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THE EAST AFRICA WOMEN'S LEAGUE,

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Kenya.

Report on

THE WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

held under the auspices of

THE EAST AFRICA WOMEN'S LEAGUE

at

THE MEMORIAL HALL, NAIROBI,

June 27th, 1930.

Subjects of discussion.

- (a) "The Conclusions of His Majesty's Government on Closer Union of East Africa."
- (b) "The Memorandum issued by His Majesty's Government on The Native Policy in East Africa."

EUROPEAN WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

On His Majesty's Government's proposals on

"Closer Union" and "Native Policy in East Africa."

On June 20th, 1930, the proposals of His Majesty's Government on these two subjects were published simultaneously throughout East Africa and in England.

The proposals were issued as separate "Command Papers," with two different sets of Instructions attached thereto.

It is proposed that the "Conclusions on Closer Union" should be referred to a Joint Committee of the two Houses of Parliament in England, while the "Note" preceding the Native Policy includes instructions to the Governors in East Africa to put the Policies laid down in the Memorandum into force immediately.

Lord Delamere had arranged for a Conference of non-official representatives of both Kenya and Tanganyika to sit on the day these papers were published in order to consider and discuss them. Attempts were also made to obtain representation from Uganda, which unfortunately failed, due largely to the European unofficial members of the Uganda Legislature being absent in England.

This Unofficial Conference sat for three days in Nairobi, and went most thoroughly into the two declarations of Policy, paragraph by paragraph, and the conclusions of this Conference have been published, while a full statement of the reasons for their conclusions is being prepared for publication.

The President of the East Africa Women's League (Mrs. R. B. Turner) who attended the Men's Unofficial Conference, realised at the outset that every possible assistance would have to be given to the men to resist the imposition of the Policies as set forth in these Papers, and on the day of their Publication issued invitations to all branches of the East Africa Women's League to send delegates to attend a Conference in Nairobi. Further invitations were sent out during the subsequent days, and on June 27th seventy women, representative of all Sections of the European community, assembled at the Memorial Hall.

Nearly every district in the Colony was represented, as well as the Commercial, Official and Unofficial communities of Nairobi, and Mrs. Turner, who was unanimously elected to the Chair, in opening the Conference expressed particular thanks to the many women who, at undoubted sacrifice and great inconvenience to themselves, had come from long distances to attend the Conference at such short notice.

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Africa, East - Race question.

The Chairman then proceeded to give an outline of the two Command Papers which the Conference had been called to consider. It was pointed out that though the two Papers had been issued as two separate documents with separate notes of Instructions attached to them, they could not be taken as separate subjects, as one hinged on the other to a very great extent. Particular attention was drawn to the Instructions prefacing the "Native Policy" calling upon the Governors concerned to put the policies embodied therein into immediate operation. For this reason the paper on Native Policy called for the more urgent and immediate attention. The Chairman proceeding said:—

"The British Government have based their decision on the principles expounded in a passage extracted from the Memorandum "Indians in Kenya" which was published in 1923 and is generally known as the 1923 White Paper (Command 1922).

The main point taken from this extract and on which practically everything contained in the Command Papers of June 1930 is based is the sentence "the interests of the African natives must be paramount." Incidentally this principle, even when taken in conjunction with its context, has never been accepted by Kenya Unofficial Europeans. The British Government have also taken certain portions of the Hilton Young Commission's Report 1929, to support their "Statement of Conclusions," but have conspicuously omitted to mention, or in any way to consider, the announcement made by the Conservative Government in 1927 when formulating the terms of Reference issued for the guidance of the Hilton Young Commission, which visited East Africa and Southern Africa in December, 1927 and 1928. In this latter announcement the following paragraph occurs:—

"In making the declaration of policy involved in setting up a Commission with these terms of reference, His Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that they adhere to the underlying principle of the White Paper of 1923 entitled "Indians in Kenya" (Command 1922), both in regard to the political status and other rights of British Indians resident in East Africa, and also as regards the Imperial duty of safeguarding the interests and progress of all natives population as trustee for their welfare until such time as they can take part more fully in their government and in common affairs of all races inhabiting the territories. At the same time they wish to place on record their view that while these responsibilities of trusteeship must for some considerable time rest mainly on the agents of the Imperial Government, they desire to associate more closely in this high and honourable task those who as colonists or residents have identified their interests with the prosperity of the country."

