

1925

KENYA

C. 873
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DATE

3rd July 1925.

A. S. DENHAM.

837

DECLARATION:—

REPORT ON DISTRICT OF KITUI.

Submits - following on his personal visit. He took the opportunity to discuss various matters (enumerated) with the Akamba.

PRINTED BY THE GOVERNMENT
Cund. 2573 Jan 26.

Previous Paper
O.A.C. 35664

MINUTES

Very interesting. The medical sub-committee referred to in para. (35677) will be sent on separately. It is not clear what is meant by Akamba only the proposals in it are very well.

Sir C. Grey might like to have the duplicate of this report.

I will refer to the sub-committee that the Special Commission made in the Akamba.

referred to will be dealt with separately and may that a copy will be made of

Subsequent Paper

to road work of heavy trail

to heavy - to work

5.5: 7/8/25.

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~~A.B.~~

KENYA
No 837



GOVERNMENT HOUSE
NAIROBI
KENYA

3rd July 1928

PRINTED FOR PARLIAMENT
Cmd 2573 July 28

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that in the course of last month I visited the District of Kitui.

The Kitui Reserve extends over an area of 5,770 square miles and has a population of approximately 115,000, the large majority of whom are Akamba.

The District is a somewhat remote one and is for the most part a large expanse of bare and uncultivated plain.

I was informed that no visit had been paid to Kitui by the Head of Government since the time of Sir Charles Kipt.

2. The Chief Native Commissioner and the Senior Commissioner of the Province accompanied me.

I was much struck by the welcome given us by the natives who lined the road for over a mile and had assembled in large numbers from the surrounding Districts. Many of the Indian Dukas and native huts had put out some form of decoration.

Ngomas, (dances) of which these people are very fond, were being held and my visit was celebrated as a public holiday.

3. I held a very largely attended Baraza at which I explained to the people the position of the Native Council and the assistance which Government hoped to receive from its members.

The...

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE,
LIEUTENANT COLONEL L.C.M.S. ALMERY. P.C., M.P.
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES.
DOWNING STREET,
LONDON. S.W.1.

The subjects discussed were almost entirely local and the people seemed to have few or no grievances. There was a demand for more grazing for their cattle.

The Akamba admitted the Yatta Plains were Crown Lands and that they had no right to graze their cattle on them but they asked that they might be allowed to do so on payment which they stated they were quite willing and able to make.

I have already written to you at length on the subject of the grazing of cattle by this tribe on the Yatta Plains vide my despatch No. 491 of the 23rd April 1925. After consultation with the Administrative Officers I decided that further grazing should be given to the Kitui Akamba on the Yatta on payment by them of a nominal sum of 50 cents per annum for each animal - (I understand that they offered to pay Sh.2/6 or more).- I considered that a nominal fee only should be charged and with a view to making it clear to the people that Government did not recognise any right on their part to obtain this pasture.

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p.156 of report of Veterinary measures and, if possible, to the establishment of a Ghee factory in this reserve.

The proceeds of this rate will be devoted to special

I also impressed upon the people the importance of disposing of surplus animals and of getting rid of their inferior cattle.

They agreed that such a course was desirable but in many cases they were hampered by native customs as for example, the necessity for repayment of dowry by the return of the animals originally obtained.

A Veterinary Survey is now being made of the cattle in the adjoining Akamba area of Machakos and it is hoped to extend this to the Kitui district; when this is complete it will be possible to settle on an economic policy for the cattle of this tribe and arrive at an estimate of the quantity which should

should be retained and culled.

4. 200 men from this District were compulsorily recruited for work on the Railway in relaying the main line. I made enquiries as to whether any complaints had been received from the people.

I was informed by the Acting District Commissioner that the only representations on the subject made to him were by a large body of old men who appeared at the Boma and stated that their women would not work for them in the Shambas as the young men had been called out for work on the Railway. The District Commissioner then summoned a Baraza at which he invited the women to be present and stated their views. The women appeared and explained that the action taken by them was due to the appeal made to them by the young girls who complained that they were deprived of their dancing partners at the Ngomas by the young men being taken to work on the Railway. It was pointed out to them that the men only worked for 60 days and then returned to their homes and the elder women expressed their opinion that it was very desirable that the young men should be made to work. They then returned to work on their husband's shambas and no further complaints have reached the District Commissioner.

At the commencement of the work on the Railway the Akamba, who are a notoriously volatile and excitable people, deserted in some numbers. I was informed by the District Commissioner that the greater part had now returned to work without the necessity for any prosecutions and that having got used to the task required of them have settled down quite happily and that there is now no difficulty in securing labour for the Railway.

