among Indians caused through unemployment and their unsympathetic attitude has had an effect of influencing both municipalities and private bodies of still restricting Indian spheres of livelihood. It therefore appeals to the Minister of Labour that as Indians are South African nationals he may extend the same facilities in regard to relief works and subsidies that are granted to the coloured people.

2. That this meeting hereby places on record its deep sense of gratitude to the Pietermaritzburg Town Council for assistance to Indian unemployed but it respectfully requests that work should be found for the Indian unemployed and that in any relief schemes Indians should be recognised in the same way as Europeans and Coloureds. As most of the Indians are born in South Africa, this meeting suggests that the Town Council might approach the Government for the necessary subsidy.

3. To all employers of Indian labour the Maritzburg Indian Unemployment Relief Committee is profoundly grateful for providing means of livelihood. It submits that the incidence of unemployment has the same effect in the distress that follows in its wake as it has on other sections of the community, and therefore in any scheme of re-organisation and retrenchment past services of Indians ought to be taken into the fullest consideration.

The meeting authorises that these resolutions be forwarded to the Agent-General. Election of Committee then took place.

The Ribben's bakery donated over 100 loaves of large bread, which was distributed among those of the unemployed present. The meeting expressed its thanks to the Ribben's bakery.

## Interviews With The Mahatma

From the replies given by Sir Samuel Hoare to questions in the House of Commons it would appear that Mahatma Gandhi is under a restriction at present to discuss the question of untouchability alone with those who are interested in it. But Sir Samuel added that letters advising the Mahatma to give up civil disobedience would also be freely admitted. The question then arises: if letters in this sense are admissible, why not talks and interviews? Surely there are enough leaders in the country whom Government can rely upon to use their influence only in the direction of dissuading him from the movement. If any such expresses a desire to be allowed to have private talks with the Mahatma on the political situation, Government ought in reason to extend permission to him to do so, without the gaol authorities thrusting their presence on the interviewer. The Mahatma will naturally have many things to consider before he can consent to an abandonment, and a conversation in regard to them must necessarily be of a strictly confidential nature. Will Government then be agreeable to let conversations proceed away from the gaoler? Perhaps Sir Samuel Hoare's reply implies this. In any case a public statement on this subject would be very desirable. If Government will give this facility, they will have removed at least part of the difficulties which now make a search for a way out of the present impasse altogether impossible.—*Servant of India.*

## Mahatma Gandhi's Statement

### Removal Of Untouchability

(Continued from last week)

#### II.

A correspondent, in spite of having received a liberal education, suggests that before *Harijans* are put on a level with caste-Hindus, they should become fit for such reception; shed their dirty habits, give up eating carrion; and another goes the length of saying that Bhangis and Chamars who are engaged in what he considers are "dirty occupations" should give them up. These critics forget that castemen are responsible for whatever bad habits are to be observed amongst the *Harijans*. The so-called higher castes have deprived them of facilities for keeping themselves clean and also the incentive for doing so. As for the occupation of scavenging and tanning, they are no more dirty than many other occupations I can name. What may be admitted is that these occupations like several others are carried on in a dirty manner. That again is due to the high-handed indifference and criminal neglect of the "high-castes." I can say from personal experience that both scavenging and tanning can be done in a perfectly healthy and clean manner. Every mother is a scavenger in regard to her own children and every student of modern medicine is a tanner inasmuch as he has to dissect and skin human carcasses. But we consider theirs to be sacred occupations. I submit that the ordinary scavenger's and the tanner's occupations are no less sacred and no less useful than those of mothers and medical men. We shall go wrong if castemen regard themselves as patrons distributing favours to the *Harijans*. Whatever is done now

by the caste Hindus for the *Harijans* will be but a tardy reparation for the wrongs done to them for generations, and if now they have to be received in their existing state, as they must be received, it is a well deserved punishment for the past guilt. But there is this certain satisfaction that the very act of receiving them with open hearts would be a sufficient incentive to cleanliness and the castemen will for their own comfort and convenience provide *Harijans* with facilities for keeping themselves clean.