It should also be noted when considering these present Command Papers that both the Majority and Minority Reports of the Hilton Young Commission agreed that the time had come for the abolition of the "Official" majority in the Kenya Legislative Council.

Again in regard to the demand by Indians for a "Common Electoral Roll," the British Government in 1923 came to the conclusion that "having regard to all the circumstances, the interests of all concerned in Kenya would be best served by the adoption of a **communal** system of Representation." This conclusion was corroborated by the Labour Government, Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1924 (Mr. J. H. Thomas).

The conclusions now come to by the present British Government are:—

- (a) That the interests of the Natives of Africa must be paramount in every form and shape, thus apparently ignoring that portion of the Devonshire Declaration in 1923, which is actually included in the quotation given in these "Conclusions" as the basis of the present proposed Policies and which reads as follows:—

"Obviously, the interests of the other communities, European, Indian or Arab, must generally be safeguarded.

Whatever the circumstances in which members of these communities have entered Kenya, there will be no drastic action or reversal of measures already introduced, such as may have been contemplated in certain quarters, the result of **which might be to destroy or impair the existing interests of those who have already settled in Kenya.**

- (b) That the constitution of the Kenya Legislative Council should remain unaltered, namely, an Official majority with 11 Elected Europeans, 5 Elected Indians, and 1 Elected Arab and 1 nominated European representing Native interests, thus ignoring the opinions of the Hilton Young Commission that the time had come in 1929 for the abolition of the "Official" majority in the Kenya Legislature.
- (c) That the present Government consider that a Common Electoral Roll, although not immediately to be introduced, is an object to be aimed at **and attained**, stating that the principle cannot fail to commend itself generally for adoption in Kenya.

It would appear that the present British Government, in making this Statement does not know the feelings of the European Settlers in these Territories.

It is further proposed that there shall be Representation of each Section of the different Communities for each Territory on the suggested High Commissioner's Legislative Council, and that any three members of this Council shall have the power to prevent any proposed Legislation receiving the approval of the High Commissioner and his Council, and insist on its being referred to the Secretary of State, thus destroying to a great extent any advantage that might have been gained by having a "Responsible Authority" on the spot empowered to give decisions on matters affecting these Territories.

instead of, as at present, all Legislative measures having to be referred to the Secretary of State for approval before becoming Law.

The proposal that the High Commissioner's Legislative Council should have on it "representation of each racial and other section of the community" appears to mean that there would be at least one Indian from each Territory on this Council and possibly later on, Africans.

This would mean that the Federal Council of these Territories would be a "spotted" one, and this would in itself destroy any possibility of further development of the idea of a future expansion of Federation to embrace British Africa from Cape Town to the Equator, as it is quite certain that no Governments lying to the South would ever contemplate joining hands with a Government that was not White in its entirety.

It is hardly necessary to say, that none of these interpretations or proposals are likely to find favour with the European Unofficial communities of these Territories. They have been unanimously turned down as unacceptable by all the Representative Europeans who have, during the past week attended the Unofficial Conference called together by Lord Delamere to consider them. It should be noted that both Tanganyika and Kenya were represented at this Conference and that representative members of Commercial, Farming and Planting interests, as well as European Unofficial members of both the Legislatures attended it.

Those who had read that morning's East African Standard would have noticed that the telegram sent Home by the Men's Conference had already been noted in many quarters and Mr. Neville Chamberlain, the Chairman of the Conservative Party, had taken up the subject and was "backing us up for all he knew" and it was up to us to assist our menfolk in their fight as much as possible.

The Chairman said she was glad to see the wives of so many Government Officials present as well as women of the Settler community. "Everyone is a woman of Kenya on these matters" she said, and expressed the hope that they would, as women of Kenya, express their views and wishes as much as the settlers; but though it was the Settler community which would perhaps feel stronger about these deplorable proposals, for it was they who had come to this country to make it their permanent home, she felt there would not be any opposition from those present, or in fact from any European woman in Kenya to the resolutions which she hoped to lay before the Conference.

"I feel," the Chairman continued, "that we women must once again bestir ourselves, as we did in 1923, as we are once again threatened with the loss of our homes, our rights to govern, our hopes to continue to help in consolidating White Civilisation in Africa, and I hope that at a later stage of this Conference we shall see fit to unanimously support the actions that have been taken up

to date by our menfolk, **and to continue to support them in their battle** to prevent the introduction into these Territories of policies, as proposed by the present Socialistic Government, which can only be described as anti-European."

