

## SCHEMES FOR VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION

### NO LONGER WORTH CONSIDERING

(Daily News Special Representative)

*In view of past failures, the voluntary repatriation of a large proportion of the Indian population is no longer regarded as practical politics. None of the efforts in this direction has come up to the expectations of either the Indians or the Europeans.*

In 1914 a scheme was introduced to provide free passages for Indians to India. The scheme did not prove attractive and the Lange Commission in 1921 urged the Government therefore to take immediate steps to encourage voluntary repatriation among all classes of Indians by offering special shipping and other facilities for those willing to return to India. The Government acted upon this recommendation and by 1926 11,487 Indians had left the Union voluntarily.

Still more attractive terms of repatriation were offered in 1927 as a result of the Cape Town Agreement, resulting in another 17,542 Indians voluntarily leaving the Union. Except for 1,229 from the Transvaal and 458 from the Cape they were all from Natal. Under this assistance scheme each emigrant of 16 years or over received a bonus of £20, and each child under that age received £10. Free passage, including railway fares in South Africa and India, was provided.

So that the Indians remaining could live a happy life the Agreement provided that wives and minor children of South African Indians could be admitted and up to the end of 1940 2,122 wives and children were brought over from India.

#### Opposition

The five years' experimental period of the Cape Town Agreement ended in 1932, and it was then realised that the scheme for assisted emigration had proved unsuccessful, only 10,738 Indians having left South Africa during the five years' period. According to the Indians, these emigrants suffered untold misery in India and their experience did not encourage other Indians to follow their example.

The Indians of Natal then began a vigorous propaganda campaign against the repatriation scheme and it was brought home to the Union Government that big numbers of Indians would never leave the country unless they were compelled to do so. In 1933 only 1,556 Indians emigrated and during the ensuing two years only 1,372. In the 14 years between 1927 and 1940 the total number of emigrants was 15,855. The Government had expected from 8,000 to 10,000 a year at least and had budgeted accordingly.

In 1932 an India Government delegation arrived in South Africa for a further conference on the position. Sir Fazli Hussein, leader of the India Government delegation said at Kimberley: "Both my government and yours have agreed that none of our people should settle permanently in this country and having agreed to this with goodwill on both sides, we hope to reach a satisfactory settlement."

Governments provided that co-operation was regarded as inspired by patriotic motives and to ascertain whether there existed any good opportunities for South African Indians in the countries explored. They stipulated further that their co-operation was not to be taken as meaning that the Indians were deemed to be undesirable in the Union or that the Indian population was to be reduced. A further condition was that the assisted emigration scheme was to be eliminated.

The development both caused a split among South African Indians, particularly those in Natal, and led to the formation of the Colonion-Born Indian and Settlers' Association. When, in due course the Young Commission was appointed to explore the possibilities of colonisation for settling Indians and Mr. S. R. Naidoo was appointed as the representative of the South African Indians, a section of Indians accused the Congress of treachery.

The Young Commission's report expressed the opinion that it was too late in the day for India to become a competitor with the Western Powers in the more settled parts of the world, and suggested that the appropriate field for Indian colonisation had to be sought in countries which, to a great extent, were still in a primitive state.

The suggestions that permanent colonies might be established at British North Borneo, British New Guinea or British Guiana led to adverse criticism not only from South African-born Indians, but from India itself. The scheme was described as "unthinkable" and a "tremendous insult to India." They declared that they would not allow their countrymen to be exploited by white capitalists, and then be rejected the moment their services were no longer required.

As was expected the India Government rejected the recommendations, leaving South Africa to take whatever steps it wanted in the direction of emigration on its own responsibility.

Any hopes that might have been cherished for solving the Indian question by emigration or colonisation had by now been dashed to the ground. Some sections of the Indian community criticised the 1927 Agreement as being a "suicidal barter," with the India delegates becoming mechanical tools of the Union policy of eliminating the Indian population. They said the India delegation "entered into a stupid transaction by which it gained a little for the Indians and lost a lot."

Government policy with regard to the Indian in South Africa has now been explicit. Mr. J. G. Derbyshire urged in the last session of Parliament the expenditure of a colossal sum of money to make emigration attractive to the Indians. The Minister of the Interior clearly indicated that the repatriation scheme was dead and that suggestions to this end were not worthy of serious consideration.

(To-morrow's article will deal with the question of the franchise for Indians.)

But when the delegates met they had to admit that the assisted scheme of emigration had been a failure, and the conference announced that the "possibilities of the Union's scheme of assisted emigration to India are now practically exhausted owing to the economic and climatic conditions of India as well as to the fact that 80 per cent. of the Indian population are South African-born. The Government of India will co-operate with the Government of the Union in exploring the possibilities of a colonisation scheme for settling Indians both from India and South Africa in other countries."

This suggestion of colonisation had come from Mr. Heaton Nicholls, now the Administrator of Natal. The South African Indian Congress was asked to co-operate in putting the idea into practice. On January 23, 1932, the Congress gave an undertaking that it would co-operate with the

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