It is well to remind ourselves of what wrongs we have heaped upon the devoted heads of *Harijans*. Socially they are lepers. Economically they are worse than slaves. Religiously they are denied entrance to places we miscall "houses of God." They are denied the use, on the same terms as the castemen; of public roads, public schools, public hospitals, public wells, public taps, public parks and the like, and in some cases their approach within a measured distance is a social crime and in some other rare enough cases their very sight is an offence. They are relegated for their residence to the worst quarters of cities or villages where they practically get no social services. Caste Hindu lawyers and doctors will not serve them as they do other members of society. Brahmins will not officiate at their religious functions. The wonder is that they are at all able to eke out an existence or that they still remain within the Hindu fold. They are too downtrodden to rise in revolt against their suppressors.

I have recalled these tragic and shameful facts in order to make the workers vividly realise the implications of the Yeravda Pact. It is only ceaseless effort that can raise these downtrodden fellow beings from degradation, purify Hinduism and raise the whole Hindu society and with it the whole of India.

Let us not be stunned by this simple recital of the wrongs. If the demonstration during the Fast Week was a genuine expression of repentance on the part of caste Hindus all will be well, and every *Harijan* will soon feel the glow of freedom. But before this much-desired end can be achieved the message of freedom will have to be carried to the remotest village. Indeed the work in the village is far more difficult than in the big cities where it is possible quickly to mobilise public opinion. Now that there is the All-India Anti-Untouchability League workers should work in co-ordination with that League. And here I would like to recall what Dr. Ambedkar told me. He said, "Let there be no repetition of the old method when the reformer claimed to know more of the requirements of his victims than the victims themselves," and therefore, he added, "tell your workers to ascertain from the representatives of the *Harijans* what their first need is and how they would like it to be satisfied. Joint refreshments are good enough by way of demonstration, but they may be overdone. There is a flavour of patronage about them. I would not attend them myself. The more dignified procedure would be to invite us to ordinary social functions without any fuss. Even temple entry, good and necessary as it is, may wait. The crying need is the raising of the economic status and decent behaviour in the daily contact." I must not repeat here some of the harrowing details given by him from his own bitter experiences. I felt the force of his remarks. I hope every one of my readers will do likewise.

Many suggestions have been sent to me for adoption by the reformers. One is a repetition of what Swami Shradhdhanandji used to repeat so often, namely, that every Hindu should have in his home a *Harijan* who would be for all practical purposes a member of the family. The second comes from a non-Hindu friend deeply interested in India's welfare. He says that every well-to-do Hindu should bear the expense of giving, if possible under his own observation, higher education to a *Harijan* young man or girl so that these after finishing their education might work for the uplift of fellow-*Harijans*.

Both the suggestions are worthy of consideration and adoption. I would ask all who have fruitful suggestions to make to pass them on to the newly established League. Correspondents should recognise my limitations. From behind the prison gates, I can only tender advice to the League and the people. I can take no part in the real execution of plans. They should also recognise that my opinions, based as they must be on insufficient data, and often on secondhand information, are liable to revision in the light of new facts and should therefore be received with caution.

Though it is now past history I would devote a paragraph to the objection raised by a correspondent and even voiced in suppressed tones in the press. Referring to the political part of the Pact they ask, "What have you gained by it? The *Harijans* have surely got much more than the Prime Minister gave." Well, that is exactly the gain. My opposition to the decision was that it gave stone instead of bread. This Pact has given bits of bread. I personally would have rejoiced with Dr. Moonje if the *Harijans* had got all the seats allotted to the Hindus. That would have been the greatest gain to caste-Hindus and Hinduism. What I wanted and what I still want is their complete merger in the caste-Hindus and the latter's in the former. It is my deliberate opinion, not likely to be altered by any fresh Pact that may come to light, that the more the suppressors give to the suppressed the more they gain. They gain *pro tanto* discharge from overdue debts. Unless the caste Hindus approach the question in that humble, penitent, religious and right spirit, the remaining part of the Pact will never be observed in the spirit that seemed to pervade Hindu society during the Fast week.