5. It is to this District that Mr. Linfield refers in his Memorandum attached to the Report of the East Africa Commission, where he quotes as follows from a communication submitted. "...

submitted to the Commission:

"You may travel through the length and breadth of
"Kitui Reserve and you will fail to find any
"enterprise, building or structure of any sort
"which Government has provided at the cost of
"more than a few sovereigns for the direct
"benefit of the natives. The place was little
"better than a wilderness when I first knew it
"25 years ago and it remains a wilderness today
"as far as our efforts are concerned. If we
"left that district tomorrow the only permanent
"evidence of our occupation would be the buildings
"we have erected for the use of our tax-collecting
"Staff..."

There was undoubtedly considerable justification for this statement but it must be remembered that the benefits of Government cannot be estimated only in buildings or institutions. A very real and lasting benefit has been derived by this District from the intervention of Government in the life of its people.

There was probably no District in the country in which witch-craft was more rife. The Akamba of Kitui were at the mercy of the Witch Doctor and their ordinary outlook on life was very largely a mixture of dread as to what might happen to them from the machinations of an enemy and anxiety to avert the fate which they believed fell on all those upon whom spells had been cast.

At one time movement in this District was confined almost entirely to a very limited area around the village.

No man would have ventured to sleep away from his own collection of huts and no journey would have been undertaken except in company with several others of the tribe.

Raids from the Kikuyu and Masai were frequent.

The British Government by its administration and policing of this District has removed these fears to a very *great* *considerable...*

X page 107 of Case 23-7

Great
 considerable extent; wholly as regards the dread of attack from a neighbouring tribe and very considerably in respect of the powers of the witch doctor. The people can now go about their ordinary avocations in security and content.

Further, one of the principal vices of this tribe was drink, and it was to put a stop to the very large consumption of Tembo in this District that the Sugar Ordinance No. 31 of 1923 was introduced - vide my despatch No. 402 of the 7th April 1924.

In spite of a period of drought the Chiefs and people informed me that there was plenty of money in the district, and before the Committee appointed to inquire into the working of the Sugar Ordinance the Chiefs gave evidence to the same effect and said that everyone now had money as they were no longer spending it on drink. The dress, ornaments, and general physical appearance of the people fully bore out these statements.

There has undoubtedly been a considerable moral and social improvement throughout this district during the past few years from the introduction of legislation and its effective administration to the immense benefit of these people.

6. The fact, however, remains that in many directions further Government effort is urgently needed. There is a Dispensary in charge of an Indian Dispenser at which there was an attendance of 6,785 in 1924 and it is evident the people are quite willing to obtain medical treatment.

There is urgent need for a European Medical Officer. Provision was made for one in the Estimates of 1925 but it has not yet been possible to fill this post. The present hospital is a miserable shed. A site for a new hospital has been selected and as you will see from the enclosure to my despatch No. 823 of the 1st July re Medical Services in 1926 proper medical provision for this District will, it is....

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is hoped, be provided next year.

There is a Government school but it needs considerable extension and I am taking steps for the provision of industrial work and increased staff.

7. Much has been done in the way of roads throughout the District with the help of the natives and it is hoped next year that further provision may be made by Government in the way of bridges and culverts.

The principal need of this district, however, is the provision of irrigation for the vast areas of open plains.

If water can be provided there is no reason why this District should not produce large quantities of cotton, sisal and foodstuffs.

8. I have addressed you by my despatch No. 784 of the 23rd June with regard to the provision of an irrigation Engineer and one of the areas which will receive his immediate attention is that of the Yatta Plains in the Kitui District.

9. A proposal has recently been made by representatives of the Dwa Sisal Company to extend the light railway now connecting their Estate near Kibwezi with the Uganda Railway to the Kitui District in order to tap the trade and agricultural produce of that area.

10. The Senior Commissioner, Mr. Traill, has shown great interest in the development of this backward district and Mr. S.H.B. Murphy who is temporarily in charge and has been for some time in the Reserve is displaying commendable energy and zeal in its progress.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant.

S. H. B. Murphy

O.A.S.


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DOWLING STREET,

27 August, 1925.

Dear Sir Edward Crigg,

 You may be interested to see the enclosed copy of a despatch from the Officer Administering the Government of Kenya reporting on his recent visit to the District of Kitui.

Yours sincerely,

Spence T. Allen

Brett Aug 31
Allen 32 f/s

Oaf. 35686/25 Kenya

C. D.
R 1 SEP
D 3 "

- Trickey.
- Shuckburgh.
- Davis.
- Grindle.
- Masterton Smith.
- Ormby-Gore.
- Amer

386

4 Sept 1925

Sir,

RAFT.

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Oaf.

I have the pleasure to acknowledge the receipt of
 your despatch No 837 of the 3rd
 of July, reporting on your
 visit to the District of
 Kulu^{N.P. 2}, which I have read
 with interest. I am glad to
 note the ~~good~~ ^{high} quality
 of the road work of the
 Travellers' Club.

The Special proposals
 made in the despatches
 to which you refer
 quoted by you will be dealt
 with separately. I have to
 (Signed) L. S. AMERY

see

with separately. ~~See~~

3. A note will be made
of the good work of Mr
F. S. F. Fraill & Mr
J. W. B. Murphy.

Jr