

Native Mtenba

MR. MVELASE MTEMBU, (Subject of Chief Njenga Abantu),  
(interpreted by Mr. Faye),

called and examined:

CHAIRMAN: Whom do you work for? - I work for Lady Steele and I am paid a wage of £4.10.- per month. Lady Steele provides me with food, clothing and a room in which I sleep, and she also gives me a bed. Sometimes she gives me a beast as a present and often, when I want to get leave to go home<sub>x</sub> to visit my kraal, I get leave. I have not worked for anyone else before Lady Steele's husband died. I was in his employ before and I was with her husband and I have remained in her service. I started work as a youth.

How long have you been with Lady Steele and her late husband? - The best information I can give you is that I started working as a lad. My payment then was 5/- a month, but at that time Lady Steele was not married to her late husband. He was then married to another wife who died.

You have worked successively for the same employer? - I have worked for the same family the whole time, and I was left £25 by Lady Steele's husband in his will.

Is your family in Njenga Abantu's location? - My family lives in Njenga Abantu's area, but occasionally one of my wives will visit me where I am living and spend some days there.

And can you send a good deal of your money home to your family? - No matter how well off a man is, he always imagines he wants more and he might do better.

How much money can you send out of your salary every month? - I depend on my pay for the living of my family.



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Sometimes, in bad times, in times of scarcity, I borrow money from Lady Steele, which she readily gives me, and then, out of my pay at the end of the month, I refund what I have borrowed.

How many wives have you got ?- I had two, but one has left me now.

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CHIEF MQUQUQU MKIZA (Camperdown)

CHIEF LANGALAKE (Ngcobo) Maritzburg and other districts,

MR. STEPHAN MINI, Maritzburg District (Chief)

MR. JOSIAH GUMEDE, Exempted Native, Maritzburg,

CHIEF SLOKA, (In charge of Natives living in the area of Maritzburg, Maritzburg Municipality),

(interpreted by Mr. Faye) called and examined:

CHAIRMAN: The Commission will be pleased to hear what you wish to tell us ?- (Chief Mini): We thank you, gentlemen, for the opportunity which you have given us of appearing before you. I will speak to you as a Native who is speaking to his rulers and expressing to them what he has in his heart, what he feels should be put before the authorities. I shall speak first about the Native chiefs. The chieftainship system among us Natives is a heritage from the time of distant past. Accordingly, the people look to their chiefs for guidance and information on all important matters. This very privilege to put before their chief whatever grievance or other matters they feel, to bring to the notice of the chief whatever they need, has grown up with us. For that reason, we should like to see the authorities improve the official status of Native chiefs, so that they may be able better to govern their people than they do now.

Speaking superficially, I think I may say that chief



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today have been shorn of practically all their power. The Native people as a body look to the chiefs and, of course, to the Government as a ruling power to adjust matters for them. It is the duty of the chiefs to see to the conservation of the tribal system in their areas. I think I may go further, and say I can describe that as part of the individuality or the national feeling of the people which calls for conservation.

We Black people were created by the Creator in the same way as other people were created. We have our usages which we have inherited from our forebears. We would very much like to see that what is good in our hearts should be kept alive. It may seem to some that it is not desirable that, with present-day conditions, such things should be. I am thinking now especially of the tribal system which includes the chieftainship system. It is in our blood, the blood of the Natives, who regard their tribal system as bound up inseparably with the same tribal headship, that is the chieftainship system.

The lobolo custom, for example, is also one of the heritages of the past and we do not like to see that disturbed. I would now wish to pass on to the matter of conditions of the farms and to say, in that respect, that the 1913 Act, that is, the Native Land Act, has caused a good deal of mischief.

In the past, a tenant was at liberty to make whatever agreement he wished with his landlord. Where tenants were living on companies farms, they could do so against the payment of rent. Farm tenants felt fairly free in the past under that system, because they could make whatever agreement



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they wished with their landlords, provided, of course, that they reached an agreement. But the 1913 Act has changed all that, both as affecting the landlord and the Natives. When I am speaking of landlords now, I am speaking of European landlords.

