

AAQ 52. G.B

SELECTIONS FROM THE
SMUTS PAPERS

VOLUME II

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EDITED BY

W. K. HANCOCK

*Professor of History at the Australian National
University, Canberra*

AND

JEAN VAN DER POEL

Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Cape Town



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211 From Lord Milner

Vol. 2, no. 68

High Commissioner's Office
Johannesburg
30 January 1903

Private

Dear Mr Smuts, I am writing to ask whether you would be willing to serve on the Legislative Council.¹ It is intended to increase this body to 28 or 30 members.

There will be a small majority of officials, as we do not pretend, at the present stage, to give complete popular government. It is only a first step. The power and the responsibility will still rest with the representatives of His Majesty's Government, but we are anxious to have a number of members who will act as spokesmen of the different sections of the people.

In that capacity I need hardly say that you will be entirely free. The Government nominates because there is as yet no machinery of election, but in its unofficial nominees it seeks to find, not agents of its own policy, but representative men who will acquaint it with the views and wishes of the population. In that respect it is their belief that the unofficial members can render great service to the country.

The Council will meet about the end of March at Pretoria. It is not expected to sit for more than three months at the most. Members will not be paid any salary, but there will be a liberal allowance—£500—for expenses. Yours very truly,
Milner

212 To Lord Milner

Vol. 2, no. 7

From Botha, de la Rey and Smuts to Milner. The original is an unsigned draft in Smuts's handwriting.

Box 1092
Pretoria

6 February 1903

Your Excellency, While we thank Your Excellency for the honour you have done us and the confidence you have shown in us in privately asking us whether we would be willing to serve on the Legislative Council, we deem it our duty to Your Excellency's Government, to ourselves, and to the people

¹ See Vol. I p. 599, note 1.

whom we are asked to represent on the Council, to address the following remarks to Your Excellency.

It is our earnest desire to co-operate with Your Excellency in promoting the welfare of the country and the growth of a good understanding between the various classes of its people. But we assure Your Excellency that we have grave misgivings as to whether this proposed Council will promote that welfare or good understanding.

We recognize that the time has not come for popular representative institutions and we would be the last persons in the world to unduly press the Government on that matter. But we doubt whether the time has come for even a nominated Legislature.

A Legislature, even of the nominated type, means public discussion of many of the topics on which public feeling is still in an unhealthy state of irritability. It means the declaration of public men and possibly of party leaders in favour of lines of legislation and administration to which the Government may be averse. It means therefore the public excitation and stimulation of all those passions which it is the sincere wish of every true friend of the country to see quietly die out. What the new Colonies specially want is a cessation from all political strife, a period of quiet rest and recuperation, from which they may in good time arise with kindlier memories of the past and more hopefulness and faith in the future. It cannot be denied that in the short period which has elapsed since the conclusion of the war great progress in that direction has already been made.

But we feel profoundly that all this good work may, nay almost certainly will, be jeopardized by this Legislative Council, which will throw almost every apple of discord into the arena. If it were possible to constitute a Legislative Council without politics or politicians, this evil might be averted; but that possibility is not worth discussion.

The existing nominated Councils in this country¹ have not been such a success as to make one hopefully disposed towards the future of this nominated Legislature, which will reproduce on an exaggerated scale the defects of the existing Councils. We fear that this body will create more irritation and grievances

¹ The second Houses in the Cape Colony and Natal.

Botha,
Smuts,
De la Rey
to Milner
6/2/03

than it will remedy and that its inauguration will soon be followed, among those classes of the community that have clamoured for it, by a dangerous agitation for its abolition and the substitution for it of representative institutions.

After all, the true position is quite clear and should be frankly faced by the Government—for the present at any rate. Notwithstanding this Legislature the power and responsibility will rest with the Government and the Government could very well dispense with it and acquaint itself in official and unofficial ways with the wishes of the population. Popular opposition in the Council will only accentuate the responsibility of the Government in pressing for unpopular measures, and will in no way lessen it; So long as the Government honestly tries to do its duty it is bound to be supported by the general population, even though it may occasionally make mistakes. That is the position as it exists today, and as it may very well be continued for some time to come.

