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Colonial Office

Date.  
1912

Labours question

See

Minutes of proceedings at a deputation

Previous Paper.

to S. G. L. at House of Commons 16 Dec 1912

29874

Mr. R. CUNNINGHAM

As an amateur labour agitator on one occasion, Mr. R. Cunningham related his experiences. He had recruited 525 Wamoru for the Mombasa Railway and the only difficulty was inter-tribal feuding, the gang making a raid on the sugar canes near Embu, but a guard could prevent this. It was highly advisable to provide the proper accommodation, such as fuel and food, for the journey. As the natives in question had never before seen a train, there was some delay over making medicine (laughter). A rise in pay would not improve the labour supply, but this could be achieved by better food and a bigger variety. The men whom he had recruited offered to work in the Mombasa area for three months, which would end on December 31st, when these natives would be returned to their homes according to agreement.

leave 9 Nov 1912  
Evidence before deputation

Copy of p. 15 of 21 Dec 1912

Mr. Reid. I have applied my authority as to the Wamoru engaged for Mombasa. No doubt this was an isolated case.

As regard rates of wages I am afraid I had not noticed that the references to rates below 7 inches were upland rates. The deputation do not however seem to have touched on the question of a reasonable rate for the coast, possibly because this wage matter, like the Employers' Federation, is one on which they are not unanimous.

Subsequent Paper

41408

to do so without anticipating the  
Gov's recommendations, except on the point of  
God accounting, which I think should be made  
clear.

From the notes I can still see no suggestion  
of corroboration of the suggestion that spirits are  
wild creatures.

WCS 23/11

There is a mail today but it would  
be difficult to get I think material  
for the day to catch it.

S R I (SA)

I have asked P.D. to make a few typographical  
corrections. When they are made please send three  
prints of 38293 & 40323 to Gov's file.

WCS

13/11/11

prints had got for

B

No  
East Africa Protectorate



Minutes of Proceedings

At a Deputation

To the Right Hon. The Secretary of State for the Colonies

on

THE EAST AFRICAN LABOUR  
QUESTION

At the House of Commons

Monday 16th December 1912

Present

The Secretary of State for the Colonies

Mr George V. Fiddes, Esq., C.B., K.C.M.G.

Major the Hon. C.H. Guest, M.P.

Major E.H. Leggatt (representing the British East Africa Corporation)

Lord Cranworth

Mr Powys Cobb

Mr A.J.B. Wavill (representing Nyati Sisal Plantations)

Colonel Owen Thomas (representing East African Estates)

Mr Laurence Phillips (representing the London Chamber of Commerce)

1.

Concessions

- 14350 - 20

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MR HARCOURT: You would probably like to amplify your letter a little.

MAJOR GUEST: The whole point of our discussion arose on some of the Companies interested in East Africa finding themselves suddenly put to great difficulty with regard to labour. The question had really been boiling up for a considerable time but it came to a head when certain of the companies interested very suddenly were met with the difficulty of knowing how they were to continue to maintain their establishments going at all. After that we called a meeting of all the various interests concerned in the country, both highland and coast interests, and had an informal discussion, and they appointed a certain number of us to draw up something in the way of a suggestion with which we could approach the Colonial Office in this country. We quite realised that there was in East Africa a Commission now sitting enquiring into the labour question, but we did not think the Commission out there would entirely represent the whole of the views because the people out there are mainly those who are carrying on the work in the plantations, while those here are largely those who are financing the plantations, and we think that both views should be as far as possible represented. In going into the question we divided it rather into heads in the Report which we suggested, namely the question first of obtaining the labour in the Protectorate, secondly how that labour was to be obtained and brought down to the plantations, thirdly, whether a system of registration of native labour could be introduced into the

Colony, and lastly such questions as the drink question in the Colony altogether. These are the main points into which we divided our Report. I think each of the gentlemen here is well qualified to give you any further information you would like to have with regard to any of these points.

MR HARCOURT: Would they like to speak now on the various points?

MAJOR GUEST: I thought perhaps you would prefer to ask us questions and we could each answer any technical point or any particular point which struck you.

MR HARCOURT: I have been studying your paper and a few questions occurred to me; I made a few notes on the various proposals and if you would like me just to speak to you generally on the paper you can make any observations you like or give me any information I want later on. Of course, the prohibition of native labour on the Coast may as you know be relaxed on the provision of proper housing, that is to say if the Governor is satisfied that the labour which is taken there will be properly housed. Has anything been done in that direction or could something more be done in the way of some form of housing for them which would enable the prohibition to be removed? As Major Guest has said, there is a Local Commission sitting and we must wait for their findings and recommendations, but I understand you would like some communication of your views to be made to them. Now I do not think we could possibly adopt the method suggested of taking your evidence before a member of the Colonial Office, but if you like to draw up a sort of brief of individuals' views and forward it to us I will see that it goes out and is brought

to the notice of the Commission there. Of course it is not the same thing as if your evidence was given to the Commission because you are not subject to any examination by the people on the spot; but still I have no doubt it would be of assistance to them, and it will certainly go out through the Colonial Office, if that would meet your views, any statements or recommendations you like to draw up on the matter.

I ought to remind you, although you are quite well aware of it of course, that the Government recruiting of labour, that is to say the recruiting by the Government itself or their officials, has always been refused as a policy by my predecessors and I have continued that policy. You will be familiar probably with the lines laid down by Lord Crewe in one of his despatches to the Government of the East African Protectorate. One of the reasons, and there are many, for that decision is that of course Government recruiting is always liable to be misunderstood; it is considered by some of the natives and by other people as being something in the nature of forced labour. A man thinks he cannot refuse to be recruited by the Government or an official, whereas he could refuse to be recruited by an ordinary trader or individual.

