

EAST AFRICA

[Ref. 18. LB 20]

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Colonel Wedgwood. — To ask the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, whether his attention has been called to the memorandum by the Governors of Mombasa and Uganda on Colonel Ainsworth's labour circular, published in November last year; and whether it is the intention of His Majesty's Government to allow native labour to be forcibly recruited by native chiefs in British East Africa under the stimulus of British officials. [Thursday 14th January.]

*For oral reply*

*Mr. F. Field.*

*As a matter of fact we shall not get far with considering the question until these questions get in the way!*

*Deficient? Reply*

*I would refer to the report & get out Monday 21st reply which I gave yesterday. The questions of the Native Lab. the matter for South Africa.*

*18/1/1912*

*Mr 18/1/12 J.H. 18/1/12*

BRITISH EAST AFRICA  
NATIVE LABOUR

78 & 79. Lord HENRY CAVENDISH-BENTINCK asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, (1) whether his attention has been drawn to the protests published by the bishops of British East Africa against a circular recently issued instructing administrative officials to exercise pressure upon the natives in order to force them to labour for private interests outside the reserves; and whether he proposes taking any action in the matter?  
(2) Whether the circular issued in British East Africa instructs administrative officials to encourage labourers to work in the interests of private persons, including women and children; whether this circular was submitted to the Colonial Office before being issued; and, if not, whether he will give instructions for its withdrawal pending consideration by His Majesty's Government?

Lord H. CAVENDISH-BENTINCK: Does my hon. Friend not agree that it is a very grave departure from precedent, so far as our Colonial Administration is concerned, that any pressure should be put on the natives to work for private interests?

Lieut.-Colonel AMERY: I quite understand the legitimate anxiety of the Noble Lord and other hon. Members of the House that no illegitimate pressure should be put on native chiefs which would cause them practically to force the natives to labour for private employers, but I should have thought it was quite in the interests of the natives and the country generally —

Lord H. CAVENDISH-BENTINCK: That they should be forced to go out!

Lieut.-Colonel AMERY: And not whether it is reasonable that it should be explained to His Majesty's Government? so long as no force or illegitimate pressure is applied.

THE UNDER-SECRETARY of STATE for the COLONIES (Lieut.-Colonel Amery): I have only just received a copy of the circular referred to in the Noble Lord's two questions. I will certainly give the matter my most careful consideration. I am not, however, prepared pending such consideration, and before ascertaining in what spirit the instructions have actually been carried out, to direct the withdrawal of the circular.

Colonel WEDGWOOD: Is the hon. and gallant Gentleman not aware that this circular does bring pressure?

The representations of the bishops are directed mainly against the use of native chiefs and headmen to induce natives to work outside their reserves and against influence of this kind being used at all in the case of women and children. They recognise that in present circumstances a supply of labour is essential to the country and desirable in the interests of the natives, and they actually advocate the adoption of the principle of compulsion under certain safeguards.

Colonel WEDGWOOD: Was the issue of this circular inspired from home, from the Colonial Office, and can we have it laid upon the Table of the House?

Lieut.-Colonel AMERY: A quite under-circular was certainly not inspired from home. As I explained just now, I have only seen it within the last few days; but I will consider the question of laying it

Sir E. Northey points out that there is no kind of force whatever employed by any Govt. in forcing labour under the Circular. The point that arises is whether the native Chief employs force to make his natives go to work. Sir E. Northey has no objection to such a fact as that this is done, but, of course, it is always possible that the Chiefs might be tempted to employ force. In any event, as Sir E. Northey observes, you are bound to work through the Chiefs in native administration, and should there be any abuse of this kind it will undoubtedly come to light and can then be dealt with.

No action would appear to be required except possibly as to presenting to Parliament a copy of the Circular if the S. of S. desires this to be done.

all  
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Sir H. Glad

For a decision as to A. the W. Secretary has told Sir E. Northey that the agitation is dying out, so that perhaps we could give it a shove.

If the agitation is continued I expect most trouble will be the women & children, and, as a matter of fact, it is said that the work (other than fishing etc) is filled with them, so that it may not be necessary to have any Govt influence on that point.

W. Col. 8/3/20  
Part 2

Cl. Amery We need not consider the report...  
The report will be got it with the...  
8/3/20  
P. 3 Jm 1/3