We would therefore suggest to Your Excellency the extreme desirability of postponing for six months or a year longer the calling together of this Legislative Council.

If, notwithstanding our suggestion, Your Excellency decides that the Legislative Council should be constituted without delay, then we would request Your Excellency kindly to give us the honour of an interview in order to discuss with Your Excellency some of the questions arising out of our invitation to serve on the Council. We have the honour to be, Your Excellency's obedient servants

213 Circular

Vol. 2, no. 8

Circular letter from Botha, de la Rey and Smuts to representative Afrikaners in the Transvaal. Original is a draft in Smuts's handwriting.

Bus 1092, Pretoria
7 Februari 1903

WelEd. Heer en Vriend, Wij wenschen U mede te deelen dat wij door zijn Excellentie Lord Milner zetels zijn aangeboden op den Wetgevenden Raad, welke aan het einde van Maart a.s. zitting te Pretoria zal nemen. Volgens informatie zal dit lichaam bestaan uit omtrent 30 leden, waarvan de meerderheid officiële leden der Regeering en regeerings ambtenaren zal

Botha, Smuts
Delivered to
Milner
6/2/03

zijn, terwijl omtrent 14 zetels bestemd zijn voor non-officiële leden, waarvan weer 6 voor de Boeren en de andere 8 zeker voor Engelsche leden bestemd zijn. Wij zijn geïnformeerd dat voor 4 der 6 zetels uitnodigingen zijn uitgezonden; drie aan onszelf en één aan den heer Andries Cronjé van Potchefstroom; de andere twee zullen nog aangeboden worden aan personen wier namen ons niet zijn medegedeeld.

Wij worden gevraagd niet in onze persoonlijke hoedanigheid, want dan zou de beslissing voor ons zeer gemakkelijk zijn, maar als voormannen en vertegenwoordigers van de Boerenbevolking. Als zoodanig wenschen wij niets te doen dat niet overeenkomt met de waarachtige belangen van ons volk, en daarom wenden wij ons tot U en onze andere oude vrienden en kameraden ten einde U en hen over deze gewichtige zaak te raadplegen.

Wat ons persoonlijk betreft mogen wij eerlijk en oprecht zeggen dat wij geen verlangen hebben eenige betrekking te aanvaarden en wij zouden ons liefst uit zoodanige dingen willen houden; en wij worden in dit gevoelen gesterkt door het feit dat uit 30 leden wij drie misschien de eenige vertegenwoordigers der Boerenbevolking zullen zijn, en drie in een raad van dertig leden zullen maar bedroefd weinig kunnen uitrichten; ook zouden wij ons blootstellen aan allerhande verdenking en misverstand. Wanneer wij op gemelden raad zouden gaan en per slot van rekening niets voor ons volk konden doen, dan zouden er mogelijk lieden zijn die de blaam op ons zouden willen leggen. Daarom zouden wij persoonlijk maar liefst uit zulk een lichaam willen blijven.

Maar aan den anderen kant zijn wij nog steeds bereid ons volk op alle mogelijke wijze te dienen en zullen wij niet aan onze persoonlijke gevoelens denken wanneer het volk wenscht dat wij voor zijn belangen moeten werken. Nu is er het gevaar dat, zoo wij weigeren op den raad te gaan, de overheid daaruit zou kunnen afleiden dat de Boeren totaal weigeren om met haar samen te werken en zal die afleiding tot nadeel van ons volk kunnen misbruikt worden. Ook is er het gevaar dat, indien wij weigeren op den raad te gaan, mannen uit ons midden gevraagd zullen worden en ook zullen aannemen, die misschien niet in de ware belangen van ons volk zullen handelen, die als Boerenvertegenwoordigers ons volk zouden

kunnen compromitteeren, en gebruikt konden worden om ons volk nog dieper te vernederen, te verdeelen en te benadeelen. Het zou alleen zijn om een zoodanig gevaar te voorkomen en om de naam en de eer van ons volk zuiver te houden, al kunnen wij niets anders doen, dat wij ons de benoeming op een raad, die niet door het volk gekozen maar door de Regeering benoemd wordt, zouden laten welgevallen.