You have made the suggestion that there should be a standardised form of contract. I do not know that you used the word "standardised" but that is what is really meant by it. I would see no objection to a standardised form of contract if that were a convenience, but I would feel very strongly that it must still be signed and explained before a Magistrate

in order that the native shall understand the terms on which he is entering into the contract, and perhaps you would say whether under these circumstances a standardised contract would be of any use to you. If it would, I would enquire of the Governor whether such a form could be prepared, but that would not omit the signing and explanation before the Magistrate.

Then you refer to the point of an employers' Federation in connection with the obtaining of labour, but you do not seem to be unanimous on that point and I will be glad if one of you will tell me what is the objection to an Employers' Federation on the part of some of those who have signed the Memorial subject to the omission of that part of it.

Then you come to the question of taxation and you suggest collective as well as individual taxation. I am not clear on the question of what is to be the method of the collective taxation, but with regard to the individual taxation you produced a sort of debating argument for taxation on the ground that the land <sup>is</sup> ~~represents~~ the interest which the natives have, in fact, that the taxation is rather to be fixed on the amount of land the native has got. That is not really a very effective debating point, because the true answer is of course that originally they had all the land and now they have a reserve. As you know, we have <sup>6</sup> considered what the answer is likely to be; but of course the argument also put forward <sup>is</sup> that in exchange for a part of the country we have given them law, order and what Lord Cranworth would call Missionaries also. I am not sure that Lord Cranworth thinks the natives

value all these things at the full market price. I notice in Lord Cranworth's book, which I read with much interest, that he quoted the general opinion there as being that the general statement is that the native will not work and that he must be made to work.

LORD CRANWORTH: I do not think I said that exactly, Sir.

MR HARCOURT: I do not attribute these words specially to you.

LORD CRANWORTH: I said that was the point of view of some people; I did not say it was mine or the general opinion.

MR HARCOURT: Yes, but it is the view which has been put forward, by the Commission by Mr Russel Bowker very strongly. There are two contradictory views as to what would be the effective way of making him work.

Lord Cranworth says that in East Africa the opinion is that anyone but a fool would know that the only way to make them work is a Poll Tax, but I think you went on to say that the opinion in Rhodesia was quite different.

LORD CRANWORTH: May I explain that? It is hardly quite fair to state that now because I think what I said in my book was that four years ago when I left East Africa there were very much modified labour troubles, and the view you have mentioned was very strongly expressed then that if you increased the Hut Tax you would increase the labour supply, and it is quite true to say that when I went down to Rhodesia I got the view just as strongly expressed that if you increased the Hut Tax you would increase the price but not the quantity of labour.

MR HARCOURT: It does not increase the supply but the rate of wages.

LORD CRANWORTH: Yes. I do not think that is a view held



either in the one case or the other now.

MR HARCOURT: I was putting the two contradictory views you had put in your book. There is another point you have ~~now~~ <sup>24</sup> put to me ~~is that~~ and that is what rate of wages you would propose. There is a certain amount of evidence by ~~planters~~ <sup>planters</sup> given before this Local Commission which seems to point to a determination to keep wages down. There was a statement made there as to the great harm done by employers paying six rupees a month instead of four, but I know that in 1908 the Governor at that time estimated the proper and usual rate of wages as being from six to nine rupees a month with food.

COLONEL THOMAS: That is on the Coast.

MR HARCOURT: Only on the coast? I would like to hear about wages when you come to it.

COLONEL THOMAS: You would decrease the amount of labour by bringing down the wages.

LORD GRANWORTH: On the other hand do you think you will increase the supply by raising wages?

MR HARCOURT: I will come to that point in a moment because I have something to say on that. Some of you here know that lately I have been in communication with Somaliland on the question of bringing some Somalis to East Africa, and perhaps I might as well read the telegrams which have passed. This is my telegram to the Commissioner in Somaliland: "Coast planters British East Africa desire to know whether native labourers could be recruited in Berbera for work on coast plantations; would send representative make all arrangements. It is proposed to repatriate at end of annual contract. Please

telegraph your opinion as to possibility of recruiting <sup>and</sup> the approximate number available rates of wages and suitability of natives. You will <sup>understand</sup> remember this is preliminary inquiry only and that before any emigration would be permitted Governor of East African Protectorate would have to be consulted". This was the reply.

"Native labour could be recruited without difficulty.

Somali is not accustomed to plantation work but reported to be quite satisfactory while employed by Fibre Company Somaliland. Wages seven rupees per month males five rupees women and children with food. <sup>Supplies suggest</sup> first shipment of 200 or 300 only in order to test effects of coast climate etc. Welcome scheme as means of relieving destitute families in Somaliland". Then I telegraphed to the Governor of the East African Protectorate:

"Terms agreed by planters concerned and they ask that you may be consulted by telegram. Should be glad reply by telegram by Tuesday morning if possible as I receive deputation on the general labour question then. Amplify <sup>by</sup> your despatch if necessary"; and I have this telegram today from Mr Belfield: "Your telegram of the 14th December.

No objection to experiment in recruiting of Somalis always provided annual contract imposed on employers obligation to provide adequate and suitable food and house accommodation for labourers and dependents, <sup>free of cost to</sup> ~~the coast~~ labourers <sup>and to</sup> could be repatriated if requested by the labourer or the Government at the end of the annual <sup>term</sup> contract or any extension of the engagement. Requirements of labour <sup>as</sup> should be stated by Commissioner of Somaliland and contract settled in accordance with such requirements. No necessity to amplify <sup>by</sup> despatch."