Now we are also told that farmers may not have more than a certain stipulated number of tenants on their farm. That compels landlords to remove from their farms tenants in excess of that number. Such tenants find that things are very hard for them when they are removed from the farm and they do not know where else to go. They find themselves at a loss. Some fly to the Native areas and, when they get there, they very often find that there is no room for them. That is why I say that the law causes mischief.

Another difficulty is that when a man is obliged to leave a farm, if he has stock he very often experiences considerable difficulty in removing his stock. Sometimes he is unable to remove it on account of East Coast fever restrictions. In such cases, the farmer eventually becomes the owner of such cattle, because they have to be grazed and dipped, and when there is no payment forthcoming for such services, the farmer takes the cattle as payment. That causes heartaches with the Natives and they find that they are being treated unjustly and unsympathetically.

I would say then that the 1913 Act has improved imposed upon the Natives hateful conditions, conditions which make it difficult for them to live on farm lands.

I come now to conditions in the Native areas and it will be apparent from what I have said that chiefs there are finding it increasingly difficult to accommodate the Natives



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who flock to such areas in order to find shelter there. I am talking now of Natives who are obliged to leave other places, where they have been living, such as farms. It would then only be reasonable to suggest, to represent that in order to ease the position in the Native areas, it would be helpful to the chiefs if their wards were extended.

I would now touch on the matter of urban Native locations and I would say in that regard that, in my opinion, there is very much improvement needed. I would very much like to see the Bloemfontein system extended to apply to all Native urban locations as regards the building of houses, so as to make it of Union wide application, because it appeals to me as an excellent system.

Now, why do I say that? I say that because, as I understand the position of the Native in Bloemfontein, he is allowed to build his own house right from the foundation to the top, and, on payment of certain dues to the Municipality, he eventually becomes the owner of the house. Those dues are paid monthly until all the instalments have been paid off and then, as I said, the house becomes the property of the person who has built it.

When I say that that was the case in Bloemfontein, I was very pleased, and it struck me that it would be an excellent thing were the same system to be followed throughout the Union.

In Bloemfontein, there is no selling of beer by the Municipality. In Bloemfontein, so far as I am aware, the system of the Municipality taking charge of the selling and brewing of beer does not apply. It seems to me that it is harmful and shameful that such a system should exist here



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and that the beverage of the people should be taken away from them and that it should be controlled by the Municipality. So far as I know, my remarks as regards Bloemfontein, apply also to the rest of the Free State, Transvaal and Cape Provinces. Natal is the only exception.

As I say, I think it is shameful that Natal should be an exception, and we should like to see that exception done away with, so that Natal should be brought into line with the other Provinces.

The White people sell their own intoxicating liquors but I do not think that they should go so far as to take away from the Natives their old natural beverage "utywala" and deal with it in the same way as European liquor.

Talking about drink, I would like just to mention that we here are very much opposed to the application of the togt system to Natal. That a White employer should be allowed to give European liquor to his Native servants would be a disgraceful thing.

As regards our doctors, our medicine men, we have inherited them also from our past, and wherever they have got their knowledge, whether it be from the Almighty or from other means, they at anyrate have knowledge, they know the plants and the herbs and the roots and they are able to do a lot of good, and we would urge that they should not be interfered with by the Authorities. They, like other people, have inherited certain things from their past, things which appeal to them as useful, and we do not think it would be wise to disturb such useful things.

I would now come to the matter of the heaps and heaps



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of passes which our people are obliged to take out, and I would enquire of what use these many passes are to those who have to take them out. Why must a man who is a Native, who has been living on the land there, whose people have been living there from time immemorial, who himself has been born there and grown up there, why should he be obliged to take out all these passes? If it is necessary to have any passes at all, I think one would be sufficient.

When I say that, I refer to the identification pass, so that wherever a Native may be, he shall hold his identification pass, whether it be here in Natal, in Johannesburg or elsewhere, and he could always use that as a document shewing whence he comes.

I now want to refer to paragraphs 28 and 30 of the Commission's Questionnaire. I think the reply to No.30 is contained in No.28. The reason why the Natives are no longer regarding the Europeans in the same kindly way today as they did in the past, is mainly because of the legislation enumerated in your No.28 of your Questionnaire. That is largely responsible for the change in the feeling which is referred to in your Questionnaire. The word we dislike very much "illfeeling between the White and Black people in this country ----", these are words which we do not like.

