

NATIVE ECONOMIC COMMISSION.

SEVENTH PUBLIC SITTING.

BARBERTON, AUGUST 13th, 1930, 9.30 a.m.

PRESENT:

Dr. J.E. Holloway (Chairman).

Major R.W. Anderson.

Dr. A.W. Roberts.

Mr. F.A.W. Lucas, K.C.

Senator P. W. le Roux van Niekerk.

Mr. A.M. Mostert.

Dr. H.C.M. Fourie.

Professor G.P. Lestrade attended at the request of the Commission.

Mr. C. Faye (Secretary).

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

- (1) LOBASI.)
- (2) SOLOMON NGWANDI)
- (3) JOHANNES TEMBA.)
- (4) REV. PETER JOHN MTI,) called and examined.

DR. ROBERTS: How many children are there in your school ? - (LOBASI): 60 children.

How many teachers? - About two.

A woman and yourself ? - Yes.

Do the children attend well ? - Yes, there is an attendance generally of fifty to fifty-five.

MR. LUCAS: Is there any arrangement made in the location for games - recreation ? - For tennis. (SOLOMON NGWANDI): I want to say something about the arrangement of games in the location. There is no arrangement for native sports in the location. Even in connection with the tennis we had there we had to work very hard. We applied to the Municipality to make us a tennis court, for which we would pay the cost, but the reply came that they were themselves short

of workers. So we get no ground sports in the location.

You have not got time because of your own work to go and prepare the ground ? - Yes. We begin our work about 7 o'clock, and do not come home till sundown.

What is your work ? - I am a teacher.

Where do you teach ? - In the Wesleyan Church.

The Wesleyan Church School ? - Yes.

How many children have you ? - 74.

How many teachers ? - Two teachers.

You and another ? - Yes; both males.

How many other schools are there in Barberton for natives ? - In town here there are two schools.

A Government school and yours ? - Mine is a Government school; the other is a private school.

MR. LE ROUX VAN NIEKERK: What have you to say about native education ? - (JOHANNES TEMBA) : On the subject of primary education for our people, I want to say I consider that in the first place it should be free for our people; secondly, that it should be compulsory in the urban areas and native reserves.

You do not include the farms ? - I do not include the farms. I think it is very strange that this has not been done by the Government, whereas as a matter of fact the Indians and Coloured people have already got free education. There is another point. Although the Indian and Coloured teachers have the same qualifications which have been taken by our native teachers, yet these Indian and Coloured teachers are getting more than our native teachers. Also, with regard to the matter of land tenure for our native people; I think that in every town there should be some land set apart so that the natives, if they can afford it, will be able to buy some plots there in order to improve the social

conditions of the people. I do not want to say more than that. I have got a lot that I could say, but I think Mr. Lestrade has covered all the points I want to make. I quite agree that the living conditions of our people in these locations are very hard, in view of the high prices of commodities and the food they have to get.

Have you any knowledge of this beer-drinking that is going on? - I got a notice that it is the hard conditions of our people that presses them to brew this kaffir beer.

One of your delegates asked that wages should be raised to 5/-. Do you know that if the natives were to earn 5/- instead of 3/-, they would buy and brew less beer? - I believe so; I believe it will tend towards their moral improvement in many ways.

Is not beer-drinking a sort of second nature with the native; does he not look upon it as something he must have as part of his food? - Well, we are fighting against that which I think is the nature of everybody; I do not think it is peculiar to the natives.

It would be peculiar to the natives, but if the wages of those natives were raised do you think they would buy more beer, or buy less? - I could not say definitely, but I think they would not contravene the bye-laws of the town or of the Government if they could afford to support their families in a decent way.

Is it usual for them to go into the location to brew the beer, or is it the wives of the men? Does your wife brew beer? - (LOBASI): No.

Who brews it? - Some people in the town here.

Are they loose women, who come from outside? - They come from outside; they come specially for that; they live in the location.

