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17 FEB 20 1900

labour

To ask the Under Secretary of State
whether he has been drawn to the proposal
of the Government to issue a circular recently
issued to the Natives in order to
secure them the reserves; and whether he accepts
the proposal.

General reply

Under Secretary

The Under Secretary will
be glad to receive from
you a further
statement of the
proposals
and the
reasons
therefor.

By the
Secretary of State
in reply to a letter
of the 11th inst., it is
noted that the
proposals
of the
Government
in relation
to the
reserves
are being
considered.
It is
not possible
for him to give
an answer
of
this nature.

Subsequent Paper.

Hof
8574

Copy of
I have only just received a copy of
the circular referred to in the letter

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 the 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 the circular was submitted to the Colonial Office before being issued; and, if not, whether he will give instructions for its withdrawal pending consideration for 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 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 unreasonable that it should be explained to His that they can labour for private employers 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: The 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 pointing labour under the Circular. The point that arises is whether the native Chief employs force to make his natives do work. Sir E. Northey has no objection to that, and 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.

add.

3. 20

Sir H. Glad

For a decision in A. the witness has told Sir E. Northey that the agitation is dying out, so that perhaps we need have it alone.

If the agitation is continued I expect most trouble will be the women soldiers, and as a matter of fact, it is said that the work (coffee picking etc) is hindered with them, so that it may not be necessary to use any Govt. influence on that point.

Sir J. Fuller

to Col. 8/3/20.

Part G?

Ch. Amery

We had a conference with the Committee on 8/11/20

Carrying the Committee will be put it with the report
P. 8.3 Jm 13