

NATIVE ECONOMIC COMMISSION.
NATURELLE EKONOMIESE KOMMISSIE.

Sitting at

Pietermaritzburg,

8th April 1931.

Chief Ngubane

Mbata

Rev. Shembe

Chief Solomon

Jones

Spies

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

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NATIVE ECONOMIC COMMISSION

PIETERMARITZBURG 8th APRIL 1931 9.55 A.M.

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EIGHTYSIXTH PUBLIC SITTING

PRESENT:

Dr. J. E. Holloway, (Chairman),

Major W. H. Anderson,
Dr. H. C. M. Fourie,
Mr. F. A. W. Lucas,

Mr. A. M. Mostert,
Dr. A. W. Roberts,

Mr. C. Faye, (Secretary).

CHIEF NJENGABANTU NGUBANE, (Graytown District, Umvoti)

Interpreted through Mr. Faye.

called and examined:

Witness: I am very glad to see here today this Government Commission, which has come to enquire into matters concerning our affairs. I will come at once to the point which I wish to make before you, gentlemen.

When the Prince of Wales visited Pietermaritzburg and we were called up to be present at the function which was held in his honour by Natives, we observed that, in his address to us, he urged that the Natives should have their children educated in the interests of the children themselves. That, gentlemen, gave me an inspiration. I have been bitterly opposed to the establishment of schools in my area of tribal jurisdiction, but when I heard the Heir to the Throne giving the Natives that advice, I thought to myself, "Well, I shall establish my own school rather than have a school established by anyone else in my land", and I proceeded to do that. I got formal permission from the Authorities, and have it in writing: I am sorry I have not it here now, but I have sent for it. I do not know whether it will arrive in time for me to shew it to you; but what I wish to say is that, as

Chief Ngubane

soon as people who are interested in education noticed I had established a school of my own, I was inundated with requests from various missions - Roman Catholics and several others, - for permission to establish schools in my area; but I have been firm and have refused in every instance.

I have seen long ago that many schools have many teachings and it has been impossible for me to distinguish between what may be regarded as right teaching and wrong teaching; there is serious conflict in the teachings of the various mission bodies that establish schools in the Native areas. That is the reason why I had a school of my own started.

I prefer to have the guidance of the Government through the Department of Native Affairs in matters concerning education and I would plead with the Commission to protect me against those persons who are clamouring at my door for admission to my land. If more schools are to be established in my area, I wish them to be established in the same way as the one to which I have referred. May I plead with you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Commission, to put in a word with regard to the dipping of our stock with the Authorities. I live in an area which is bushveld, and not only in that area, but in other areas of the same kind, where there is bushveld, cattle this season have become very thin owing to dry weather and scarcity of grazing. The result is that the harassing of the cattle by dipping is helping to kill them off and we are losing what little are left to us. We hope that the Commission will help us in that respect, too, and see that the periods between the dippings are extended somewhat.

Chief Ngubane

Another matter which we wish to bring to your notice, gentlemen, is that our areas are becoming congested; we are finding it increasingly difficult to accommodate Natives who have been obliged to leave farms. Although we chiefs who are present here today - I ~~saw~~ quite a number of chiefs here - have not met together to discuss our evidence, I think at anyrate most of what I have said will be supported by them, were they to be questioned in regard to it.

CHAIRMAN: You refer to right teaching and wrong teaching: will you explain what you mean by right teaching and what you mean by wrong teaching? - I merely give you my impressions; I am a Native and am not acquainted with your methods of reasoning; I am telling you what appears to me to be the position.

Did you have any schools before the Prince of Wales told you to have your children educated? - No, sir.

Did the White men tell you that you ought to have schools? - Yes, sir.

Why is it that you took no notice when the other White men told you and you took notice when the Prince of Wales told you? - When the Heir to the Throne speaks, sir, it makes our hearts warm and then, when our hearts become warm, our eyes begin to see.

Now, with regard to dipping: you will remember the outbreak of East Coast fever all over the country? - Yes, I remember that, sir.

Do you realise that, if dipping is stopped, that disease will come back? - It is manifest, sir.