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so that so far that tentative experiment may go on I hope. Of course the secret of successful labour employment as Lord Cranworth has again said in his book is very much dependent on the individual employer or at all events it produces a very considerable effect. Some men always seem able to keep their labourers and to obtain more while some others for some inexplicable reason or perhaps for reasons which may be obvious there are not able to keep their labourers; but on the whole Lord Cranworth took a hopeful view of the future of labour and I should be glad to know whether you would ~~and~~ think these <sup>from the booklet</sup> words apply: "Taking the labour question as a whole I believe, although undoubtedly the Protectorate has trials to go through and difficulties to overcome in the immediate future, there is no part of Africa in which the <sup>ultimate</sup> outlook is better or more assured".

LORD CRANWORTH: I certainly think so but I do not know that other people do.

MR HARCOURT: On the Local Commission which is inquiring now it has been stated that of these months contract men are readily obtained for the Magadi Railway from Meru: is that so?

MAJOR DEBATT: No Sir, I am able to tell you. I have been in communication with the Magadi Company to-day and they wished me to say that they are very sorry their Representative was unable to meet you, but they are actually 25 per cent under their requirements and they see no immediate hope of making that up. Their works have been very seriously delayed and they are quite anxious about the time when their contract work will be finished. They could give no date for finishing their work. <sup>The statement was made before the Commission that the natives are too well off to go to</sup>

work.

MR. HARCOURT: That may be so but I do not think in the long run you will be able ~~visibly~~ to force them to work by taxing them into increased poverty, because that is really what it comes to. But I believe a great deal might be done with prosperity by creating wants and supplying them at a price, and the price to satisfy those wants could only be obtained by labour. I had a very remarkable interview with a gentleman from Uganda who knows the natives very well, a few weeks ago, and he said that the natives there had taken enormously to work, to labour generally; I said "Why?" and he said "Because they have developed so many wants." I said "What sort of wants?" and he specified a number like trinkets, cheap clocks, and various things.

LORD CHANWORTH: And drink.

MR. HARCOURT: Ah Yes I know; you would have to keep them from that, as you are anxious to do I see, but if you can develop the wants for the products of civilization for which they will have to pay, you will not only be doing good to the labour <sup>market</sup> there but doing good to Trade generally and <sup>our home</sup> ~~their own~~ trade. I am not at all sure that eventually you will not find men coming into the labour market more from the desire to satisfy those wants than you will by any amount of taxation which it would be possible to impose.

The Governor proposed in 1910 a poll tax on the able bodied males who did not pay hut tax and to exempt those who had done a month's work either for the Government or an approved private employer. I am not sure that that has ever been carried out; I rather think it has not and I do not know why, but I

will communicate with the Governor and see whether these proposals could be conveniently and properly carried out now. No doubt there <sup>ought</sup> would be some alleviation probably in that direction.

In part of your letter I do not quite understand what you mean by the suggestion that ~~men~~ who reach a certain standard of technical proficiency should be granted some distinct <sup>ive</sup> privilege.

MAJOR GUEST: That was that any men who ~~had~~ been through any industrial concern should wear some distinctive badge whereby his own <sup>self</sup> respect would be raised in comparison with other natives who had done nothing. It was thought by several persons who are at present on our Committee that there was a good deal to be done rather more by a caste system being produced with regard to labour so that a man would be in a higher caste if he had achieved certain technical work.

MR. HARCOURT: How would you mark the caste?

MAJOR GUEST: We proposed it by means of a badge.

MR. HARCOURT: I did not know that the badge was to be a ~~mark~~ of distinction.

MAJOR GUEST: That is what was proposed.

MR. HARCOURT: I was just coming to the badge. It was to be the registration of all natives by a metal disc.

MAJOR GUEST: No, that is a separate thing; there was the main registration question to register all natives by means of a metal disc, but this proposal was that some natives who had <sup>attained</sup> ~~attained~~ a certain industrial proficiency should be granted a badge to put them on a higher status.

MR. HARCOURT: Perhaps you would not mind in some subsequent communication elaborating that a little as I do not understand the suggestion. Then on the question of the registration generally and the metal disc proposed, that of course means a universal poll tax

which I may say I think is impossible yet. The hut or the poll tax was only to be extended and is only being extended as the development of the Province may allow but it is not being made universal at present. I do not quite know why identification seems to be specially <sup>difficult</sup> ~~serious~~ in East Africa, <sup>difficult</sup> ~~serious~~ than in West Africa. We have not found <sup>anywhere</sup> the difficulty of identification suggested but there may be of course some special reason why it is difficult there. There is another point I want to ask you to suggest that facilities should be given for families to accompany labourers; that is part of the letter.

MAJOR GUEST: That is more with a view to their coming down to the Coast from the Highlands.

MR. HARCOURT: I did not understand from you by whom the facilities were to be given and how they were to be assured: is it to be part of the Contract?

MAJOR GUEST: In the main it would be railway facilities or facilities on the route by which they would come in from their native reserves to the Plantation Works.

MR. HARCOURT: There would be accommodation provided for them.

MAJOR GUEST: Yes.

MR. HARCOURT: Do you mean by "Railway facilities" free passages?

MAJOR GUEST: I think reduced rates certainly.

MR. HARCOURT: Then there is another point that is new to me and the Office and that is that there is a high percentage charged to natives on changing rupees.

MAJOR GUEST: That is a very great grievance out there; they bring the money up in small change -----

MR. HARCOURT: I wish you would give me some ~~facts~~ <sup>further</sup> evidence about that; I do not say that I doubt it but I wish something further to put to the Governor.

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It is quite a new point to me.