Yes, I know. Have they got husbands there? - Yes.

but their husbands are getting very small wages; they cannot afford the expenses, so they are trying to get money in that way.

DR. FOURIE: Are there many Swazis in the locations ? - Yes. (SOLOMON NGWANDI): They have got much money. The woman will brew the beer for her husband and herself. They may brew it, because they call it their own national food.

DR. ROBERTS: You say you would like to see compulsory education introduced. Have you any idea of the standard up to which you would compel pupils to attend ? - (REV. PETER JOHN MITT): Up to Standard IV would be a good thing.

And you would have it not only in the locations but also in the Reserves ? - Yes.

Do you not think it would be difficult to put that into effect at once ? - If the Government would move in the matter there would be no difficulty in starting at once.

There is a difficulty at present in paying teachers' salaries. Do you not think to bring in a large scheme of compulsory education would be difficult ? - I do not know how much funds the Government has.

Have you anything in your mind as to why you would exclude the farms ? - The natives who are there are at the mercy of the landlords.

Leaving that. Do they not need education ? - They need it undoubtedly.

Then why should you exclude them ? - I only exclude them because I cannot speak for them, as they are at the mercy of the landlord.

You speak for all the natives. Why should you exclude them ? - The conditions on the farms was my difficulty.

Do you not think they could do with it there quite as much as in the towns ? - Yes.

MR. LE ROUX VAN NIEKERK: You see, it is difficult to

have compulsory education on the farms ? - Yes.

DR. ROBERTS: You say that Indian and Coloured teachers have larger salaries than your two friends here ? - Yes.

That is only very recently; it has not always been so; it is only recently ? - Yes, quite so.

So it is not a constant thing; some years ago the native was better paid ? - Quite so.

DR. FOURIE: How big are the stands in the location ? - (LOBASI): Some are 50 x 100, and others 50 x 50; but they are cut off now; there is no ground at all with which to do anything. Even for children to play in the yard there is no ground at all. We have made our complaint to the Municipality, but they refused to have anything to do with it.

MR. LUCAS: Mr. Mti, are all the natives in the locations detribalised; have they lost their chiefs or left their chiefs ? - (REV. MTI): I should say the majority of them have been detribalised for a long time.

They do not have anything to do with their chiefs ? - I could not say all of them.

Which part do you come from ? - The Cape Province.

Have you been here long ? - Over twenty years.

In Barberton ? - No, in the Transvaal.

In Barberton ? - Five months.

THE CHAIRMAN: Lobasi, you stated that you want a place for a location where you can erect your own buildings ? - (LOBASI): Yes.

Would you want to buy the land for yourselves ? - We would be very pleased.

And build your own buildings on that ? - Yes.

That takes a great deal of money. Are there natives in the location who could afford to pay that money ? - They could try their level best; the cost of living at present is very high.

They would require some way of paying off the value ? -

Yes.

You are not speaking of natives who want to buy land like that immediately ? - I speak on behalf of them.

Are there individual natives in the location now who could buy land straight away if offered ? - Yes.

There are such natives ? - Yes.

How can they be better off than the others with the wages they get ? - They can buy on terms, they cannot afford cash.

If you buy land on terms you have to have some cash to start with ? - Yes.

Generally at least a fifth, and sometimes a third of the price ? - Yes.

Are there natives in the location who could pay so much ? - Yes.

They could put the money aside ? - Yes. Others have raised lobola; they have kept their money for such things, because they see the living is worse.

Would you say all the natives in the location are Christians ? - Yes.

Do they still pay lobola ? - That is native law. Even myself, I do not like to have a wife without paying anything, because it is our law.

You are a Christian ? - Yes.

And you pay lobola for your wife ? - Yes, to please the parents.

DR. FOURIE: To which Church do you ~~being~~ belong ? - the Wesleyan Church.

Do they acknowledge the lobola ? - Yes.