I would like to tender my congratulations to those Princes who have opened their State temples to the *Harijans* and have otherwise proclaimed banishment of untouchability from their States. If I may say it, they have thereby done some penance on their own behalf and their people. I hope that the Hindus residing in these States will carry out the terms of these proclamations and so fraternise with them as to make the *Harijans* feel that they never were the despised outcastes of Hindu humanity. We are too near the scene of tragedy to realise that this canker of untouchability has travelled far beyond its prescribed limits and has sapped the foundations of the whole nation. The touch-me-not spirit pervades the atmosphere. If therefore this white ant is touched at its source, I feel sure that we shall soon forget the differences with regard to caste and caste and religion and religion and begin to believe that even as all Hindus are one and indivisible; so are all Hindus, Mussalmans, Sikhs, Parsees, Jews and Christians, branches of the same parent tree. Though religions are many, Religion is one. That is the lesson I would have us learn from the campaign against untouchability. And we will learn it, if we prosecute it in the religious spirit with a determination that will not be resisted.

(To be continued)

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## Sir Syed Ali Imam

### Reminiscences Of The Dead Patriot

(BY ST. NIHAL SINGH.)

Sir Syed Ali Imam had a manner that allayed suspicion—disarmed hostility.

I recollect with considerable amusement how he won me over at our first meeting. Until then I had looked upon him as somewhat of a Muslim separatist. With my hatred of any device that strengthened the fissiparous tendency in India, I had therefore, feared that that meeting might prove to be an encounter. A few minutes of conversation, however, made me realize that whatever part he might have played in the agitation that finally resulted in the political isolation of his co-religionists in our country, he was a nationalist at heart.

This meeting occurred in 1915. Sir Ali had gone to England after laying down the reins of his office as the Law Member of the Governor-General's Council.

It was, I clearly recollect, the day before he was due to leave England. He had just entered into a matrimonial alliance with a Roman Catholic lady. The fact that he had been willing to bow to her wishes in respect of the fulfilment of certain rites prescribed by her religion arrested my attention. It showed to me that he was no narrow-minded bigot—that he could see things from an angle of vision that was not his own—that he could make concessions even to other people's prejudices.

The very circumstances in which we met, too, disposed me in his favour. He invited me to join a tea party that was being given in his honour at the National Club. Had he been a stickler for formality he would have asked his host—Syed Hussain—to issue the invitation. He waived all ceremony, however. Syed Hussain was a kinsman of his—knew me—and would not mind my being of the company. He therefore sat down in his temporary home in London and, explaining the circumstances, asked me to meet him at Syed Hussain's tea table.

I recall that I was somewhat late in arriving. Syed Hussain's guests had ranged themselves round the tables and the tea was about to be served to them. I took a chair which had been left vacant for me next to Mr. A. G. Gardiner, then Editor of *The Daily News*—to which paper I had contributed off and on for several years.

The party proved to be most informal. Sir Ali did not need any coaxing to tell us facts about administration in India that interested us all.

"Lord Hardinge governed India with the aid of the police," he remarked, beaming with satisfaction at the accomplishment of a Government of which he had been a member—an important member. "He had not hesitated to drain India of troops and send them to the front. Every one in India knew that the country had been drained of troops. Only civilians turned over-night into soldiers had been hurried out to take the place of the Regular Army sent overseas. Yet not a soul stirred. There was no disturbance anywhere. India remained steady."

Gardiner and one or two other Britons present drank in every word that fell from Sir Ali's lips. They soon found that he was not indulging in reminiscences of this kind without purpose. With hardly a break he turned these recollections into a thesis for Indian self-government.

Some one at the table said something about the differences between the Hindus and Muslims:

Immediately, the Nationalist jumped out of Sir Ali's heart. He let the Britons know that the quarrels in India were no more than tiffs between brothers—that India was not the only country where various sections of people were at logger-heads with one another—that there was no cure for internecine quarrels in India quite so effective as self-government.

I was amazed at this talk. I had expected to find a "hard-boiled" Muslim separatist in Sir Ali Imam. I found him instead to be a fervent Nationalist in temperament—in outlook—in aspirations.

(To be continued)

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