Now, what is better: to dip cattle and keep some of them, or to stop dipping and lose the lot? - We look to the Authorities and we think that, in a matter of this kind, the

Chief Ngubane

Authorities, seeing perhaps how desperate our position is, may relax the regulations in our favour. I do not say that I urge the abolition of dipping.

You have got one school now: is that school enough for all the children to go to? - Well, sir, it is in its beginnings now, but I notice that it is already too small, and I am enlarging it and, if I require more schools of the same kind, as I said, I shall have them built, with the approval of the Government.

Did you have the school built with your money or your own labour? - Mine all, sir.

The Department pays the salary of the teacher? - Would it were so, sir; I should be glad if the Government would come to my assistance and do that for me.

Do you pay the salary? - Yes. I have been afraid of letting him slip out of my control for fear something unexpected might happen and I would be landed; but if it is safe, I would be glad if the Government would take over the paying of his salary.

How much does he get? - When the school closes for holidays, I give him £8.

Do you give him £8 a quarter? - At present I have only about 50 children there, sir, and I think, counting the shillings as so much per head of those children, the man is well paid.

You pay him £8 when he has worked up to a holiday? - Yes.

How many holidays does this teacher go away for in the year? - I have not fixed a definite time for holidays, sir. He has not received more than £8 for any one year; I have only had him for the past year and this present year; he has not been there two years yet.

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MR. LUCAS: Where did you get your teacher from? - He was from Mpolweni. My school is undenominational.

Do you give the teacher a piece of land for himself? - That I have still to arrange; he will have his garden site, sir.

Do you give him food? - I feed him. We plead with you to look after our interests so that we may live happily in this land.

HEADMAN: LUGUBU MBATA (Chief, Kufe Kwezwe; Msinga District)

called and examined.

Witness: In the Tembu Ward from which I come, there is a school which is recognised by the Government and which is conducted undenominationally. We Natives would be grateful if the conducting of education in Native areas were more firmly under the control of the Government than it is now; we would feel happier about it.

CHAIRMAN: What do you mean by that? - What I mean, sir, is that everything which you White people bring amongst us we look upon as a kind of education; I am now speaking more specifically of matters of administration generally. We would be glad if the Government were to control matters a little bit more closely than is being done now.

What sort of matters do you want the Government to control? - I refer particularly, sir, to the matter of Natives living on farms. These Natives are obliged from time to time - I am not speaking of the whole population, but in regard to individual families, - to leave those farms and seek places elsewhere where they may settle and live. The difficulty in regard to them is to find room in the Native areas. There are far more farm lands in this part of the country than there

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are Native areas, and obviously, with the population increasing generally and with the need for accommodating our people who have to leave the farms, conditions are becoming more and more difficult in the Native areas. I imagine that some people owing to stress of economic pressure, sometimes become so depressed and lose all interest in life as to be tempted even to take their lives. We hear that a person who has become very depressed will commit suicide. It will be a great boon to us if the White people were to migrate generally from farm lands to towns and develop their towns and industrial centres and give us a little more elbow room out in the countryside. In saying that, sir, I know I am stating something which is an impossible thing.

I will not say anything in regard to dipping, Mr. Chairman; ^{you} have already had the statement of the previous witness on that; but may I mention one of the difficulties with which we are faced in that respect; East Coast fever restrictions prevent in many cases the movement of cattle from one area to another. I can quote you an instance of a Native whom I know, whose daughter married someone living near the Drakensberg. The father of that girl has not been able to get his cattle which were to be given as a marriage contribution, because of East Coast ^{fever} regulations. The result is, that it seems to us he might as well not have had a marriageable daughter as well; the usual custom has not been observed and we feel it is as if no daughter had been begotten by him.

I am in agreement with Chief Ngubane, to a great extent, in what he has said concerning education; but I also would tell you something else. Our criticism - that is the criticism of the illiterate Natives - our principal criticism

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of education is that when the children have gone through the schools, they have no definite objective ahead of them; there is no work waiting for them particularly suited for children who have fitted themselves in the way that you White people say our children should become fitted. I do feel, Mr. Chairman, that I am beginning to feel now very much as an inspired preacher does: I have seen parsons get up and preach and look very happy when they are letting off what is in their minds. That is how I feel now that I have been given an opportunity of speaking to you sir, and the other members of the Commission, and I thank you very much for this opportunity.