Wij wenschen uw eerlijke en oprechte opinie te hooren of U denkt dat wij de benoeming behooren aan te nemen of niet. Er is geen tijd of gelegenheid om het publiek te raadplegen, maar wij drukken het vertrouwen uit dat U uwe vrienden in het privaat hierover ook zal raadplegen en ons zoo spoedig mogelijk uwe gevoelens zal mededeelen.

Het is ons wensch om, wat wij ook doen of laten, niets zonder ons volk te doen, en daarom raadplegen wij in deze ernstige zaak zooveel onzer oude vrienden als mogelijk. Met groete en heilbede, Blijven wij, Steeds getrouw de uwen

L. B.

J. H. de la R.

J. C. S.

TRANSLATION

Box 1092
Pretoria

7 February 1903

Dear Sir and Friend, We wish to inform you that we have been offered, by His Excellency Lord Milner, seats on the Legislative Council, which will meet at the end of March in Pretoria. According to our information this body will consist of about thirty members, of whom the majority will be official members of the Government and government functionaries, while about fourteen seats are intended for non-official members, of which again six are intended for the Boers and the other eight for English members. We are informed that invitations have been sent out for four of the six seats; three to ourselves and one to Mr Andries Cronjé¹ of Potchefstroom; the other

¹ Andries Petrus Jhannes Cronjé, brother of General P. A. Cronjé (q.v.), was a Commandant during the Anglo-Boer War. He surrendered when Potchefstroom fell on 11 June 1900 and in 1901 began to raise 'National Scouts', i.e. ex-members of the Boer forces who took service under the British military authorities. He accepted the invitation from Lord Milner to sit on the Transvaal Legislative Council.

two are still to be offered to persons whose names have not been communicated to us.

We have not been invited in our personal capacity, for then the decision would be very easy for us, but as leaders and representatives of the Boer population. As such we wish to do nothing that does not accord with the true interests of our people, and therefore we turn to you and our other old friends and comrades in order to consult you and them about this weighty matter.

As far as we personally are concerned, we can honestly and sincerely say that we have no desire to assume any position and we should prefer to keep out of such things; and we are strengthened in this feeling by the fact that among thirty members we three would perhaps be the only representatives of the Boer population, and three in a council of thirty members will be able to achieve precious little; we should also expose ourselves to all kinds of suspicion and misunderstanding. If we should go on to the said Council and in the long run be unable to do anything for our people, then there would possibly be people who would want to put the blame on us. We should therefore personally prefer to remain out of such a body.

But, on the other hand, we are still prepared to serve our people in every possible way and we shall not consider our personal feelings if the people wish us to work for their interests. Now there is a danger that, if we refuse to go on the Council, the authorities would be able to conclude that the Boers refuse entirely to co-operate with them, and this conclusion might be used to the disadvantage of our people. There is also a danger that, if we refuse to go on the Council, men will be invited from among us and will accept, who will perhaps not act in the true interests of our people, who, as representatives of the Boers, may compromise our people and be used to humiliate our people still more deeply, and to divide and injure them. It would only be to prevent such a danger and to keep the name and the honour of our people pure, even if we could do nothing else, that we should consent to appointment to a council which is not elected by the people but appointed by the Government.

We wish to hear your honest and sincere opinion—whether you think that we should accept the appointment or not.

*Botha, Smuts
De la Ruyk
Boer
notables
7/2/03*

There is no time or opportunity to consult the public but we express the hope that you will also consult your friends privately about this and let us know your feeling as soon as possible.