We want to live in the same country with our rulers, without the hurtful distinctions which exist today. The children of the Natives grow up today and often look at the Europeans as their natural enemies, and vice versa, the European children that are growing up, look upon the Native as their natural enemies. Well, sir, we do not like that.



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Another matter to which I want to refer is the matter of the employment of Natives. Today there are many Natives walking about the countryside who are quite unable to find work, although they wish to work. Some are being deprived of their work by their White employers and some by the Government. That makes us wonder where these unemployed Natives will get money to pay the Government taxes and other Government dues. Moreover, if a Native, who cannot find employment, is found wandering about the country like that, he runs the risk of being arrested for roaming around the countryside and being up to no good.

The burden of my remarks is to try and make it clear that there are Natives like that who are suffering great hardships and for whom something should be done. There was a promise which was held out to us by our Mother, the Late Queen Victoria, in the year 1843, which has still to be redeemed, a promise which was made by her representative, Governor Cloete, to the Zulu King Mpande.

Although we feel downtrodden today, we have not forgotten that promise. Another promise was made by Queen Victoria in 1881 to the Zulus. I say that the Zulus feel agrieved because they have been deprived of their king. Queen Victoria declared and proclaimed that she now has become their Sovereign. Queen Victoria proclaimed to the Zulus these words. She said, "Know you, Zulus, that so long ~~and~~ as the sun rises in the East and sets in the West, so long shall we hold in trust for you the land of Zululand"; but today that land of Zululand is being sold as farms; it was cut up years ago, and that promise has been broken.

That is all I have to say.

(Mr. Gumede): There is no doubt that there are



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these indications of ill-feeling between the White people and the Black people in the country. We have only to point to the well known occurrences in Durban in that regard. The White people know very little about the Black people, they know very little about our religions. How many know about the legend of the coming of Death into the world, when the Creator sent a swift-running small creature to tell mankind that mankind would die and then, shortly afterwards, regretted that and sent a chameleon to go and countermand this information, but, of course, the chameleon being slow, was not able to get up in time and the swift-footed creature came first, and so people died. We are a people chained down by the lethargy of legends of that kind.

The points which are put in your general questionnaire, make it difficult for us to reply to them, because, what is uppermost in our minds is the question, "Why all this?" When I say that, I am thinking what our people think generally. They remember the agreements which were made by the Queen of the White people, agreements which have since been broken and, which, in our opinion, are responsible for a great deal of the unhappy state of affairs in the country now, as between Europeans and Natives, and I suppose also responsible for your appointment as a Commission.

We do earnestly hope that the result of your coming here as a Commission will be the betterment of these conditions. When the country was taken from us, we were told that the customs of the Natives must not be interfered with, except only in regard to such matters where those customs were repugnant to the usages of civilised men, particularly in regard to the killing of people without what



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you regard as a proper and fair trial in court. You also said that the work of our doctors to smelt out and undercut the evildoers would have to cease. We would say this, that the Government of the White man has destroyed our traditions, our customs, and our usages as a people and now you come to us to ask us questions about the relations between the White people and the Black.

We are like people floating in air, as if some magic power has brought about and created some leviathan among the White people -- they are all at sea in an environment entirely foreign to them, they are lost. We had become accustomed to our old usages, we had become so accustomed to them as to feel happy living under our old customs and conditions. We had our own land and country, our own cattle and plenty of grazing ground and we had our own stock. And when a man is happy and when he had plenty, he would not call in anybody from outside to help him. If you ask us then why it is that the country today is overstocked, our obvious reply is because you have taken the land away from us and put up wire fences. You ask us about the nature of the soil, whether it is becoming impoverished and our obvious reply is, "Naturally, since you have restricted us to small areas, where our cattle trample down the ground and make it much more difficult to derive from the ground what we would otherwise have been able to get."

Our old usages are being completely undermined, and that process of undermining is entering even into the closest family relationship, into our family life; our womenfolk are getting out of hand and they are leaving us.



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We are like a people which is just scattered.

