



EAST AFR. PROT
41408

41408
REC'D 30 DEC 12

via Office
Date
1912
30 Dec
previous Paper
40323
subsequent Paper
90 41522

Arab labour for Coast plantations

Leads comes with Col Owen Thomas representing the Coast plantation interests in East, prop. proposals for recruitment of Arab labour on terms similar to those proposed in regard to Somaliland. Encloses copy of tel. addressed to Indian Govt requesting views.

See J. O.
4542

H. J. R.
3/1/13

83 Cas 30 p 13 2/26 B

41522



41408

REC'D 30 DEC 12

The Under Secretary of State for India presents his compliments to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies and forwards herewith for his information copy of a letter from East African planters, a letter to Colonel Owen Thomas in reply thereto, and a telegram to the Government of India dated 26 December 1912, all on the subject of the proposed recruitment of labour for the East Africa Protectorate in South Arabia.

India Office.

30 December 1912

75088-20

To India Office
Dated 11 December 1912

41408
REC'D
DEC 30 DEC

Sir,

The undersigned, representing the coast plantations interests of British East Africa have the honour to submit to you a proposal for utilising the resources of Southern Arabia to supplement the East African labour supply which is at present inadequate to our needs. The rapid opening up of this colony during the past decade has led to an influx of settlers into the highland regions, a great extension of public works, and the investment of a great deal of capital in plantations in the coastal areas of rubber, sisal, cotton and other tropical produce. This development has naturally caused a corresponding increase in the demand for unskilled labour, so much so that the supply available, which is dependent largely on the native tribes of the interior being brought into close touch with the Government, necessarily a gradual process, has failed to keep pace with the demand for it, and though it is considered probable that the natives of the protectorate itself will eventually prove sufficient for all requirements, a severe shortage exists at the present time. Important government undertakings have had to be suspended in consequence. Several large plantations are approaching the producing stage and unless sufficient labour is forthcoming to work them those who have invested their money will be involved in loss, further enterprise will be discouraged and the prosperity of the colony is likely to suffer a severe check. This is a matter that affects all interests alike, but is of most immediate concern to the Coast planters partly for the reason just stated, and partly because it is found that the natives from the high table land of the interior, on whom they mainly depend, do not always thrive in the tropical regions near the coast.

In these circumstances it has been decided to import

labourers for work on the coast if it can be done without prohibitive expense. It is hoped that this will tide over the present difficulty and set free the up country natives for work in parts of the protectorate to which they are better adapted.

Somaliland and S. Arabia seem the most promising recruiting grounds. We have already approached the Colonial Office with regard to the former and we now venture to hope that the assistance of the Indian Government will be forthcoming to enable us to do what we can on the Arabian coast.

The climatic conditions of the two places (S. Arabia and the E. African Coast) are not dissimilar; the distance separating them is not great, and Arabs from Shahr and Muscat are actually established in E. Africa and do well there. The objections, on ethnic grounds, that prohibit the introduction of Chinese into Africa do not apply in the case of Arabs or Somalis. We believe we can offer pay and conditions that will prove attractive, and that if labourers can be induced to come it will be to their and our mutual advantage.

We propose to recruit them on a contract of sufficient duration to ensure an adequate return in labour for the money we shall have to spend in bringing them down the coast, but there is no question of indenture. Repatriation at the employers expense will be optional to them at the end of the stipulated time. Otherwise if they are disposed to settle permanently and bring their families, we will provide them with land for cultivation. We can find employment for on the Estates for women and children as well as for grown men.

If the Government of India will give its support to the scheme we will undertake in all matters to consult the wishes of the Aden authorities, and to refrain from recruiting in Aden itself, or any other place where, owing to labour being required locally, or for other reasons, it is considered undesirable. Our plan, at present, is to get into touch with merchants and

others at points on the coast where labourers can be collected, and get the idea popularised among the natives. We propose to send a representative to investigate the whole matter on the spot and if practicable to effect the necessary organization.

As this matter is one of great importance and urgency to us we venture to hope it may receive your early and favourable consideration. In order to obtain an answer in the shortest possible time we will gladly defray any expenses your department may incur in telegraphing to India or Aden on the subject.

We have etc.,

(Signed) A. J. B. Wavell, Nyali Sisal Estates Ltd.

E. H. M. Leggett, Managing Director, British East Africa Corporation Ltd.

Osan Thomas, General Manager, East African Estates Ltd.

Cardross, Chairman, Gazi H. F. A. Rubber and Fibre Estates Ltd.

Incl 2 in No

443

C. O.
41408
REC'D
DEC 30

INDIA OFFICE,
WHITEHALL,
LONDON, S.W.

~~A is requested that in any further communication on this subject the under-mentioned letter and number may be quoted, and the reply addressed to:
The Under Secretary of State for India,
India Office,
Whitehall,
London, S.W.
P. 4610~~

27 December 1918

Sir,

With reference to your letter of the 11th December 1918 as to the proposed recruitment of labour in Southern Arabia for employment in plantations in British East Africa, I am directed to inform you that the Government of India are being consulted by telegraph on the subject, and that a further communication will be addressed to you on the receipt of their reply.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Sd.) Lionel Abraham

Colonel Owen Thomas