It is our wish, whatever we do or leave undone, to do nothing without our people, and therefore we are in this matter consulting as many of our old friends as possible. With greetings and good wishes, We remain, Always faithfully yours,

L. B.
J. H. de la R.
J. C. S.

214 From Lord Milner

Vol. 2, no. 70
Government House
Bloemfontein
9 February 1903

Messrs. Louis Botha
J. H. de la Rey
J. C. Smuts

Gentlemen, I have the honour to acknowledge your letter of February 6th, which has been forwarded to me at this above address and to thank you for the expression of your desire to co-operate with the Government in promoting the welfare of the country.

The Government is alive to the considerations which you so forcibly urge in favour of postponing an enlargement of the Legislative Council. For my own part I share your anxiety to a very great extent.

But it has appeared to the Government that the counterbalancing advantages of the proposed course greatly outweigh any inconvenience which may result from it.

The fact of laws being passed in an open Council, in which not only will representatives of different sections of the community be able to make their opinions felt, but the Government itself will be able to explain its policy, is calculated not only to prevent mistakes, but to remove misconceptions.

While quite agreeing with you that what the country most wants at present is a cessation of political strife, I am more hopeful than you appear to be of the effect of bringing leading

men of various sections, men with a sense of responsibility, to discuss together matters affecting the general welfare. The questions which most press for attention in the immediate future are not so much political (for I believe, as you say, that there is a general willingness to accept for the present the existing form of government) as social and economic. Co-operation in such matters will, I hope, lead to mutual respect and better understanding, and will thus tend rather to soften than to exacerbate the political controversies which are doubtless inevitable in the future.

May I add that my hopes in this respect are greatly strengthened by the tone and spirit of your letter, and by your evident desire to promote the gradual growth of better relations between different sections of the community, so deeply divided from one another by the events of the immediate past.

For these reasons I hope you may be willing to accept the offer which I have made to you on behalf of the Government. In any case I shall be happy to see you, and further to discuss the matter. I fear I cannot be at Johannesburg before late to-morrow evening, but shall have much pleasure in seeing you the following day at 11.30, if that hour is convenient to you. I have the honour to be, Gentlemen, Yours very faithfully,

Milner

215 To Lord Milner

Vol. 2, no. 9

The document in the Smuts Collection is in Smuts's handwriting and is marked: 'True copy, J. C. Smuts'.

Johannesburg
11 February 1903

Your Excellency,

We regret greatly that we do not feel at liberty to accept the invitation to serve on the Legislative Council which Your Excellency has done us the honour of sending us. We have stated our position and difficulties to Your Excellency both in our joint letter of 6 February and in the interview which Your Excellency was good enough to grant us this morning, and we therefore consider it unnecessary to repeat them here. We do not think that we can be of any real service either to the

or was a Transvaal burgher and we will not allow him to get to his home. Surely this is quite contrary to Vereeniging conditions?

I have made personal application to the Resident Magistrate here and that functionary, with true official *morgue*, told me that he had sent the papers to Pretoria 'from which an answer might be expected in two or three weeks'. Not a word of regret for the poor fellow eating his heart out here.

The man's name is Hendrik Ten Kate of Potchefstroom. He is, I can testify, an honest, sober, hard-working fellow. I appeal to you to help him if you can for I cannot tell you how much I feel for him.

I will write no more though there is *much* I should like to write were conditions favourable. But do get poor Ten Kate his rights. Yours very truly,

John X. Merriman

220 To J. X. Merriman

Vol. 2, no. 129

Box 1081

Pretoria

26 May 1903

Dear Mr Merriman, I have been delaying my answer to your letter in reference to Ten Kate, because I had hoped to tell you the result of my representations to the Government. However the final answer has not yet come; so I shall in the meantime tell you how the case stands.

The Vereeniging Agreement makes it impossible for the Government to keep burgher prisoners of war out of the country. Unfortunately the Government take it upon themselves to decide who are and who are not burghers. And, as you know, they have decided that naturalization just before the war and presumably in view of war was a mere form which failed to effect its object. I have, however, represented to Sir A. Lawley the extreme hardship of applying such a rule to a case like that of Ten Kate and he has promised favourable consideration of the case. As soon as a definite answer comes I will let you know.