MR POWYS COBB: I have brought several test cases on that particular point but in each case it was lost because the Law did not cover the point. I brought these test Cases at one of the Court Stations and the Assistant Commissioner there was very keen on giving to obtain a conviction because he quite agreed that it was a most improper practice, but the Law could not be stretched so far as to cover the point.

MR. HARCOURT: It want<sup>s</sup> some amendment of the Law.

MR POWYS COBB: Yes.

MAJOR LEGGATT: I have known the same thing at the other end of the country it is like there. The ten cent piece goes for the value of 6 or 8 cents when exchanged by the Indians in the Bazaar, speaking not only of wages but of trade.

MR POWYS COBB: The matter goes so far that we are afraid to pay our boys in notes, we have to pay them in cash because there is even a bigger percentage charged on changing notes than on changing the rupee. They go so far as to endeavour to deceive the natives as to the value of the paper notes. The natives of course cannot read.

COLONEL THOMAS: We had under the old system 16 notes in a rupee and 16 <sup>notes</sup> ~~notes~~ would amount to 96 cents. Now a rupee is 100 cents and the Indian will give you when he changes the rupee 96 cents and he says that is a rupee. That used to be the old rupee, but if you go to the Post Office you will get 16 stamps and 4 cents for your rupee, and that is how to get over the difficulty. That is the time when they started deducting 4 cents from the hundred.

MR. HARCOURT: I will make some enquiries and see if we can improve that situation. As to the restrictions on wine drinking, of course that is governed by the

*Pabu* Wine Ordinance but as to spirits I would be glad to have a little more detail because the sale of spirits as you know is prohibited although you speak of it in your letter as being "regulated." It is prohibited, and if you think the sale of spirits to natives is increasing -----

MR. GUEST: It is the issue of licences to non-Europeans for the sale of liquor. I admit it is regulated and we think possibly it should be regulated but we think great advantage is taken of that in the sale of liquor to the natives themselves.

MR. HARCOURT: I would like to consider the whole question of the native ~~there~~ <sup>General</sup> who under the circumstances of his life, the climate and the land, really is in the position of the idle rich and the suggestion is that the only way to make him work is by something in the nature of a single tax shall we say? That <sup>elsewhere</sup> may have a wide application but no doubt the hut tax and poll tax to a certain extent encourage work in order to provide the money which he has to pay under those taxes.

The women  
COL. NEL THOMAS: ~~XXXXXX~~ generally provide the money.

MR. HARCOURT: Yes I know and I suppose if that were true in all cases the larger hut or poll tax would be provided also by the women.



MR. POWYS COBB: I think we ought to attach more importance to the value of the Tax, because it can be remitted for labour, than the actual imposition of the Tax itself. I do not think the idea is to tax the natives into poverty but the idea is, and I certainly in my own mind think, that the value of the tax lies far more in that it gives you something you can remit in return for work, because the man who works I think is entitled to some consideration, he has done something to raise himself in the social scale, he has evolved somewhat, and his progress I think should be recognised.

MR. HARCOURT: On the whole of this matter, of course, I must ~~ask advice~~ <sup>ask</sup> from the men on the spot. I shall consult the Governor and see what the findings of this Commission are. They have very wide Terms of Reference. Being here, I am in the position of ~~one~~ <sup>one</sup> who ~~has~~ <sup>has</sup> said to "sit at home glibly ordering the affairs of better men ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~me~~." I am very anxious to assist in every way the humane and economic development of East Africa. I think I have shown that in the loans which I have been able to obtain in order that development should not be retarded. I will consult with the Authorities and I will do all that seems tolerable and just and profitable to assist what I really believe may be made something in the nature of a White Man's Land. Perhaps you will supplement your ~~own~~ information in relation to one or two of the questions I have asked, either now or in writing later, and I would be delighted to listen to any observations you like to make on anything I have said.

LORD CRANWORTH: You asked just now with regard to the Employers' Federation, and I think it is only right

that I should put the point of view of the highlands with regard to that matter. Between the Coast lands and the highlands there is a large strip of uncultivated land as you are no doubt aware, and although it is bridged over the people at the coast and the people up-country are separated by a considerable gap and conditions are very different there. Up country there are a lot of natives who work; down-country there are a good number but nothing like the same quantity. Wages at the coast are much higher than up country, and we up country and the Government up country are short of labour; Therefore a very considerable quantity of people whom I should think to be the majority up country, think that if a Masters' Federation were formed they would be forging a weapon whereby their own labour would be taken down to the coast. Up country, as you know, there is an enormous quantity of natives, millions, whose wants at present are very small. I take it the numbers employed now are being checked by this Inquiry and also the numbers wanted, but at all events it is quite certain that they amount to a very small per centage of the whole amount of labourers who could be employed and, as a great many think, they should do some work. Even although they are the idle rich they might contribute something. But until we have our wants supplied up-country I think the majority of the people would hesitate at all events to forge any weapon which would deplete their already-scanty available supply.

I think there is a certain feeling up-country that it would help matters if the boundaries of the native reserves were definitely fixed. There is a great

indefiniteness about the borders of these boundaries, and if they were definitely fixed one would know more or less how one stood. After all, it must be borne in mind that in the case of the Kikuyu their numbers have certainly quadrupled since we administered the country; formerly they occupied a very small tract of country of which they were very doubtful masters, because they had to take to the bush whenever their enemies came along, so that it is hardly fair to say that they were owners of the soil which they could not even defend.

MR HARGREAVES: I was not applying it to a particular tribe.

LORD CRANWORTH: They form the most of the labour up-country at all events. Now they have spread over a large and indefinite area and, as has been pointed out, they do no work either for themselves or anybody else. Such a thing as an able-bodied man doing work among the Kikuyu is practically speaking unknown, and that does not seem to be right, and it is strongly felt out there that it would be easy to devise some means by which these people should do a certain share of work either for themselves or for somebody else.