DR. ROBERTS: Is that so, Mr. Mti, that they acknowledge it ? - No, Sir, it is not recognised in our Church. Of course, it is going on, but not with the recognition of the Ministers. I will admit that it goes on in underhand

ways, but we do not recognise it.

MR. LUCAS: What is your objection to it ? - There are a lot of things. You know the history of our people. You know that sometimes women were sold against their will.

But that is not necessary. I just want to know why your church has not recognised it ? - There are so many things, and that is one thing, if we recognised that, it would be deteriorating the conditions of our people.

CHAIRMAN: How could it deteriorate the conditions of your people ? Your own people recognise that as a custom, do they not ? - They abuse it, that is the reason. We as a church must stand against it - because it is abused so many times.

How do they abuse it ? - They sell these girls to the young men against their will ~~xxxxxxx~~ sometimes.

DR. FOURIE: Do you call the lobola system a system that is equal to selling ? - I do not say that. It is only when it is done against the will of the party concerned that it looks like selling. I do not look upon it in the proper sense of selling.

CHAIRMAN: You say that cattle which come in for lobola can be used to pay for ground like that. Now, is it permissible to use all the cattle for that purpose ? - (LOBASI): As soon as they receive this cattle some of them sell them; they have no need to keep them.

That is not the question. Does your native law allow a man to sell cattle he gets for lobola in order to buy land with it ? - Our native law says if you have bought these cattle and they belong to you you can do what you like with them. You speak to your sons.

Do you have first of all to speak to your sons ? You cannot do what you like with them ? - You have to consider the matter with your people.

You must speak to your sons about it first ? - Yes.

(REV. MTI): According to our custom, they can be replaced if a man has disposed of them.

But it is permissible to sell the cattle and buy land with it ? - Yes, undoubtedly.

May the father do that without the consent of other people ? - Well, he can sell them, or simply do it in order to conduct his business, with a view to eventually replacing those cattle.

DR. ROBERTS: Under native law the cattle are not his ? - Quite true. He is responsible for them.

They are not his ? - No.

He is simply keeping them for the family ? - Quite so. He is responsible, and if at any time he is able to replace them he can do so.

CHAIRMAN: Have you anything to say ? - (JOHANNES TEMBA): I wish to represent on behalf of myself, and others similarly placed, Sir, that here in the location of the Barberton Municipality we are hedged in by restrictions. For example, we are not allowed to work for ourselves in the location here. Furthermore, the location is the private property of the location authorities, it is not owned by us who live there. That is burdensome. If a resident in the location is visited by a relative or friend, he has to pay for the accommodation of that visitor. When the child of an occupier grows up that child is required to leave his parents. Those are grievances of ours. So far as I have been able to understand, I support those who have already spoken. I think they have enlarged a good deal on points on which I might have been able to touch, but not so well as they.

MR. LUCAS: What work do you do ? - I work at the Ice Works.

What sort of work do you do there ? - We look after

the electric controls for the making of the ice.

What wages do you get ? - I am paid £5 a month.

MR. LE ROUX VAN NIEKERK: Have you to supply your own food ? - Yes.

What do the other natives who work in the factory earn ? - I am alone there.

MR. LUCAS: Are there any natives employers in Barber-ton; men who work for themselves and have somebody else working for them ? - (LOBASI): No Sir.

No native builders or carpenters ? - No.

You have told us about a shoemaker outside ? - Yes.

Are there any inside the town ? - No Sir. I would like to say a few words about our Swazi native Chief here. There are some natives coming from the farms to whom I would like the Government to give a piece of land, because now these people come to the location here, and they cannot get work in town. If their chief got a place these people say they could live with him.

Where is the Chief ? - Near Kaapschehop.

You say his people come into town ? - Some of them are coming into town, and it is very hard for them to get work here, others say they would like to send their children to town here.