Things up here wear a rather black look. The Government are trying to tackle problems far beyond their powers and the

result is that the general population is more and more splitting up into factions—over the Native question, the Chinese question, the Municipal question, the School question.¹ If this continues much longer the fine music of Imperialism will surely be drowned by the creaking of the Parish Pump! Yours very faithfully,

J. C. Smuts

221 To J. X. Merriman

Vol. 2, no. 130

Box 1081

Pretoria

29 May 1903

Dear Mr Merriman, The Chief Secretary for Permits writes me that so far back as 6 April ult. instructions had been sent to the Permit Secretary at Cape Town to issue a permit to Mr Ten Kate. As Sir A. Lawley was still considering the matter a fortnight ago I do not quite follow the development of the matter. However I hope that Ten Kate will now be able to return to his family.

Our Legislative Council has so far excited very little public attention. The Councillors as well as the public know that they are mere puppets in a play in which Destiny is the one real actor.

During the last months I have had many letters from Liberal friends in England who represent that our apparent contentedness (which they say cannot be real) is doing our cause as well as the Liberal cause lots of harm, and that it would be advisable for us to growl a bit in view of the approaching General Election. I cannot agree with them. At critical times the English electorate and the English press, controlled by financial magnates, will leave us in the lurch, while the Liberal Party seems to me a broken reed to rely on. The best appears to be to hasten responsible government by our quiet demeanour and thereby to obtain control of the management of our own affairs. Don't you think so too? Yours very faithfully,

J. C. Smuts

The originals of the letters from Botha to Milner (222 and 223) are drafts in Smuts's handwriting.

¹ See 226.

Smuts to Merriman
29/5/03

Jenkyns: *British Rule and Jurisdiction beyond the Seas*; interesting from legal point.

225 From J. X. Merriman

Vol. 2, no. 57

Schoongezicht

7 June 1903

My dear Smuts, I was glad to get your note and thank you for all you have done in the matter of Ten Kate; before I got your letter the poor fellow got his permit and free pass and finally was allowed to take the oath and has, I hope, by this time rejoined his family. His case was one that threw a somewhat lurid light on policy and practice.

I wish I could write to you fully but the detestable system of legalized espionage prevents me from doing so.

There is nothing to prevent me from saying, however, that this new move of Chamberlain has taken everyone by surprise.¹ You cannot set the clock back without damaging the works—as he will too late find out.

I saw your good father the other day at Malmesbury looking the very picture of a sturdy yeoman. We begin our session next Friday. I wish you were one of us but you are quite right to stick to your business and try to rebuild the ruins of society.

Wishing you all sorts of good fortune, Believe me, Yours truly,

John X. Merriman

226 To L. T. Hobhouse

Vol. 2, no. 12

This letter, signed by Botha but written by Smuts, was addressed to L. T. Hobhouse. It was published in *The Times* on 15 July 1903, accompanied by a letter from Leonard Courtney recommending its publication.

Box 1092, Pretoria

13 June 1903

Dear Mr Hobhouse, I have delayed rather long before writing to you; the fact of the matter is that one does not like to express an opinion on events before one is at some distance from them and can discern their effects. And although I personally never

¹ His retirement from the Colonial Secretaryship to pursue Tariff Reform.

had a doubt about the meaning of Mr Chamberlain's visit to this country, still I did not like expressing my opinion while there was yet a chance of matters turning out better than I had anticipated.