MAJOR GUEST: There are one or two points you brought out in your remarks, Sir, which I think might get some answer. You spoke with regard to the good employer being always able to get labour, and that was so until quite recently. In the old days it did very much depend on the personal character and the personal sympathy of the employer, but recently things have got to such a pitch that even the good employers cannot get their men, and that is one of the main reasons why we have had to bring this forward to you as a really

critical case. We certainly have gone through that period when the good employers could get men, but now there are no employers who can get an adequate number of men. The development of the country has gone on very rapidly and there is greatly more labour required than in the old days.

Then with regard to the housing question which is another thing you mentioned, I think if I may judge from what was the tone of those who discussed this question at our private meeting, there is no doubt the employers are quite willing to very carefully consider any suggestion the Government may have with regard to the housing of natives, especially if they felt that thereby they would get the assistance of the Government in getting labour, or having got the labour that they would be able to keep it better than they can at the present time.

MR HARCOURT: Is it a question only of housing at the coast?

MAJOR GUEST: I think that would apply to employers of labour throughout the whole country. There is no feeling that they want to put the natives in a difficult position, and that applies up-country as well.

LORD CRANWORTH: They are always provided with good accommodation.

MAJOR GUEST: As to the Government recruiting question which rather comes in with the suggestion of the Federation, the owners on the coast for the moment are much more vitally interested in this question because it has struck them harder, or rather it has struck them earlier, because they are the plantations which are more advanced. Although there are some big plantations up-country which employ a great number of

labourers, they have hardly got to the same stage of distress there from the labour point of view as at the coast, and the coast owners were more anxious to form this Federation than perhaps the highland owners would be. It seemed to us that even if the highland people do not feel disposed to agree to it now, they certainly will with this coffee industry require more labourers, and they will feel it in the same way and possibly they may be glad to join in the Federation when the time comes. The suggestion was that the Government should be of assistance in providing the labour. It was not so much that they would hunt for the labour but that it would be under Government sanction and supervision, because there are many areas at the present time which are only administered by the Government and not necessarily available to the ordinary settler to get into even; and if he did it with the assistance of the Government it would open up a much wider field from which labour could be recruited.

Then with regard to the wants of the natives, I think that has been recognised and is certainly a policy which ought to be pursued. It is a policy which takes a long time. For instance, all round the Gaspero Plantations there are enormous numbers of natives but the administration pure and simple has hardly penetrated those districts yet.

As to the drink question on the coast, although it is being controlled by the Ordinance, there is no doubt that there are enormous abuses of that particular Ordinance.

MAJOR LEGGATT: It is hardly administered at all; it is a dead letter.

MAJOR GUEST: I had a long interview with Mr Bowring who was acting as <sup>Governor</sup> Consul there, with regard to this particular question, and his views would be well worth hearing on the point.

With regard to the main proposal of our general Report, the Poll Tax and the identification question, the Committee I think felt in the first place that you could not carry out the registration system without having to gather funds, and the Poll Tax apart from being an advantage from the point of view of bringing the men into touch with civilisation would be something to supply the cost necessary to carry out the registration. I think most of the people in the east African Protectorate seem to think the main solution lies in the Poll Tax and registration; although it may be an early stage to bring it in that is what they put great stress on.

MAJOR LEGGATT: May I say a word about the subject of taxation? Entirely apart from the question of whether taxation would or would not increase the inclination of the natives to come to work, it is actually the fact that Government taxation has been reduced and effectively reduced in the last few years. A rate of three rupees may or may not have been fair four or five years ago when they had practically no means to sell their own products, partly because the country was not open for the traders to penetrate the districts, and partly because the railway rates were too high to enable low-grade products to be exported at a profit to the trader and the native who sold. Therefore those natives in

the remoter districts were in a state of some poverty. Now by the reduction of rates on low-grade articles like maize, during the past few years the natives has practically been making off one acre of land what it took him two or three acres' cultivation to get before from the sale of the products. Taking the Kavirondo Province this year the output of their products of low-grade articles amounted to 18,000 tons and the railway rate has been reduced from 18 rupees, or £1: 4., to 10 rupees per ton. That has been practically a present from the railway companies to the natives of £12,000 on the ~~amount~~ of the year's output, which is one-fifth of the total amount of taxation raised from the natives in that Province. Those are the figures. It means even more than that because after all, it is the surplus value of the products of the natives which really gets the full benefit, I mean taking into account the ocean rate and all the other items, the net value to the native on the spot has actually increased by the amount of eight rupees per ton which has been taken off the railway rate. We see the effect in that Province which I have named, and the curious thing is that it actually reacts to the disadvantage of the native himself if he should be disinclined to work and do very little. He sells his output when he has a bumper year and does not do enough work another year and there is not enough reserve of money in the district for them to purchase food stuffs when these periodical famines, so called, (which are really not famines in any other country) come round; they are temporary shortages largely brought about by their own improvidence and their own inducement to be lazy. That I think is perhaps worth being noted

because it has not been put forward as a point at all in connection with taxation. It is outside your point, as to whether taxation increases their desire to work and so on.

On the point of their wants I believe you will hear from your officers in that country that their wants have hardly increased at all in the last four years. The sons of Chiefs have, it is true, taken to riding bicycles and a little more trade is done with certain of the more enlightened tribes. You can see from the figures of the imports divided over the total population of the country how much it is, and it is astonishing how little it is considering that there are eight million natives in East Africa and Uganda. So that if it is to be a question of waiting until their wants have induced them to do labour, all our plants will have gone to seed and our coffee will be lying on the ground if we have to wait for that. We are all agreed as to the eventual righting of matters in that way, but I do not think it will meet our immediate needs to rely upon it.

