

DESPATCH

EAST AFR. PROT.
No. 15173

C. O.
5173

Number No.
address Copy
19

(Subject.)

1908

8 apl

Last previous Paper.

Nairobi Native labour Incident

Submits Lt addressed, to C/S by Lord
Cardoso's Committee. Explains his attitude at the
meeting to the settlers. The leaders do not appear to
recognise consulting nature of demonstration

PRINTED FOR PARLIAMENT
No. 4122 JULY 1908

Mr. Conradsen

See memo attached to

15142

This Committee deny that
any disloyally intended was
intended by the meeting at
Govt. House. I ask for a public
enquiry.

It will be sufficient
to say that H. L. was not
present for a public enquiry
as the main facts are
not in dispute.

W. J. P.
Oct. 2/08

15173

Page

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East Africa Protectorate

Confidential No.

15173

RECEIVED
30 APR 1908

PRINTED FOR PARLIAMENT
C.L. 4122 JULY 1908

My Lord,

At the request of Lord Cardross I have the honour to submit a letter addressed to Your Lordship by his Committee.

I have little to add to what I have already reported in connection with this disgraceful and very unpleasant incident.

The reference (a) to my opening address at the meeting on the morning of the 23rd March is incorrect. I refused to withdraw the Rules and said I would consider details whilst adhering to main principles. The two details referred to were the conditions regarding the supply of

ad Cardross
April 8th
do

His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State
for the Colonies,
Colonial Office,
Downing Street

15173

ford and bladders to labourers, to
whom great importance had been
attached by the settlers.

I again repeat that it was im-
possible to deal with the question
raised by Lord Delamere, ⁱⁿ ~~in~~
the spur of the moment.

The statement that I turned on
my heel and spoke in an angry
tone is not in accordance with fact.
I was perfectly cool and collected
under circumstances as difficult
perhaps as a Governor could be
placed in. I never raised my
voice and answered Lord Delamere
quietly and civilly but firmly,
restraining my feelings in the position
in which I found myself placed.

The statement that I declined
to receive Lord Cairness's Committee
is quite correct, and in accordance
with the dignity of my office and
the position I felt assumed. Your Hon-
ourship would have wished me to

assume

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255. No apology had been received from the leaders of the demonstration and in the absence of such I declined to enter into a neutral controversy with Lord Cardross's Committee and to receive them until a full and public apology had been made for all the proceedings in front of my house.

As I have already said in my despatch of to-day no one questions the loyalty of the leaders or members of the demonstration. The demonstration itself was an intolerable insult and this neither its leaders nor Lord Cardross's Committee appear to recognize.

I have the honour to be
with the highest respect

Your obedient
most obedient
humble servant

John Buller

13 of

*In view of East African Protectorate
Confidential (185) & Report of
Enquirer 20/14*

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C. O.
15173
30 APR 08

NAIROBI,

April

1908

To

His Majesty's Principal Secretary
of State for the Colonies, LONDON.

Sir,

We, the Committee, elected by a mass-meeting of Settlers were entrusted with the task of drawing up an account of recent occurrences in connection with the meeting convened by His Excellency on the 23rd ultimo.

The Labour Question is no new one, but has been brought before His Excellency's notice on many previous occasions and notably so within the last three or four months.

In November the Malindi planters prepared an address to Mr. Winston Churchill pointing out the difficulty of the labour supply.

November 2. - There was a Planters' deputation to Mr. Churchill complaining of the same difficulty.

November 23rd. - A deputation from the Colonists' Association.

December 7th. - New Labour Rules published.

December 13th. - There was a meeting of Planters at Mombasa.

The Secretary of Native Affairs suggested that the labour difficulties were caused by ill treatment of natives and cited cases which, however, could not be proved, whereupon he withdrew the suggestion.

The meeting asked for the abolition of the new Labour Rules

Rules

January 24. - A general meeting of the Colonists Association at Nairobi passed a Resolution asking for a Committee of Enquiry, and also that the present Labour Rules should be

March 5. - Committee of Colonists' Association sent a letter and Resolution saying that the present attitude of Government towards Settlers and natives is fraught with danger and again asking for the withdrawal of the Labour Rules.

On several occasions the subject of the Labour Question was raised by the unofficial members of the Legislative Council.

To all of these representations His Excellency expressed his sympathy, but nothing further was done.