MR. LUCAS: Have you a demonstrator in your area? - Yes, sir: but he is faced with many difficulties; his work is uphill. We, not long after his appointment, had a bad epidemic of "mkuhlan" (influenza), which killed off many people. Then, after that, we had trouble with the weather. I am speaking now of irrigation plots which exist in our area. In addition to that, there is the further difficulty that the Department of Native Affairs has laid down that the rent for the hiring of the irrigation plots must be paid in advance; going back on a definite instruction which had been issued by the Secretary for Native Affairs in Natal, (Mr. Arthur J. Shepstone) who had said that, on the establishment of these plots for the benefit of the Natives, he wished them to understand that they were not required to pay rent for their plots until they had planted them, reaped their crops and had an opportunity of disposing, if so they wished, of some of their crops in order to get the wherewithal, if

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necessary, to meet the Government due.

What is the rent of one of these plots? - The plots vary in size, sir. Mr. Shepstone laid down that an inspector should be appointed, who would take charge of the assessment of the rent to be paid. We were told by Mr. Shepstone that, in the case of productive plots, we would not be required to pay more than £5 as rent, but, in the case of less productive plots, the rent would go down until the minimum was reached of £1. Mr. Shepstone's system worked very well; but that has now all changed, much to our disappointment. If you were to visit our area, you would find storekeepers, - Europeans, - are growing fat on us by selling the very things which we ought to be producing for ourselves from our own irrigation plots.

CHAIRMAN: What do you mean by non-productive plots? - There is a big difference, sir, between the productiveness of the plots for various reasons; sometimes the Natives will over-irrigate; in other cases they will not irrigate enough. In other cases again they will work their plots out and not put into the ground what has been taken out.

MR. ROBERT: What do they grow? - We plant mealies, we plant peas; we plant beans and other things which the Natives grow.

CHAIRMAN: Do you mean by non-productive plots, plots that give only a small yield? - Yes, sir.

MR. LUCAS: Have you noticed any improvement since the demonstrator came? - No, sir; he is a lazybones.

Why do you not try to get a better one, then? - When I say he is a lazybones, sir, I mean that he expects us to do everything; for example, he has bought a tremendous piece of machinery called a plough; I have not seen such a thing

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before; and he says we must bring, when we want to have it used, sixteen oxen to drag it about. And the result is the thing is lying idle. Please do not misunderstand me; I am not opposed to the teaching of agriculture by persons who have learnt your ways, but I was merely mentioning matters which are difficulties to us. I think it is a very good thing that the Native should be helped in that way; it will benefit the Native, and it shows that the Government bears a goodwill towards us, who are subjects of the Government. I would like to add, in fairness to the demonstrator, that last year we got a small plough - when I say that I only mean comparatively, because it requires six or eight oxen to drag it.

CHAIRMAN: Why do you now have to buy from the trader what you formerly grew yourselves? - It is because we are harassed by the conditions on these plots. If a man is ambitious and progressive and wants to develop a good deal of land, which he is quite capable of developing, he is told he is doing it at the expense of other residents, and is checked. In the case of a man who is not so progressive and who is struggling to make both ends meet - supposing he has not paid the rent within a stipulated time, the Department institutes proceedings against him and the messenger comes along and attaches his stock for the rent.

Who lays that down? - It is laid down by the Department. In the beginning, sir, I worked 8 acres of land - what I was told by the white people was 8 acres of land - and when the time for reaping came, I was able to reap quite enough to pay the Government rent and to have sufficient left over for my own requirements; but since the Department has

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insisted on our paying the rent in advance, I felt it would be impossible for me to pay all the money wanted at the right time. The result is that, during the past four years I have not set foot on the irrigation plots: I have no interest in them at all; although I am so hard pressed now that I think I shall ask for permission to get a small plot during the coming season.