MR POWYS COBB: A good deal has been said from time to time about the housing of natives, and I think all of us are very keen on endeavouring to make our native both healthy and contented, and so a good many of us have studied these questions closely. I think the housing question has been altogether exaggerated. My own experience is that the native prefers to live in his own grass hut. I have tried various forms of huts, weather-board huts with brick chimneys and fireplaces and cement floors; corrugated-iron huts and the ordinary native huts with a wattle door and palm-leaf roof, but you can only



get the native to live in those huts under compulsion. They prefer to build their own huts as well as to select the sites for them. I think far more could be done towards their health by a strict system of sanitation. It is a most difficult thing to enforce but I believe it is far more important, and the other point which adds very much to their comfort and health is a good water supply. First of all there must be the provision of water and then efficient steps must be taken to prevent pollution of that water.

You were speaking of a standard form of contract, but I do not think one standard form could be applied to the whole country. Each industry will require to have its own form. Then as to your point that it must be signed before a Magistrate, the existence of that rule at the present time causes a great many of us not to sign on our boys at all because the registration fee we pay is a pure waste of money. That brings us to the point of the question of identification. The reason why that registration fee is wasted is that if a boy breaks

his contract and runs away he cannot be identified, he disappears into the wilderness and nothing more is heard of him. If some system of registration existed no boy could move anywhere without producing his metal disc and showing who he was and where he came from. It would help enormously towards the apprehension of offenders of all sorts, not only deserters but offenders of all sorts. It seems an extraordinarily simple thing, a metal disc bearing a letter indicating the Province and another letter perhaps indicating the district and the date to indicate the year, so that the registration badge of this year would not be palmed off as the one for next year. If they had a hole pierced through it and the native carried it round his neck it would be a fairly indestructible thing and not easily lost. It seems such a very small interference with the liberty of the subject and seems likely to produce considerable results.

709  
 You were speaking of the way we ask for families to be brought down. One of the main reasons for bringing the families to the labourers is that by so doing we should get over the cooking question. The whole of the Medical Officers I think agree that one of the great reasons why natives when moved from one district to another are sometimes unhealthy is because they have to feed on badly cooked food. Supposing you endeavoured to establish a system of supernumerary men to cook the food for the other men living in that hut, you would find there as a good deal of discontent and mistrust. They do not trust each other because they think the cook is stealing the food and in nine cases out of ten they are right

25

If they have their women folk with them that difficulty is overcome. It is obvious that when a man comes home from a day's work he is not likely to spend a proper amount of time in cooking his porridge thoroughly; he will just get it hot and eat it, and half the stomach troubles the men suffer from come from that. But even so the health on the Coast where conditions have been reasonably favourable has been quite satisfactory. For example I have been working at Kikuyu for nearly 5 years on the Coast and I think my average daily has been 200 men at work and in 5 years I have lost 7 men which is not a bad percentage. The point I want to emphasise is that we employers of labour are as keen as anybody on getting healthy contented labour and that it is very much to our interest to be so; we should be exceedingly foolish to aim at any other result and any assistance or advice we get from your Medical Officers and so on in East Africa are very gratefully received.

MR. WAVILL: With regard to the standardisation of contracts it seems to me that apart from the fact that the Registration Fee which is paid under the present conditions for taking a Native before the Magistrate is a waste of money, it is almost impossible on a Plantation employing 100 or 200 men some miles from the nearest Town where there is a Magistrate to carry out the Regulation. Perhaps 20 or 30 men are coming and going every day and it is impossible to take every man who signs on into the Town and get the thing done officially.

MR. HARCOURT: Do you change 20 or 30 men every day do you think?

MR. WAVILL: There are very few plantations employing so

many men now; in a few years time when things are in working order some of them will employ 500 or more and on the average there will be 10 or 20 men and even more signing on and going away every day or every few days at any rate. The conditions are always approximately the same; everybody working on a plantation knows more or less what the the rates of pay on that particular plantation are; for instance we always pay our workmen the same; the ordinary workman gets so much and the head-man so much more. The same with the rations. They all know the conditions. To have the things signed and registered before a Magistrate does not help the Native to understand. It is not as if the conditions were complicated or different in individual cases. I think that was one of the most practical suggestions that was arrived at at this Committee Meeting that there be some standard form of contract put before the Government for their approval that it may be taken as read and that every workman employed on the plantation understood what it was and that if he was taken on under this contract he might be considered as having concurred in it.

COLLIER THOMAS: I think it is fair to say that we have more Natives working to-day than we have ever had in East Africa but at the same time it must be admitted that the scarcity of labour to-day is actually more acute than ever it was. In the case of a good many planters on the Coast owing to increase of settlers in the Highlands and Planters on the Coast and the great extensions of Public Works on the Government, labour has not increased equally to the demand owing possibly to the system of recruiting. Recruiting has been done in a very slipshod manner by professional recruiters who go to the Chiefs. I believe they apply

