

1937

India (Visit of S.A.C.)

PC11/7/10/41

SOUTH AFRICANS IN INDIA

(From our Simla Correspondent)

October 5

The event of the week in Simla has been the visit of the S.A. Parliamentary Delegation, to which reference was made in these columns a few weeks ago. The outstanding figures of the Delegation is, of course, the Hon. J.H.H., Minister of Interior, Public Health and Education in the Gov. of Union of S.A. and the Leader of the Delegation. He is a brilliant speaker, ready, polished and witty. He seems to meet with ease all the demands made upon his powers in this respect. He is a young man who must have a big political future in South Africa in spite of his independent attitude over the Native Representation Bill. He is an intellectual in the Smuts tradition. Strong nationalist, he appears to be satisfied with the status and freedom which the Union of S.A. has now achieved. His personality and talents overshadow the rest of the Delegation, but one of the most remarkable members of the party is Mrs. Hofmeyr, the mother of the Minister, who, at the age of 72, possesses a vigorous personality. Her influence upon her son, like the influence of Kruger's mother, is one of the dominating factors in his life.

EXTRACT of letter written to Sir Jagdish Prasad from Pretoria on 20.1X.37.

.....But broadly it amounted to this - I feel quite satisfied that Hydari is personally very well suited to the post but that the fact that he is married to a European wife in one which should receive very careful consideration. The difficulty is that the question of mixed marriages is a major political issue in South Africa at the present moment, and the chief opposition party is attacking the Government very bitterly for its unwillingness to legislate against such marriages. A General Election is due in the middle of next year, and we take our politics very seriously in S.A. with a resultant (~~unhappy~~) (unhappy) tendency to emphasise merely personal issues. There is therefore a very great danger that if Mr. & Mrs. Hydari were to arrive here before the General Election the fact that the new India Agent-General is married to a European would be seized upon. There will of course be no difficulty whatever in the social circles in which they will move, and I am sure that both of them will be very acceptable - but it is almost inevitable that things will be said at public meetings, in the Press, possibly in Parliament which will be very painful to them, and will of course not be without embarrassment from the Government's point of view. Moreover there is a possibility that there may be reactions on the part of India's Agent-General..

I think that is really all that I can say - I have written very frankly, and I hope that what I have said will be helpful.