MR. LUCAS: Has that having to pay in advance prevented other people also from getting working plots?— Please pardon me for appearing to be voluble, but the people by whom I have been asked to speak, were I given an opportunity of speaking before you, gentlemen, impressed on me very strongly that I must leave the position very clear indeed before I finish; that I wish to explain that, if a comparison were made with the present state of development of the plots with what it was some years ago, it would be found that the land is not being cultivated to the same extent — when I say that, I am speaking comparatively. There may be some people cultivating it, but it is not being cultivated to the same extent; the people feel they are being held back and, in addition to that, the condition of having to pay rent in advance is acting as a serious handicap to them.

CHAIRMAN: But it is not clear to me. Except by having to pay rent in advance, are there other ways in which they are kept back?— There is the restriction to the amount of land that may be held by any one letholder; there is also the fear that the people are always under that they will be sued by the Government if they are not able to pay their rent in advance. That also makes them limit the amount of land that they take.

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MR. MOSTERT: If you are allowed to pay in arrear, then you can afford it ?- Yes, sir; and we have represented it to the Department.

Cannot you get over it by selling one beast only and getting an advance ?- No, sir; that would be very unpopular. My cattle are just enough to keep me going with my large family. In the past, sir, when we paid at the end of the period, Natives who did not have all the necessary money, much more willingly parted with their stock, because they thought the Government was making a very fair claim on them; but that feeling has gone since the new rule was imposed.

MR. LUCAS: What is the largest number of bags of mealies you get in any one year from 8 acres ?- I cannot tell you sir, because I was always in a hurry to meet the Government rent and the mealies that I had planted first I would, of course, reap first; the result was, when the end of the season came and I had finished my reaping, it was impossible to say how many bags I had got.

Have you ever felt, gentlemen, in your blood a sinking kind of feeling, that there is something mysterious in your neighbourhood which makes you feel apprehensive? That is how I feel just now. I am rather shy about asking a particular question. I would very much like to know who these important looking gentlemen are that I see in front of me, so that I may be able to talk about you when I get home. In wishing you goodbye, gentlemen and thanking you for your patience, may I just whisper a secret to you; the Natives in Natal and Zululand are very perturbed; they are told, in our language, that their cattle are to be burnt; I believe that means they are to be scorched with brands. The Natives are very sceptical about it indeed. They do not know why it has to be done, who has ordered it and what will, in the end, be the result of such scorching. That is my last word to you.

Isiah Shembe

REVEREND ISIAH SEMBE, from Inanda District, (interpreted
by Mr. C. Feyer),

called and examined:

CHAIRMAN: I understand you are the head of the religious community? - Yes, sir.

Yours is an entirely Native Church, without any European leadership? - Yes, sir.

Is the Church derived from any European religious tenets? - I teach them what I myself feel inspired to teach them.

And you have not got your teachings from any European Church? - No, I have not got them from any European Church.

We saw your settlement at Inanda. Have you got followers in other parts of the country? - Yes, sir.

Do all your followers live on land which belongs to your religious denomination? - Some live on my own land and others live elsewhere.

When you say your own land, do you mean farms that you have bought? - Yes, sir.

Are those your own farms? - Yes, sir.

Are they registered in your name? - Yes, sir.

Now, are you a rich man to be able to buy farms? - No, sir.

How do you get money to buy farms? - I receive money from persons who are friendly disposed towards me and I make no discrimination. I raise money among my friends and I also put people on the land which is registered in my name.

Do your followers contribute money towards the buying of these farms? - Yes, sir, when I appeal to them.

Do they look upon that land to which they have contributed money for buying it, as belonging to them? - That

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situation has not arisen, because I always make it abundantly clear when I ask for monetary help that I am getting their help for the purpose of buying land not for them but for myself.

Do you mean, that the people give you money knowing that they are enriching you, or do you mean to enrich the Church of which you are the leader? - I always make it clear what my object is. When I want to buy land for myself, I tell the person whose help I seek that I am buying it for myself and the same with regard to land which I am buying for my followers.

Now, the lands which you have bought, are they registered in the name of the Church and in the name of your followers, or are they registered in your own name? - As I said, only my name is registered in the title.

Now, are you a monogamist or a polygamist? - I was a polygamist.