to the Chiefs and say "Send 100 men down to the Coast and I will give you so much each". We do not know what he pays. This native Chief, who has a certain power over his men, says "You must go, you must go, you must go", and it is the weakest men of his tribe of course who will submit to his rule, and they are sent down. I have been on the Coast when 300 or 400 of those men were brought down, and the moment they came down 90 were sent back at the Government expense because those men were not fit to be sent away from the highlands. That accounts for a good many of the deaths that occur on the Coast, because these men who recruit them do not care; they get three rupees a head for recruiting. These are not the men I should like to do the recruiting in a country like East Africa. These poor men are sent down who are unable to work and some of them die on the way. A great many die within the first fortnight or three weeks; they cannot cook their food or do anything. We had the Government recruiting in the country at one time, but that was rather unsatisfactory as the Government could not please everybody, and these men were certainly not able to please anybody. We are very keen on federation. I quite understand from what Lord Cranworth said, that the people up country might think we were to take all the labour away, but still, as he says, there are millions of them in the country, and I think with a proper system of recruiting, and treating these men properly - bringing them down in a decent way, not herding them like cattle - there would be no difficulty in getting enough labour for the Coast as well as the highlands. In the country there is plenty of material, and I am very keen on federation myself. Just before Sir Percy Girouard left East Africa this question was brought before him

and he said "I shall be very pleased indeed; it is the very thing you want and I shall be very pleased to lend you an Official to supervise and see that the ~~thing~~ thing is carried on properly". I thought of it afterwards and I think I was responsible to a certain extent for bringing up this question of federation. At present we are employing different men and they are competing one with the other and sending a mass of men to us but the whole thing is most unsatisfactory. We have spent some thousands of pounds along the Coast and labour is <sup>so</sup> ~~very~~ scarce that our plantations are in a very bad way indeed in fact unless we have labour in the next six months we shall practically be ruined. The weeds grow to such a height on the Coast, 6 or 7 or 8 feet <sup>high</sup> ~~high~~ that everything is smothered and lost. We lost about 500 acres of rubber last year and had to replant the whole area on account of labour being difficult to get, and what we should like on the Coast if the up-country people are not in favour of Federation is that the Government should assist us. We are prepared to finance the whole thing and I quite feel that I cannot ask the Government to do everything; we must do something ourselves. I look to what has been done in other countries, for instance in South Africa where they recruit labour and they have got their own Associations and they bear all the expense. We feel we must do that; what we feel is that we must have Government ~~sympathy~~ sympathy so that they may understand that we are treating our men in a right way. Some employers may not treat their men well but it is rather awkward that we are all placed on the same footing as not treating the Native as he should be treated. In our case we have built iron houses for them and done everything we could possibly think of. Some men died there because

they sent down men who were not fit to come to the Coast.

MR POWYS COBB: You asked what exactly we meant by the facilities for the men coming down and on their way back. The point is that if men are recruited up country they have to be taken care of until they reach the plantation and until they get back again to their homes; that is to say in the district where they are recruited they should be collected together at one central point and there should be some sort of camp with a decent water supply. It would be a great help if that was near a Station, as the Station hands could keep that sanitary and ready for the recruits to occupy when they came in. On their march to the Railway it seems imperative that there should be regular standing camps at the end of each day's march. Again we should have <sup>to have</sup> a water supply. Again when they reach the Railway instead of being sent down in the ordinary trains as they are now if they were being recruited on a proper system they would arrive at the Railway in a train load and a special train could take them down; and instead of coming down one with individual tickets they could be sent down on one Bill of Lading, because if they go down on tickets the probabilities are that at the second or third station they come to the Indian Ticket Collector will tell them that the ticket is not good for the whole of the journey and that they must take another one and so they get considerably swindled on their journey. Then again on arrival at the Coast they need looking after, and on the return journey it is even more important that they should go back in train loads and be booked through so that the continual robbing on the journey may not take place

*3.0.17*

and again that they should be marched back by a regular line of camping places. I think all those are things which are very well worth attention because many complaints I believe of the condition in which Natives have arrived back at Fort Hall are <sup>due</sup> to the ~~fact~~ <sup>fact</sup> that they have been robbed on their way up from the Coast.

MR HARCOURT: Is that by the Railway Indians?

MR POWYS COBE: These are not the only people; there are a great many semi-civilized natives now who appear to make their living out of the ignorance of the returning plantation lands. There is a very thorough <sup>of examining</sup> system all round Mombasa now; they crimp there as thoroughly as anywhere in the World I think.

MR HARCOURT: Well, Gentlemen, I will consider all the things you have told me. I will consult the Governor of East Africa and in addition I will send out to this Commission any documents or expression of views you like to put before me, not of course with the imprimatur but merely <sup>as</sup> ~~with~~ the consent pipe for their setting there, if that would be any convenience to you. In the meantime I can only promise you the fullest consideration.

MAJOR BURTON: I think we shall have some advantage to the Country if at any rate we could get before the Colonial Office in this country, an extremely urgent question is, so much so, that really there are many plantations on the verge of feeling that they must close down. It means so much money thrown away and so much development of the country retarded. It is from that point of view that we have tried to impress it on the Colonial Office at home. We thank you, <sup>very much</sup> Sir, for receiving us.

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23 Dec. 1912

(No 897)

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit to you the accompanying copy of a letter <sup>x</sup> from received from representatives of leading planting interests in the E.A.P. on the subject of the supply of labour in the Protectorate. I received a deputation of those concerned on the 16<sup>th</sup> of Dec. and I sat down, for purposes of record, <sup>a copy of the notes</sup> of the minutes of the discussion which took place on that occasion.

You will observe that I have undertaken to send to you, for communication to the local Commission which is considering the subject, <sup>which I may receive</sup> any statement of the views of

DRAFT

E. Afr. Prot. 20. 897

Sr. Belfield

MINUTE.