A number of those present then proceeded to express their points of view, including Lady Eleanor Cole, Mrs. Jewell, Mrs. Orr, Lady Sydney Farrar, Mrs. Irvine, Miss Bennett, Lady Muriel Jex Blake, Mrs. Joyce, etc., representatives from Gilgil, Nairobi, Mau Summit, Athi River, Kabete, Ulu, Machakos, etc.

The first speaker said that these Command Papers contained many unacceptable suggestions which she felt sure could be safely left to the Elected Members to deal with, but that she felt a special protest was called for from the women of Kenya against the general tone of hostility towards the Settler community. Throughout these documents the attitude taken was that the Settlers were the enemy from whom the Natives and Indians had to be protected. If it were not for the real sympathy that existed between the Native and the Settler, the latter's position would be already impossible, but even so if the present British Government persisted in this attitude much longer the life of the settler, and especially of the women, would become quite impossible and unsafe owing to the undermining of the white man's authority.

Quoting from the Memorandum on Native Policy, the speaker said:—"H.M. Government regard the objective to be achieved as a general improvement in the standard of life, alike in economic conditions, in home circumstances and in physical health, together with the spread of education in the widest sense," and she asked in what way had White Settlement proved a hindrance to such an objective—had it not rather been the biggest factor towards such improvement as had already been achieved? In support of which claim she quoted the following passages from the Hilton Young Report:—

"It is quite certain that nothing like the present development of the Highlands of Kenya could have been achieved without the introduction of a vigorous community of European Settlers. On the best European Farms the natives may receive through contact with their white masters an education more practical and more formative than anything they can be taught in the schools—White Settlement provides a stimulus and example which may in the long run promote and hasten the progress of the natives."

and again:—"In the highlands of Kenya the Native population is totally insufficient and unfitted to develop the country If the whole country were to be handed over to a policy of native production alone under the guidance of European Administration it would have to be constituted an economic sanctuary so as to prevent the economic needs of the outside world from forcing some other form of development upon it."

From these quotations the speaker said it would seem that White

Settlement is wanted for the good of the native of this country and of the economic world in general, and quoted General Smuts as saying:—

"A large European community settled on the healthy highlands in the heart of Africa and forming not only a new centre but a fresh support and stimulus for Western Civilisation throughout vast surrounding areas may well revolutionise the whole outlook for the future. It may give an opening for strengthening our civilisation and reclaiming Africa from barbarism such as has never been dreamt of before."

It was considered that the Wives and Mothers of the White Settlers have a right to ask the British Government to treat them in a less hostile spirit **or** to show in what way they have failed in their task.

Another speaker pointed out that British Men and Women had been asked and encouraged to leave their homes in England and elsewhere and come to Kenya, particularly just after the Great War, when cheap land and assisted passages were offered to those prepared to risk their health, their capital, in fact their all, in what was then a very little known country. Many of those present had taken those risks and now, for the second time within a few years, after they had cut their farms out of the bush, had established their homes and were bringing up children, they were being threatened with expulsion, or anyhow conditions which would come to the same thing and would force them to leave the country they had opened and made what it was to-day, "their homes and their all."

Surely these attempts must be resisted at all costs and steps must be taken to assure stability and safety.

"We come of a race," said this speaker, "which, given trust, has rarely abused that trust, but we must be trusted first and last, and the only solution I can see is an Unofficial Majority in our Legislative Council. We Settlers will then have a definite pledge that we can depend on and not be a Catspaw for any Government that may happen to be in power in England. We are British, and we have certain rights as Britishers which we must insist on."

In this connection another speaker said that she had been in doubt for some time as to the need or wisdom of granting an Unofficial Majority in the Kenya Legislative Council, but that during the past few days she had discussed the matter with several people and had now come to the conclusion that an Unofficial Majority **was** desirable for the following reasons:—

"The aim of the Imperial Government should be to foster the interest of European Settlers in **responsibility** for native advancement, and the surest way to do this was to entrust them with a responsible share in that advancement."

She now felt convinced that if an Unofficial Majority was given it would not only ensure a continuity of policy, but that the Settlers would prove themselves worthy of their trust and prove that they regard the interests of the Natives as their own.

Another speaker expressed the view that if these Proposed Policies were allowed to go through, the White people of Kenya would be faced with ruin. Not only the Settlers on the land, but the Settlers who are in business as well, and likewise the Indian as the latter were dependent to a great degree on the Settler for their livelihood.