Meantime the situation became critical and it was apparent to everyone that something must be done. His Excellency the Governor, therefore, convened a general meeting for March 23rd "to discuss the Labour Question, and to consider the best means of removing the difficulties which have arisen in this connection and of dealing with the various issues involved."

Although the notice was exceedingly short, there assembled a large and representative gathering of Settlers including the principal employers of native labour from all parts of the country.

The Governor in his opening speech and before hearing any evidence stated, inter alia:

(a). That he would not consent to the alteration of the recently promulgated Labour Regulations except in one or two details which had never been effected and which he had decided to allow previous.

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(b). That he thought the solution of the Labour question lay in the gradual education of the Chiefs and people in making work as easy as possible.

(c). That Labour Boards were in process of formation and that he would not, at present, agree to a Central Board, nor did he think the same necessary.

(d). That employers who treated natives well had no difficulty except at certain seasons.

(e). That he was consulting his legal advisers as to what steps could be taken to better check desertion.

The Governor then invited expressions of opinion and stated that any feasible proposal would receive his most sympathetic consideration.

A great number of employers of labour then addressed the meeting and related their experiences and numerous suggestions were made for remedying the present state of affairs.

From these speeches it was clearly proved that great distress was caused throughout the country owing to the shortage and uncertainty of native labour and it was asserted that so far from helping to a solution of the difficulty some Government officials had practically discouraged natives from working.

A unanimous resolution was passed.

The Governor in reply said that the Government was not unsympathetic, and that desertion was met by the Masters and Servants Ordinance.

He wished to point out that he would not be responsible for the actions of individual officials.

He refused to withdraw the Labour Rules and did not think that they had caused a rise in prices.

That Provisional Committee was in process of formation and would deal with such details as the issue of blankets.

Such an inadequate reply was also totally unexpected that it was not until His Excellency had left the chair that those present were able to realise its purport. The meeting lasted over three hours.

In consequence of this reply a large number of those present at the Governor's meeting again met in the afternoon to discuss the situation. It was generally felt that the Governor had really given no answer to the questions involved and that the Labour difficulty was again put on one side indefinitely.

It was resolved, therefore, to go up to the office and request the Governor to give a more definite reply, including an assurance that immediate steps of some kind would be taken. The meeting was informed that the Governor was at his house and that it was impossible to communicate with him owing to the telephone being out of order. Many of those present had come from distant parts of the country and would not remain long in Nairobi. All wished to hear a definite statement from the Governor, and in fact, having been invited by the Governor to this meeting, felt that they were entitled to such reply.

The meeting, therefore, proceeded in a perfectly orderly manner to Government House.

Capt. Sadler, Aide-de-Camp, came to the door and said that he did not think that His Excellency would care to see the whole meeting, and proposed that three or four should enter the house as a deputation.

It was suggested that His Excellency should be asked to come out on to the balcony for a few minutes and address the meeting. In response to this request His Excellency came out in the porch. Lord Delamere, addressing

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addressing His Excellency, said that it was felt that the Labour Question involved the speedy ruin of every settler in the country, and requested, in the name of the meeting, an answer to the unanimous resolution of the morrow.

Messrs. Mackenzie, Mackenzie, and Baillie made short speeches, and the Governor said he would not answer at once and that the meeting had better send a deputation to his office on the morrow.

Lord Delamere replied that every one was tired of being put off till to-morrow and asked whether His Excellency would then give a definite reply. His Excellency replied that he would give a definite reply next day and the meeting was prepared to retire when the Governor turned on his heel and said in an angry tone that it was a most unheard of proceeding coming up in a crowd to Government House. Several of those present, not more than half a dozen, then called out "Resign, resign".

For this the individual members of the meeting might as justly deny their responsibility as the Governor had already done for the action of his subordinate officers, but we have no desire to shift the blame on other shoulders and accept full responsibility for the actions of all present. During the meeting the utmost decorum had been observed.

Except for the four speakers, every one kept silence, the leaders and most of those present stood bareheaded. The allegation that the meeting was disorderly and offensive entirely misrepresents the facts.

The meeting dispersed to a distance of several hundred yards and halted for a few minutes in order to

select

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addressing His Excellency, said that it was felt that the Labour Question involved the success or ruin of every settler in the country, and requested, in the name of the meeting, an answer to the unanimous resolution of the morning.