- Mr. Bodin, 23/1
- Mr. Rand 23
- X Sir G. Fiddes 23
- Sir H. Just.
- X Sir J. Anderson. 23
- Lord Emmott.
- Mr. Harcourt.

for comment

~~Large the Hon. W. G. P. P. v. others 200 (38292)~~

~~Notes of proceedings at deputation 9/10/12 (40322)~~

x No 38293  
 + No 40323  
 - 14349-20

Concessions

of those represented on the  
deputation

2. You will understand that  
in reading your ~~Memorandum~~ notes  
I have no desire to anticipate  
your ~~own~~ recommendations, which  
you may make as a result of  
the report of the Local Commission,  
which is now enquiring into the subject.  
On the most important points, however,  
that of the possibility of direct  
Govt. intervention in labour

I concur in  
recruiting, ~~from~~ ~~abroad~~  
brought in the views of my  
as expressed in my  
Memorandum ~~and~~ ~~of~~ ~~contained~~  
in ~~the~~ ~~Commission~~ ~~desp.~~ ~~no.~~ ~~420~~

of the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, 1908, ~~and~~  
with ~~the~~ ~~Commission~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~15<sup>th</sup>~~ ~~of~~ ~~October~~  
1908. But the notes will

indicate to you certain points on  
which you will as doubt consider  
it desirable to withhold the  
reply which was in my possession  
when I received the deputation and  
may also be of some use  
in showing matters of detail  
to which attention should be

2109 5/08  
[The desp. no 3060/12  
has conf. & should not be  
referred to (LW)]

† No. 8 (th) in  
[Cd. 5194],  
June, 1910

Specialty directed in considering  
the general question. You will  
notice for instance that the same  
discussion

reference was made to the different  
aspects of the labour problem, as  
viewed from the standpoint of  
those interested in upland or  
coast plantations, both in the  
matter of wages and in that of the  
machinery for organizing labour

3. As regards particular  
matters which were discussed,

I believe that in L. 1000 (L. 1000)  
(no 294 of the 19<sup>th</sup> of May 1908)  
covering the report of the labour inquiry of 1908  
in James Hays, & Co. proposed  
that a decision of full time  
should be allowed to those who  
who could show that they had  
looked for a week <sup>with</sup> for Govt or  
for an approved private employer  
so far as I am aware, this  
arrangement, which had been  
approved as a tentative measure,  
has not been carried into  
effect except to the extent that  
a notice has been put before

2109 5/08  
§ No 8 (f) in  
[Cd 5194], June, 1910.

before the tax was substituted  
 for payment of monthly labour  
 for the Govt. It appears from  
 Encl: no: 6 to the same despatch  
 that Sir J. Hays, Sadler  
 expressed himself as agreeing to  
 the principle of a dividend  
 receipts for tax. I am not aware  
 what form of receipt has been  
 adopted, but it may be, as the  
 deputation pointed out, that  
 the form is both insufficiently durable  
 and useless for purposes  
 of identification. I should however  
 require to be satisfied, as to the  
 security for the change before I  
 could agree to the failure being  
 a metal badge <sup>being regarded</sup> as proof of  
 non-payment of tax, both that  
 a real security for a more permanent  
 form of receipt exists and that  
 the difficulty of identifying  
 labourers who desert is so much  
 greater in the E.A.P. than elsewhere  
 that a <sup>special</sup> means of  
 identification is essential.

21093/08

4 I need only draw your attention  
 in general terms to the statements  
 as to the unsatisfactory character  
 of many of the present labour agents

and as to <sup>the</sup> objections to which  
 labourers are subjected on their  
 way to and from their work,  
 but there are two points which  
 have an importance apart  
 from the immediate question  
 of labour and <sup>to</sup> which I  
 would invite you to give  
 careful consideration. <sup>The</sup> ~~deputation~~  
~~deputation~~ <sup>deputation</sup> ~~should~~ be taken to prevent  
 allegation that natives have to  
 submit to exorbitant exorbitant  
 in changing money or are defrauded  
 by misrepresentation of the character  
 or nature of currency notes should  
 be fully enquired into, and I  
 shall be glad to have any  
 recommendations you may  
 find it necessary to make  
 to prevent this evil. As  
 regards drink, I was not  
 informed by the deputation  
 of any <sup>regularly</sup> ~~defendants~~ in the regard  
 to spirits, and I <sup>you will as</sup> ~~do not~~  
 doubt be able to ~~convince~~ <sup>convince</sup> me  
 that the prohibition of sale of  
 to natives is strictly observed.

DRAFT.

MINUTE.

- Mr.
- Mr.
- Sir G. Fiddes.
- Sir H. Just
- Sir J. Anderson
- Lord Emmott
- Mr. Harcourt.

Spirits

have however already  
written from the Honorable  
despatch no. 615 of the 5<sup>th</sup>  
of Sept. that illegal dealings  
in palm wine take place  
in the Coast hinterland, and  
it would appear from the  
statements made to me by  
the deputation that similar  
conditions prevail in other  
districts. If you see this as so,  
and if you are satisfied that  
the <sup>illegal</sup> traffic in  
palm wine is a matter of such a harmful  
nature to the tribes you will of  
course consider the <sup>best</sup> measures  
which should be taken to  
enforce or strengthen the provisions  
of the Native Liquor Ordinances.

5. Some reference was made  
in the course of the discussion to  
the <sup>in</sup> prohibition of Gabirugy labor  
at the Coast and to the proposed  
introduction of Somali laborers.

I draw from your letter no. 209 of  
the 29<sup>th</sup> of Nov. that <sup>reference to</sup> the

30 6/12

X No 37980

556

forasmuch as the prohibition may  
be waived in cases in which you  
are satisfied that proper accom-  
modation and sanitation are  
provided. I have assumed you a  
another despatch on the second  
matter, and I shall be  
interested to learn the result  
of the preliminary experiment  
for which it is proposed to  
make arrangements at once.

Yours faithfully  
L. I. Lane etc