All these conditions under which we live today, are conditions which make our life unhappy. We have often made representations to the Government about our grievances. The good that you have done for us we appreciate highly. We also like to progress. Generally speaking, the conditions under which we live and the system of the Government of the White man, are responsible for the scattering of the Natives, as they are being scattered today, they are responsible for the moving about of the people from one part of the country to another. They are responsible for the people driving to the towns, because the people are at a loss to know where to live permanently and happily.

The burden under which we live, sir, is a heavy one and we are labouring under it. If it were put to us, "If you are dissatisfied you can leave", very well, we do not know where to go. We are bound up and tied up by all sorts of restrictions. A man may not move about, for instance, without having passes, and the treatment under which we are put, the disabilities under which we are labouring, it seems to us are such that they are meant that we shall be driven away from our country.

We would thank you White people very much indeed for the good things which you have brought to us, because we know that you have brought us much that is good. You have brought us education, for instance, and we would appeal to the better side of your nature to extend that good which you have done to us, and to extend it to many other sides of Native life in this country. And perhaps I may say this



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in that connection. When the White man came to this land, the land was occupied by the Natives communally. And when the White man began to cut up the land into farms, and when he began to sell it as farms, we were allowed to buy, that is to say, those of us who could buy, and many of us did buy.

In some instances, we were allowed to form companies and to buy land as communities. Ede<sup>H</sup>dale and several other places, Kleinfontein and such places, were bought in that way by groups of Natives.

(Chief Mini): We Natives living in the neighbourhood of Maritzburg, are building a kind of hostel for Natives where we think they will be able to find shelter and be under a wholesome influence. That hostel is in Church Street here and we should be very glad if the Commission could spare a few moments to come and see what we are doing ourselves, by our own efforts, for the betterment of our people here in Maritzburg and in the areas round about Maritzburg.

CHAIRMAN: The Commission, of course, is very fully occupied today, but if it is at all possible, we shall be very pleased to come and visit your hostel and see what you are doing?- The Native community will certainly be most grateful to you if you can see your way to visit us there.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED FOR LUNCH AT 1.10 P.M.  
UNTIL 2.30 P.M.

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Afternoon Session starts on page 6803.



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On resuming at 2.40 p.m.

MR. ROBERT DUNLOP, Chairman, Joint Council and Native Welfare Society,  
Rev. JAMES DEWAR, Native Welfare Society,  
REV. EDMOND NCWANA, and  
REV. MATTHEW SILIIO,

called and examined:

CHAIRMAN: Mr. Dunlop, when you say urbanised Natives have no standard of living of their own, do you mean that they have shifted away from their tribal standard and that they have not settled down to any particular way? - The differences existing between them are so great; there is really no standard; they are constantly changing. Because of the constant changes and of the very different types, there is no distinct standard of living among them. Some of them are gradually approaching the European standard; others remain for a long time at a much lower standard.

What you mean is the divergence of standards is very much according to what each wants to do individually? - Yes.

You have given us some interesting figures in your budgets, derived from your Family Budgets Enquiry. I take it that these 105 in the last line are a selection from different budgets you have got? - A selection from about 180.

Would it be possible for us to get the original budgets? I do not think they would be of much value to you.

Why not? - Because they do not contain specified quantities or amounts in every case, and we have been dependent a great deal on the actual investigator's own notes, in each case - which notes we have not kept; they were rather voluminous, - so as to get at the figures. You must remember that the investigators were voluntary workers whom we had to depend on. We endeavoured to secure data from 300 so-called homes; we



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secured about 180 that we thought were reliable; the rest were discarded. Out of the 180, I have selected against 105 that one could see were fairly correct. We have had to eliminate a great many as being absolutely hopeless. A Native has the greatest difficulty in giving us information of an accurate character as to how he lives, the quantity he uses and so on. If we handed over this yellow sheet at the back, I do not think it would convey so much to you as to us.

They had already passed through two screens, as it were? - Yes.

First of all, the investigators examined them critically and then you examined them critically. But what I would like to get from them is some sort of quantity relation between various things and, incidentally, to criticise them from that point of view. Now, one can get that even if quantities are not given, when the amount of money paid for the various things is given. It is really with a view to getting that information and secondly criticising them from that point of view, that I would like to see the originals. I take it the budgets, in the form in which you have them now, show how things have been arrived at after all the corrections of your investigators have been made? - Yes.