Why do you say they want to come into town ? - Because there are no places on the farms outside on which to reside; they are all private farms. If our chief could have a place from the Government they would do their best to buy it.

DR. ROBERTS: You mean, the Chief wants a place where he can gather his people at his feet ? - Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Which chief is this ? - Chief Mhola.

DR. FOURIE: His tribe ? - Swazi.

MAJOR ANDERSON: How many people has he got ? - The Native Commissioner would know about that, I do not know.

MR. LUCAS: Is there anything else you wish to tell us about ? - No, Sir, thank you.

MR. GIDEON WIKSTROM, called and examined.

THE CHAIRMAN: You are a Missionary of the Swedish Alliance Mission ? - Yes.

Do you wish to read the terms of your letter ? - Perhaps you would read it, and if there is any question you wish to put to me, I will answer it. I am not so very good at English reading.

The witness submitted the following statement :-

"The Native Economic Commission, Barberton.

Sirs,

Appreciating the existence of the above Commission, I wish to take the opportunity to place before you a missionary's views regarding Native Education in this district, this with reference to section 4 of the items to be inquired into by the Commission - "Revenue received by the natives and expenditure necessitated by their presence."

"It should be noted in the first instance that the natives of this district are, as a whole, in a very low and backward state compared with natives in most other districts in the Transvaal. And this is only natural since comparatively little has been done for their welfare. To-day thousands of children in this district grow up to men and women without receiving even in the smallest degree any education whatever. This matter must be taken up seriously.

"There are some three or four missionary societies working in this district, each doing its best, but they can do but little in the way of keeping schools for the natives, owing to financial difficulties. It should also be borne in mind that these societies are altogether

supported by voluntarily contributed means abroad for the spiritual welfare of the natives, so that the ordinary schools must come in the second place. Therefore, if any improvement is to be effected in this respect, it must come from the Government.

The revenue received from the natives in this district should be a fairly respectable amount (beside poll taxes other taxes are grazing fees, etc. are paid in native areas) and although the writer cannot produce any figures at the moment it seems as if the returns received by the natives in the way of education is hardly proportional as far as this district is concerned.

To the writer's knowledge there are only three schools in the whole of the Low Veld that receive any Government grant, that is, one teacher in each of these schools is paid by the Government. In the White River Ward there are some four or five schools receiving equal grants and one or two near Kaapschehoop, also one school in Barberton. This is as far as the writer knows all that is paid out for native education here. The writer has been struggling hard during the last 14 years trying to maintain some schools on the Mission's expense. Again and again we have applied to the Government for grants but always received replies to the effect that no funds were available. Beside the school we have in town, which is not aided by the Government, we have some 15 outstations in the district, supervised by the writer. On eight of these places we have started schools, where teachers were employed beside the Evangelists in charge of the stations, but we have been compelled to close down most of these schools since the Mission was unable to support the teachers. We have now three schools left, which we are trying hard to keep up on Mission funds, and we receive Government grants only for

one school in this district.

At the close of a circuit court in Barberton recently the judge remarked on the savageness of natives in this particular district and went so far as to suggest that some stricter laws be made and enforced specially for this district. These remarks really support our views expressed here, namely, that this part of the country is in a particular need of assistance in putting the natives on a higher level. We think that the Government should consider this seriously and make an effort to meet our applications for more registered schools.

I wish it were possible for me to take the Commission out in the country and show the difference in life amongst the natives where those little schools exist and where there are no schools.

Trusting that these remarks will in some way enlighten the Commission on the existing conditions amongst the natives in this district and that its influence will be used in an effort to get support for more teachers, so that we, instead of closing down the schools we already have, shall be able to start some more."

THE CHAIRMAN: These schools maintained by your missions; are they carried on by European or native teachers? - Native teachers.

Are those teachers trained by yourself or elsewhere? - Mostly in Natal. We have not got high schools really, we only have the ordinary schools. We generally get our teachers from Natal, from the Institution there.