And now? - Now I have no wife at all. (Remark by Mr. Faye): When he says wife, he means he is not living in a state of marriage.)

Have you any children? - Yes, sir.

Do you realise that, according to the European law under which your lands are registered, those lands will pass to your children afterwards unless you make provision that they shall not pass to your children? - Yes, sir, I have made provision for that.

What sort of provision have you made? - In various ways. Some of the land I have left to my followers and some of it I have left to needy people and some of it to needy widows who have none to support them.

Are you an exempted Native? - No, I am not exempted.

Isiah Shembe

Do you not think that it is a mistake to put that land which belongs to the community, who are held together by religious ties, into the name of one man, into your own name ?- No, sir. I do not think it is a mistake. I am not saying that your view is wrong, but I am merely stating my own view in reply to your question.

Do you know that in certain European churches there has been a lot of trouble in regard to the same things and that they have afterwards had to go to law about it and that the legal expenses have frequently been almost as much as the land was worth ?- Yes, sir, that is so, but advice is available to persons who care to seek it at any time.

How many farms have you got registered in your own name ?- Fairly large farms, four, that is apart from the small places.

Where are these four big farms ?- One at Inanda, one at Mhlumbe and one ^{at} Mzumbe.

Now, how much of this land have you left for your own family ?- 200 acres.

And the rest ?- The rest is invested for the persons whom I am describing as needy persons -- that land is left as refuge for these persons.

Now, we have been assured that many of your followers think that the land belongs not to you and your children, but to your followers generally, just in the same way as the land over which a chief rules should be worked by the followers of the chief for the benefit of all ?- The position is as I have told you and not as you have been informed on that point.

Yes, but we have been informed that that is what your followers think and, if that is so, then your followers

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will not be satisfied with the arrangements which you make. Do you realise that - and, if they are not satisfied, they may go to the law to have the matter put right and that may mean a lot of expense to your followers?- You are right in telling me that and I appreciate your remarks, and I would merely say that we are thankful for helpful advice from whatever quarter it may come and at whatever time.

Now, on what ground have you allocated 900 acres to your own family? Was that land bought with money that belonged to you, as apart from money contributed by the followers of your Religion?- You make me feel foolish in putting questions like that to me, because, when I first answered you in reply to your questions, I said clearly that I had explained to everyone that I required money for certain specific purposes and I also told you that I personally am not a man of means.

If it is not your money, then by what right do you give that land to your own children rather than to your Church?- If I were to tell you that I were in need of a jacket and that I would like a little money to buy one, in the same way as I have acquired this one, (indicating his jacket), you would understand that that jacket had been bought with your money for my own personal requirements, and so it is with this land, which I have set aside for my children.

Do you get a salary from the Church funds for the work which you do as their leader?- When a man has dedicated his life to the service of God, he does not worry about material things of that kind; he looks to God to

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feed him, as I do.

Why do you worry then to leave the 900 acres to your children ?- May I say that I have not left lands for my children alone, but also for many others.

I am talking of the land which you have left for your children. You are working for God and not for your children. Why then do you take some of that land, which was given for the service of God, for your children? - Why should I leave them out; can you give me any reason?

Why should you treat them differently from your other followers. How many children have you got ?- I have three boys.

And you leave three boys 900 acres of land and you leave all the rest of your followers the remnant ?- How do you know, without having enquired, what the ratio is?

Well, we shall enquire. How many acres of land have you got altogether ?- I would have to go home and look up my title deeds to ascertain exactly what the extent is, but I have not given my children more than I have given the others. I have given others more than I have given my children.

But you have only three children and surely you have a good many more than three followers ?- I would only like to say that, when a man is working for his Creator, the Creator of us all, we have to set to the best of our ability and we have to make reasonable provision for the rest of our family, which is given to us by the Creator, and I am not singling my children out for special treatment.

Are you giving each of your followers 300 acres of land ?- No, I am not doing that, but may I explain that I have gone along the road which they may be able to follow.

Collection Number: AD1438

NATIVE ECONOMIC COMMISSION 1930-1932, Evidence and Memoranda

PUBLISHER:

Collection funder:- Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

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