We can start from that point. We can assume your investigators had good reason for making the changes they made. We want to carry it a stage farther and that can only be done on the original papers? - I do not know if it can be done. However, I will consider it and if they are of any value, we will send them to you, and we might make a further correction if there is time and you thought it worth it. Could we suggest that we might take from these figures a few, -



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say ten or twenty - and reinvestigate them on the spot and verify these with all the detail we can get and send it forward to you.

Yes, thank you. It is much more valuable to us to have a small number that we know to be absolutely correct, that represent actual expenditure over a period? - Yes.

Now, in this same table, the item "Sundries"; what does that include? - You have got that at the back there; it includes clothing, materials, shoes, furniture, soap, crockery, medical, church, school, amusements.

That is the figure you consider is the least reliable? Yes; we had the utmost difficulty in getting that - in fact, some of the figures are ridiculous, they are greater than the total income under the head of "Sundries".

Now, are these Natives people who are more or less permanent dwellers in Meritzburg? - These are urbanised Natives taken from seven districts. We have a very great variety in our district. You have heard a good deal about Sutherlands; we have not included any Sutherlands budgets, but have investigated exactly the same conditions on this side of the boundary - what is called "Camps Drift", where the conditions are very poor. We have had better farther up, where you have had a settled urbanised Native for many years, - in fact, you have the third generation. The Rev. Matthew Sililo is the Native Minister there. There the conditions are very much better. When you come down to the bottom end of the Town here you have Hevron's Hill (?), which is about the worst you could possibly have. You have shacks on the side of the hill and, from the moral and hygienic point of view, the conditions are deplorable. In New Scotland you have a settled body of Natives; the same out at New England



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where the conditions are not so bad; but when you get to the Camp's Drift area and beyond and the Sutherlands area which you have heard so much about, you have a changed community.

Some of these budgets include families in Camp's Drift and Hevron's Hill ?- Yes.

And the Municipal Native village ?- Yes; they are taken from seven different areas, - from the bad and the good.

There are people living here with their families ?- Yes, that is so.

The first five entries here, are those single families; or is it the average of families having one male and one female or one male and one female and one child, as the case may be ?- We take them in groups of male and female without children, and then the group, one male and female with one child; we did that on the advice of a friend who is interested in the Commission, - Dr. Loram, as a matter of fact. We took them male, female, two children, three children and four children, and then another group which I have not given you here, which did not convey anything. That is where you take more than two adults in a family, - when we came to groups of four or more adults in one home and, say, six children, we took the six children as representing three adults. Then, when we tried to average it out per adult, we found the figure three absolutely misleading, because the children varied from one to twelve years.

So that each line here represents a certain number of children ?- Yes. The average of the last one is 105 families consisting of the previous five groups.

Have you got the figures for the number in each of the first five groups; they are not given here ?- The number



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of actual families ?

Yes, in each group ?- I can get them.

I think it would be useful if we had them ?- They vary from, say, 30 to 40 in a group.

Well, the five total up to 105 ?- Yes, but some of them have only got five.

On the next page, you say wages are not based on a living minimum standard but on assumed racial inferiority. What exactly does that assumed racial inferiority mean in relation to wages ?- Oh I think the opinion of our Society is that the wage fixed there has no relation at all to what it costs the Native to live.

That is the negative side. Now, you give a positive side. What factor fixed the wages? I do not see how it related ?- Well, I think it is the general assumption that, because it is a Native he cannot be paid anything more, or should not be paid anything more than a wage that has been common for a very long period.

You mean, by change in the economic conditions, a rise in costs ?- Yes. You take the question of togt; you had it mentioned this morning. You were not told that the change brought about in togt labour -- at the top of the page you will see, for the period 1913 to 1918, when there was an enormous rise in the cost of living, there was no change in the pay of a togt labourer; and the change in 1919 was brought about by compulsion being brought to bear upon employers to increase by a six\_pence. Public opinion itself brought about a further increase which, in 1930 we got legalised, but it was this Society that took the steps to get this done, and I got it done in the face of very strong opposition. Then I want to point out the note there that, although the legal wage for a



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