Have you a seminary? - No, just an ordinary school, taking up to Standard VI, and occasionally the brightest of these children we take out to start school when they get through. We shall have to have a certificated teacher; we have

no certificated teachers of our own.

You said the natives are backward in this district. The evidence we obtained from some chiefs yesterday seemed to show that they ploughed deeper than natives do in other parts that we visited. I wonder whether you can express an opinion as to whether that is actually the case? - I have no idea; I have not heard of anything like that.

When you speak of your own natives, are you referring particularly to Swazis? - Yes.

Your Mission is entirely amongst the Swazis? - Yes.

PROFESSOR LESTRADE: Are you in the Union? - Yes.

In Barberton district? - Yes.

Where roughly are your mission stations? - We have about fifty different stations all over the district; down in the Low Veld and on different farms. The difficulty to-day is to get Government support for the teachers.

THE CHAIRMAN: By whom are those fifty stations run in other respects? - We have an Evangelist on each of these stations who is paid by the Mission.

A native evangelist? - Yes.

Are you the only White man in charge of this work? - Yes, Of course we have more stations in Ermelo, Piet Retief, and other places. We have a Mission at White River as well.

I take it you are aware that when the Government supports a school it insists on a certificated teacher? - No, they really do not. It is up to the Superintendent to say whether he wants a certificated or uncertificated teacher. The Government have no schools themselves. The Mission have to erect the schools and find a teacher. They support the teacher. So that there is quite a large income from this district, and I think we should receive a little more in the way of wages for the teachers, so that

these schools we have started we should be able to maintain. We cannot do it on Mission funds. It is really a matter that should be given support to.

Are there other Missions here ? - Yes, there are three or four societies, as I say; you have, for instance, the Wesleyan. As you know, the White minister of the Wesleyan Church is for the Whites; but they also have a native minister.

MR. LE ROUX VAN NIEKERK: Are there other missions ? - We have a Swedish mission down at Komatie poort, which is really not the same mission as I belong to, but we co-operate; although there are two different names we co-operate. A mission has started at Nelspruit, but until recently they only had one missionary there. I think they call it the Pentecostal mission, or something of that sort. They started about a year or so ago. That is as far as missions go. Then there are small independent native churches; what they call the Ethiopian Churches.

Can you tell me what grant you get for native teachers - how much altogether; do you get a lump sum ? - I could not say; I think there are some eight or nine schools with one teacher in each. You could figure it out, but it is a very small sum compared with their income.

It would ~~xxxx~~ be about £400 ? - Yes. They are mostly uncertificated teachers, and they only receive £2.10.0 per month.

The other missions; have they many schools or teachers? - We have only the one school. I have worked very hard for fourteen years to get schools but have never been able to get support. That is my complaint. We get so little encouragement from the Government.

How many schools have you had to close down ? - Five schools.

MR. LUCAS: Because you did not get any grant ? - Yes. We tried and finally were compelled to close down.

DR. ROBERTS: So you must have a large number of schools in this district that are not recognised by the Government ? - We had to close them down. We have four schools; one is registered and the others are not. We shall have to close down the others if we do not get support.

MR. MOSTERT: Are your schools inspected by the Government Inspector ? - No; only registered schools. They do not take notice of other schools. When they get registered they send the inspector along.

Those schools that are registered are inspected ? - Yes, they are supposed to be inspected.

Are they inspected ? - Certain schools outside perhaps it will take a year or two before they receive an inspector - like the Low Veld and Komatipoort.

MR. LUCAS: You said you would like the Commission to see the difference between the conditions where there are schools and where there are not ? - Yes.

Could you tell us what those differences are, as you see them ? - There are so many differences. When I started work at the Komati valley eight or nine years ago they had never seen a missionary; they were just savages. If you go up there to-day you will see better houses built and when you go into the houses you will find them clean; you will find a clean bed. I was there the other day and was surprised to find the sheets of the beds and so on as clean as those in any White man's house. I was surprised, because they were in an awful state some years ago; it was really heartbreaking.

