

1920

PC11/17/34/5

INTERVIEW WITH SMUTS (Memo by JHH)

Box 3, File 1

During October 1920 General Smuts invited me over to Doornkloof. In the evening we had a lengthy conversation in his library. He started by asking me what I thought of the failure of the Hereeniging Conference. I said I thought it was a tragedy and gave him my reasons. He asked if I did not think the gap had become too great to bridge. I said, possibly, but if so it merely proved what I have said all along that the attempt to bridge it should have been made a year ago. To this he made no answer.

In the course of the conversation it became clear to me that the Conference had failed because Gen. Smuts did not really want it to succeed. He had done nothing on his part to help the movement forward or prepare the way to the Conference.

He then went on to talk about the proposed amalgamation of the S.A. and Un. parties and the necessity of organisation. He was thinking of asking me to become Chief Organising Secretary with assistants in the province. It would lead in the course of a few years* to a seat in the Cabinet. In reply I said I would need some considerable inducement to give up my present work. In taking up any work I wanted to be satisfied that I was working for the realisation of certain ideals and I was satisfied of that now. There was also the danger of 'giving up for party what was meant for mankind'. I was however quite prepared to think over the proposition.

I have not heard anything further about it to date (21.3.21)