"I do not know," said this speaker, "to what lengths we may have to go, but one thing we must not do and that is to get into a state of apathy. We must make our voice heard. We must remember our homes which we have made, our money we have sunk in the country and our children. These present proposals are iniquitous, and mean ruin to us all, and it is up to us all to see that they are **not** put into operation."

Referring to the question of the Franchise for Indians, and the indication given in the Command Paper that a Common Roll for Europeans, Indians and Natives was an object to be aimed at and attained and one that "cannot fail to commend itself for adoption in Kenya, as in any other Colony where there is a mixed population," another speaker said that this object did not commend itself to those Europeans who live in Kenya, whether Official or Unofficial and who are in daily contact with the coloured races, native and non-native.

In Kenya, it was stated, there were no illusions as to the political fitness of the Asian or the African to take part in the Government at the present time or for many years to come.

The possibility that, in years to come, the coloured races, may become fitted to rule, was not denied, but it was suggested that as far as Indians were concerned they should prove their ability in this respect firstly in their own country.

Even the League of Nations in accepting the doctrine of the Sacred Trust of the leading nations of civilising primitive races, points out that this can never be done by placing a dangerous power in ignorant hands.

"If that be so," said the speaker "then we who stand to-day as the foremost Colonisers and Civilisers among the nations, would be false to our standards and our pledge of Trusteeship for the Natives of East Africa if we sought to share our great responsibilities with a people, not themselves sufficiently advanced to be yet capable of self Government in their own Mother land."

Another important point was made during the Conference when reference was made to the handicap at present placed on the

Natives in their endeavours to become efficient artisans, clerical assistants and traders, due to the presence in these Territories of large numbers of Asians who were preventing the Africans from rising in these directions.

Before putting any Resolutions, the Chairman reminded the Conference that those present were not only representative of the 1,200 members of the East Africa Women's League but of every section of the European community, official and non-official.

She realised that it was possible that some women had come to the Conference uncertain in their minds of the meaning and forebodings contained in the "Command Papers" they had been discussing, but she felt sure that after listening to the various points of view which had been expressed these were now thoroughly convinced that these proposals of the British Government were impossible of acceptance as they stood.

She expressed the hope that the same unanimity which had been such a conspicuous feature of the Men's Conference would also be the outstanding feature of this Conference, thereby showing His Majesty's Government that the whole European community of Kenya were solid in their opposition to the introduction of Policies which could only lead, as similar proposals had done in 1923, to grave antagonism between the different Racial Sections and to the shattering of the peaceful progress that is being made in these East African Territories towards the advancement of the Natives of Africa which only a White civilisation can accomplish.

The following Resolutions were then put to the Conference and passed unanimously:—

1. RESOLVED THAT

This Conference, called together by the East African Women's League and Representing British Women who have established Homes in Kenya, view with grave concern and alarm the Conclusions of His Majesty's Government on Closer Union in East Africa and the Memorandum on Native Policy in East Africa combined with the Preface thereto.

While agreeing that Native Interests must be safeguarded as they have been in the past, this Conference considers that both the Conclusions and the Memorandum indicate a strong tendency on the part of the Present Imperial Government to destroy in practice, if not in theory, the policy, which has been in force for many years, of encouraging White Settlement which was initiated and has been fostered by former British Governments and therefore constitutes a threat, both to the future security and stability of the White Community whose members have made their homes in East Africa.

Further, that any attempt by the British Government to force a Policy on these Territories which is not generally accept-

able to the White Community will seriously retard the peaceful and ordered progress of the Colony, as a whole.

Further, that His Excellency the Governor of Kenya be requested to convey this Resolution to the Secretary of State for the Colonies by telegraph and that a copy be sent to the Press for publication locally and in Great Britain and Southern Africa.

2. RESOLVED THAT

This Conference representing European Women who have established homes in Kenya strongly support the views, as expressed in the telegram sent to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on June 21st by the Conference of Representative European Men from Tanganyika and Kenya, including members of the Legislative Councils of both Territories, recently held under the Chairmanship of Lord Delamere, and agrees that His Majesty's Government's Conclusions as regards Closer Union in East Africa and the Memorandum on the Native Policy in East Africa are unacceptable in their present forms.

Further that a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and a copy handed to the Press for publication.