MR. LE ROUX VAN NIEKERK: These natives you are speaking about now; were they educated by you or is it

just mission work ? - It is mission work. We had a school there. The children got a little bit of education. The elders got no education, except in Christianity.

MR. LUCAS: Have you noticed any changes besides the changes in their houses ? - No. It is mostly in religious ways of course. Of course, it is private farm land and we go very little there.

MR. MOSTERT: Do you teach them trades ? - We do not. The difficulty is to get the ground for it. As it is, we buy a farm. I understand that was for a number of natives there; only a certain number were supposed to work on the farms. I do not know whether it is correct. We have been intending to put up a school at White River but have been told we can only have so many families there - and it would not pay us.

But other trades, such as carpenter's work ? - We have started it quite recently. Of course, my station in town here is not suitable for a school of that kind. It is fifty miles from White River; we have a mission station and missionary and we teach them carpentry work there. That was supposed to develop into a real industrial school.

Is the intention still to develop it into an industrial school ? - We are just inquiring about these things, but we are allowed to keep only a certain number of natives on the farm.

Take the valley you were telling us about - seven or eight miles from here: do you know the conditions under which the natives live in respect to the landowner - the farmer ? - Yes, I think so.

What are they ? - They used to belong to Moodie's Company before. Now lately the farm has been bought by Mr. Andrews in town here, and they have to work on his farm,

and he pays them. I do not think the old system of working for three months has been done away with; each one works there and he pays them.

Is that the usual thing in this district ? - In some places; mostly amongst the newcomer farmers, energetic farmers; they like that way, and the natives too, I think; but there are also some farms where they have to work three months.

You say the natives like that better than being paid wages the whole year ? - Those farms that do that do not seem to have any lack of labour.

You say the natives on that particular farm are very well off; would that help your work, to get them to live in a more civilised way - better houses ? - Yes, that is one of our best out-stations - up the mountain. They seem to be better off than other places. Then they in turn are able to contribute a little bit to the church, and that money is spent on teachers. The money we get from overseas we are hardly justified in using for educational purposes; it is really to pay Evangelists; but the natives on all the out-stations are supposed to contribute to the church. They do quite well in some places and in some places less. That money is used of course for teachers, and it is not enough.

The Swedish Mission outside Roodepoort, near Johannesburg; is that connected with you ? - No, that is the Swedish State Church.

It has nothing to do with you ? - No, not in a way.

You send boys there ? - They have a school at Dundee; we used to send boys there.

The station outside Roodepoort I am talking about ? - They had the same church at Dundee; we used to send to Dundee.

To come back to what you said about Komati Valley; is the change you described there taking place in the other out-stations ? - Yes, more or less. It is more evident in some places than others. It very much depends on the person we place there, what we call the Evangelist. If he himself is a good man and has a good wife he can do good work, better than even the missionary can do.

What changes have you noticed in the character of the people in the district that you deal with; are they more industrious ? - You mean amongst the Christians ?

Does their influence show on the people outside; people who are not Christianised ? - I think so; it may be a matter of opinion.

Do they become more industrious and regular in their habits ? - Yes; it all depends on the Evangelist. If he plants a few flowers and trees and so on, this little place becomes a beautiful place. The natives have not things like that, and it appeals to them and they try to take it up in their own homes. I have found at some places that they have started to plant shrubs and things like that to beautify the place. You will find it on the High Veld. The houses of the natives down here are simply awful. The conditions have been better lately and they have tried to plant a few things, which have shown me the influence is good. I would like to mention one thing - the difficulty in towns - about education; the regulations at present say, if there is a school registered, another school will not be registered within three miles. I think it should be more in country places and should not apply to towns. We have quite a number of Christians and naturally they will send their children to the school or church to which they belong. It is a pity it is not a Government school. But there are no Government schools in the

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