However there is or can be no doubt any longer that, at any rate so far as the Transvaal is concerned, Mr Chamberlain's visit to South Africa has been a dismal failure, and has left matters worse than he found them. We did our best to gather at Pretoria at the time of his visit all the most influential and representative burghers of the Transvaal in order that he might have an opportunity of acquainting himself at first hand with the views and sentiments of the people. We saw him only once in a joint body as a public deputation. For the rest he saw none of us and preferred to gather his information and advice from quarters about which the less I say the better. At the public meeting he adopted a line of reply which could not but be considered insulting and which was so considered by everybody present. When we prayed for amnesty he pointed out how we had sjambokked and shot *our* rebels; when we asked for equal rights for Dutch and English, he asked us whether that was in our Charter—the conditions of surrender at Vereeniging; when we asked that, in view of the impoverishment and devastation of the country, no war debt be laid on the country until the population had been given self-government and the people's voice could be heard thereon, he did not even deign to reply to us. His great taunt was our ingratitude and non-recognition of the fact that the Government was spending 15 millions sterling on the restoration of the country to its pre-war condition. Everybody then and since has been wondering and asking where and how and on whom this vast sum of money has been spent, for there is certainly no public evidence of it, except perhaps in the blue-books which are sent to the Colonial Office for home consumption.

From Pretoria Mr Chamberlain went to Johannesburg and as he was there dealing with men who represented nobody but themselves, unless it be their financial principals in Europe, he seems to have had much easier work in persuading them to assent to this poor country being saddled with a war debt which, in proportion to the white population of the country, is probably one of the largest in the world. Rumour has it—

I repeat it for what it is worth—that even this reluctant assent was only given when dark threats were made of a much larger debt being placed on the country and the mineral assets being withdrawn from public participation and earmarked specially for the payment of the war debt. It thus became a case of Hobson's choice, and there is no doubt now that these individuals with whom Mr Chamberlain conducted these interesting negotiations through Lord Milner unfortunately chose wrongly. However the main point to bear in mind is that an unprecedented war debt was placed on the Transvaal against the express declarations of the burgher representatives and without the consultation or concurrence of a single section of the population of the country. And in the face of this Mr Chamberlain declared at his recent Birmingham meeting that 'the representatives of every class in the Transvaal took upon themselves' this burden of a war debt. As it has been a governing principle of English colonial policy and, as I am told, even law since the American War of Independence that the colonies shall not be taxed without their constitutional assent, I shall be much surprised if the great political parties of Great Britain ratify this strange procedure on the part of Mr Chamberlain.

From Johannesburg Mr Chamberlain went to Bloemfontein, where matters seem to have gone less smoothly and where, equally as at Pretoria, a protest was made against the imposition of a war debt on the country before the grant of representative institutions.

I emphasize these facts because they are bound to exercise great influence on the future politics of the two new colonies.

At Cape Town Mr Chamberlain seems to have felt some misgivings about his policy of 'firmness'. It is needless for me to point out that at this time of day the Boer is thoroughly wide-awake, and that firmness makes as little impression on him as weakness and that the only thing that impresses him is justice and fairness.

While Mr Chamberlain was at Cape Town Lord Milner offered to Generals de la Rey, Smuts, and myself seats on the new Legislative Council. As, however, we could not act in our individual capacity, and as no opportunity could be given us of consulting the burgher population, and as, moreover,

Botha to
Hobhouse
13/6/03

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→ Note: the letter was written by Smuts
but signed by Botha

nothing whatever had been done to give effect to the solemn representations which we had made to Mr Chamberlain at Pretoria, we felt bound to decline this honour. We took, however, the liberty of pointing out to Lord Milner that it was better to face the situation honestly and manfully and that it was undesirable to retain all power in the hands of the Government under the Crown Colony system and to share its responsibility with a nominee Legislative Council; in other words that the Government, having all the power, should also retain all the responsibility, and that there would be no objection to this so long as it continued to govern justly and fairly. The warning to govern justly and fairly seems to have been as little heeded as the warning against a mongrel nominee Legislature.

Well, we have our Legislative Council now, but as I myself declined to sit on it, it is not for me to criticize it. The burgher population however laugh to scorn the very idea that it is represented on that Council.