The Resolution passed at the Unofficial Conference and referred to in No. 2. Resolution above was as follows:—

“That in the opinion of the Conference the Statement of the Conclusions of His Majesty's Government as regards Closer Union in East Africa and the Memorandum on Native Policy in East Africa are unacceptable.”

“Attitude of Imperial Government as now expressed involves breach of previous pledges stop East African Colonists stand on principle that White Race is only people which has proved capacity to Govern mixed races stop Must challenge doctrine of political and economic paramountcy of Natives as interpreted in these Documents and claim the Closer Association in Trusteeship foreshadowed in nineteen twenty seven White Paper stop White Settlers permanently domiciled in East Africa cannot accept designation Quote—Immigrant Community—Unquote, as applied to themselves or right of Indian Immigrants to participate on same basis as Europeans in Government East Africa and regards Indian Representation on Local Legislatures desirable only as convenient method of enabling Indian Sectional views to be voiced stop Also consider imperative that Closer Union should be accompanied by Unofficial Majority in at least one Territory stop The Principles of a Common Electoral Roll and racially mixed Federal Council cannot be accepted stop Although Closer Union involving constitutional changes still desirable Conference regrets retrogressive spirit of New Proposals has definitely antagonised European opinion stop Comprehensive statement follows.”

Before closing the Conference the Chairman said that she had received Telegrams and letters from all parts of the Colony from Women who for one reason and another were prevented from attending the Conference at such short notice, expressing their regrets at their absence and wishing every success to the Conference and giving their support in resisting the imposition of Policies on these Territories which would prevent them assisting in the White Civilisation of Africa and could only lead to the ultimate destruction of the Native Races.

A hearty vote of thanks was passed to Mrs. Turner for convening the Conference and giving the Women of Kenya the opportunity of voicing their views in a way that may bring them to the attention of the British Government.

Telegrams asking for support to the views expressed at this Conference have been sent to a number of people in England and South Africa, including the following:—

To THE RIGHT HON. NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN, HOUSE OF COMMONS, LONDON.

SIR ABE BAILEY, 38 BRYANSTON SQUARE, LONDON.

reading as follows:—

“Seventy Women of Kenya Representative of all Sections European community assembled in Conference at Nairobi under auspices East Africa Womens League desire me convey their grateful thanks to you for your endeavours to prevent imposition of Policies on these Territories which could only result in preventing consolidation White Civilisation in Africa and ultimate destruction Native Races.”

To GENERAL HERTZOG, PRIME MINISTER, PRETORIA.

GENERAL SMUTS, IRENE, TRANSVAAL.

HON. C. U. MOFFAT, PRIME MINISTER, SALISBURY, S. RHODESIA.

reading as follows:—

“Referring Telegram sent Secretary State Colonies and handed Press today by Conference Women Kenya Representative all Sections European Community we hope you will support us in every way possible in our endeavours prevent imposition on these Territories of Policies which could only result prevention consolidation White civilisation in Africa and lead to ultimate destruction Native Races.”

To THE DUCHESS OF ATHOLL, HOUSE OF COMMONS,
LONDON.

MR. GEOFFREY DAWSON, THE TIMES, LONDON.

The Hon. LADY CECIL, 2 CADOGAN SQUARE, LONDON.

The Duke of LORD NORTHUMBERLAND, HOUSE OF LORDS.

LORD SALISBURY, HOUSE OF LORDS.

MRS. OGILVIE GORDON, 32 HANOVER GATE MANSIONS,
LONDON.

MRS. BALDWIN, BROOK STREET, LONDON.

SIR PHILIP RICHARDSON, HOUSE OF COMMONS,
LONDON.

reading as follows:—

“Referring telegram sent Secretary State Colonies and handed Press today by Conference Women Kenya Representative all Sections European Community we hope you will support us in every way possible in our endeavours prevent imposition on these Territories of Policies which could only result prevention consolidation White civilisation in Africa and lead to ultimate destruction Native Races.”

a copy of this telegram was also sent to:—

The PRESIDENT WOMENS SERVICE LEAGUE,
DAR-ES-SALAAM.

The Hon. To MAJOR ORMSBY GORE, HOUSE OF COMMONS, LONDON.

reading as follows:—

“Conference European Women of Kenya hope you will continue do utmost prevent imposition these Territories of Policies which will prevent them taking part in developing White civilisation in Africa and lead to ultimate destruction of Natives.”