Messrs. Ward, Watkins, and Bailie made short speeches, and the Governor said he would not answer at once and that the meeting had better send a deputation to his office on the morrow.

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select

statement of all that led up to the Public Meeting of the 23rd ult., and to the subsequent meeting at Government House and all that took place there, and further, on behalf of such persons to apologise for anything which may have taken place at such meetings, which was contrary to etiquette or right in any way be construed as an insult to His Majesty's Representatives or an appearance of disloyalty to the Crown. The object in going to the Governor's office and subsequently to Government House was purely a desire for a satisfactory assurance that steps would be taken by the Government for speedy relief from the deadlock into which the Labour Question had brought those who depended on the labour supply for their daily bread. No thought of disloyalty or of making a demonstration was in the minds of the meeting in so going. His Excellency in calling the Public Meeting and himself presiding had entered into the political arena and unfortunately when feelings are strong on political questions, words are sometimes used by individuals, even in more august assemblies, which are immediately regretted. We do not consider that any stigma of disloyalty should rest upon the non-official population of this Colony and, lest this should be the case, we would earnestly beg you to grant a full public enquiry as to everything that took place at such meeting and the events leading thereto and resulting therefrom.

I have the honour to be
 Sir,
 Your obedient servant,
 Chairman of Committee.

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Copy
For [unclear] Governor

15173

Recd
APR 30 08



[Faint, illegible text, possibly a list or table]

[Handwritten scribbles]

- (a) Immediate Withdrawal of Labour Rules. (a) I do not see in what way the rules affect employers of labour, and I do not intend to withdraw them. As regards blankets and food these matters can be altered. Blankets are only lent to the native.
- (b) Framing of new rules to be by Central Board with adequate non-official representation, rules to be subsequently adapted to districts by Local Boards. (b) I am against having a large Central Board at present as conditions vary in different Provinces. In any case I propose to give the Local Boards a fair trial, considering the question of central boards.
- (c) Contracts for labour to contain obligations on both sides, and to ensure a minimum term of service. Adequate machinery to be employed to enforce these provisions. (c) No reply.
- (d) Luxuries to be paid for by the employee in course of his employment. (d) No reply.
- (e) Labour Bureau to be apart from the Department of Native Affairs. (e) No reply.
- (f) Rate of wages for unskilled labour not to be fixed higher than that in existence 12 months ago. (f) No reply.
- (g) Government Departments to conform to Rules. (g) No reply.
- (h) Government Officers to be directed to encourage the native to labour, and to assist the employer to obtain such. (h) Myself and my Staff, particularly Secy. for Native Affairs, and the Labour Officers are in sympathy with the Settlers, and have done and will do everything possible to assist them in getting labour, but at the same time the native must be protected.
- (i) A Native Commissioner of tried Colonial experience to be appointed as head of Dept. of Native Affairs. (i) No reply.

- (a) I must decline to withdraw the Rules.
- (b) I do not propose to consider the question of a Central Board until the Provincial and District Boards have been given a trial. I agree to a Board of Enquiry commencing its sittings to-morrow composed of the Provincial Commissioners and the Heads of Departments or their representatives, which will meet under the Presidency of the Lieut. Governor with six un-official delegates to consider the terms under which labour will be recruited by the Government, and to enquire into the conditions of the labour supply. I fully agree that Labour Boards should discuss the questions referred to, and such legal measures as are possible should be taken.
- (c) Contracts for labour to entail obligations on both parties.
- (d) By luxuries I presume that blankets are meant. I agree that luxuries supplied to the employee should be paid for by him, and deducted from his wages.
- (e) There appears to be some misapprehension regarding the system of Civil Administration in the Protectorate. The Provincial and District Staff form in effect the Native Affairs Department. The Secretary for Native Affairs holds a travelling appointment and is attached to the Governor's Office. It is absolutely impossible to separate the question of Native Labour from other questions of Native administration, and any Officers detailed for the recruitment of native labour, are and must remain under the orders of the Provincial and District Staff.
- (f) Government cannot fix rate of wages, but will do all it can to check the tendency of prices to rise.
- (g) I am quite prepared to accede to this request.
- (h) This has always been the intention of Government and a further circular urging particular attention to this point will now be issued.
- (i) I am prepared to consider this question.