Botha to
Hobhouse
13/6/03
letter written
by Smuts

The warning which we conveyed to Lord Milner—that the Legislative Council would set the ball of high politics rolling—has come true. One of its very first tasks was the changing of the status of the coloured people, which however the good sense of Sir Richard Solomon negated after it had been solemnly passed. The Government, having avoided one extreme, has now run a rock on the other. As the Municipal franchise was not to be given to the coloured people, no more was it to be given to the overwhelming population of white aliens in this country—in other words the coloured British subject and the white alien should be regarded as equal in this British Colony. The logic of this may be sound, but its policy, in view of the universal opinions of South Africans, is more than questionable; while the situation becomes utterly ridiculous when you remember that it was Lord Milner's advocacy of the cause of the white alien which was the direct cause of the war.

Leaving the Legislative Council alone, I wish to refer very briefly to some other questions of grave importance. The work of the Repatriation Department is a complete and dismal failure. However good the intentions of the Government with this branch of the Administration might have been, still

it cannot be denied that the Repatriation Boards have been struck with a strange powerlessness, for which their composition, in the teeth of our advice and recommendations, has been largely responsible. Lord Milner's despatches about the huge success of this Department are nothing more than a fairy tale. Will you believe it that now, more than twelve months after the conclusion of the war, these boards are still travelling over the country and wasting the public funds in order to apportion the 'free grant' of three millions? No wonder that the burghers have given up all hope of ever having anything given them out of this 'free grant'. Although this relief fund was in the Vereeniging conditions of surrender called a 'free grant', I have not yet met a single burgher in the Transvaal who has received anything free or gratis from the Government, all relief having to be signed for or secured by sureties or promissory notes.

Then there is the School and Language question which we brought to the attention of Mr Chamberlain and which has already in every form been brought to the attention of the Government. But in vain. The Government has imported a number of English educational experts under whose care and instruction the education of the Boer children is now directed to a goal which no Boer professes to foresee or understand. An intensely religious, moral, and conservative people, the Boers find their whole existence torn up by the roots, as it were, their children educated by strange people who may be Romanists or sacerdotalists, and probably are; who do not know their language or modes of thought; who teach the children Dutch, without knowing it; who teach them history which every child knows to be a travesty of the facts, and whose whole influence is unconsciously directed to making plain to the ordinary Boer the gulf which separates him from his conquerors. Do you think that such an educational system, administered too with that red-tape which before was almost unknown in this country, is a factor for conciliation in this country? Do you think the Boers will love and admire their conquerors for openly trying to Anglicize their children and for putting their language on the same footing practically as Zulu, Sesuto or any other foreign language? It sometimes seems to me that the Government has forgotten every lesson of

*Letter to
Hobhouse
13/6/03
letter written
by Smith*

Transvaal history. We have asked for school boards to direct local education along general lines to be supervised by the Education Department. This system, which is only one form of that local self-government which alone suits free and progressive peoples, worked perfectly well all over South Africa before the war. No doubt it is derided by the imported educational experts who are now experimenting with their abstract theories on the Boer children. These experiments will, however, in all probability turn out failures and discredit in the eyes of the people the Government that started them. Free Schools, administered by School Committees nominated by the parents, are now in operation in many parts of the country and are frequented by more than 4,000 children.¹ In these schools the fundamental principle is the equality of English and Dutch; and when you consider that the parents have in these hard times to pay for the teaching of their children in these free schools, while next door the Government school affords gratis education, you can understand with what rooted suspicion they must consider these Government schools.

You see very little writing in the paper on those subjects. The fact is that the Boers are a silent people and would rather suffer in silence than make a parade of their grievances. The grievances that you mostly hear of in the Transvaal are, strangely enough, those of the capitalists and mining magnates. And the particular grievance which is now most popular is the want of Native labour for the mines. Before the war, one did not hear so much of this as of the kindred complaint that the Native labour cost too much. No doubt one of the hopes which these people built on the successful issue of the war was that of cheap Native labour. Unfortunately this hope has turned out a complete delusion. The Natives are there right enough, but their suspicions have been thoroughly roused; most of them have made much money out of the military during the war

¹ These were the C.N.O. (Christelijk-Nationaal Onderwijs) schools set up by the Afrikaners in the Transvaal and the Orange River Colonies because, in the Government schools, the use of Dutch as a medium of instruction hardly found a place and because parents had no share in their control. Assisted by funds from the Netherlands, arranged for by Dr N. Mansvelt and others, some 200 C.N.O. schools were set up under the control of a central committee to conduct examinations and inspections, and local committees elected by parents. These schools played an important part in the preservation of the Dutch language and the stimulation of Afrikaner nationalism.

*Letter to
Hobhouse
13/6/03
letter written
by Smith*

and are now quietly waiting for the fulfilment of the many other promises by which the military secured their co-operation in the late war.

So now the cry is all for cheap Chinese labour. In other words, the vastly preponderant black population of South Africa must now be reinforced by hordes of the yellow races from Asia in order that the mining ventures of the Transvaal may pay dividends. These financial gentlemen are not deterred by the prospect that such a step will degrade South Africa for ever and prevent it from being a country for white immigrants and finally make it once more a black man's land. What feeling have they for South Africa or the coming generations of its people? We are convinced of their utter and naked selfishness; and what is more, we are convinced of their stupidity and want of foresight in all matters of politics. Their general interference in the politics of South Africa from the days of the Jameson Raid up to the present contributes one unbroken record of stupendous blundering and miscalculation, and we do not think that the destinies of this sub-continent ought to be entrusted to such people.

Unfortunately, however reluctantly I say it, I have no doubt that the Government of this country is almost completely dictated by the mining magnates. And that makes the situation all the more serious for the general population of the country, English as well as Dutch.

You see in what a difficult position my colleagues and myself are placed. If we sit still while the country is going to the dogs, we fail in our most important duty to the State. If, on the other hand, we criticize the policy of the Government and those who stand behind the Government, we are branded as agitators and are taunted with starting a revolutionary propaganda. However it seems that the time has come for us to speak out and not by our silence to appear to acquiesce in the wrong course affairs are taking.

It will be with great reluctance that we shall do so. God only knows what a chance this Government had of winning the respect and the confidence of the Boer population. A singular misconception of their character, however, has led the Government into a policy of firmness and assimilation, which has completely precluded all possibility of the Boers revising their

Botha to
Hobhouse
13/6/03
letter written
by Smuts

notions of British policy. It is to them still the same policy which drove their forefathers from the Cape and which has drenched South Africa in blood and tears. If they were prepared to have an open mind after the war, I am afraid they are less so today. If the Government had started the administration of the country on broad and statesmanlike lines and on the democratic principle of trusting the people, then nothing would have been too great for the silent forces of respect, co-operation and conciliation to have accomplished in time. Instead, however, the whole policy of the Government has been inspired by fear and distrust and cast along those narrow bureaucratic lines which are equally abhorrent to all colonials and South Africans.

The consequence of all this is that the Transvaal is today in a most unhappy and dissatisfied temper. The English, even more than the Dutch, are bitterly complaining. The only redeeming feature of the situation is that in this common adversity English and Boer are being drawn together; but it is not a work of which the Government has any reason to be proud.

You must not infer from all this that the Boers are seething with discontent. There is a wonderful calm everywhere observable. All their energies are engaged in the work of rebuilding their homes and repairing the losses of the war. Nothing is more touching and inspires me with more hope for the future of this country than the whole-hearted way in which the people have thrown themselves into this work. The summer harvest was a failure because of the severe drought, but even now as much ploughing has been done for the winter as probably in any previous year. Yours very faithfully,
s. L. B.

227 To H. C. Bredell

Vol. 2, no. 131

Hermanus C. Bredell was President Kruger's private secretary during his exile. On 28 April 1903 Smuts cabled to Kruger urging him to return to South Africa and live in the Cape Colony where no permit would be necessary. Bredell's reply is not in the Smuts Collection.

Box 1081

Pretoria

28 Juni 1903

Lieve Manie, Een paar weken geleden ontving ik jou brief in antwoord op mijn telegram. Uit jou brief kan ik goed zien wat

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