

EAST AFR. PROT.
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Last previous Report
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"EAST AFRICAN STANDARD"

Records impressions of the East African Press in general and the action of the Standard in regard to native unrest. Considers a really respectable paper and one of the crying needs of the Protectorate.

Dr. G. Fuller

Wait until Mr Anderson sends the question again?

H. J. R.

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GOVERNMENT HOUSE
NAIROBI.
BRITISH EAST AFRICA.

11th March, 1913.

EAST AFRICA PROTECTORATE.

CONFIDENTIAL No. 25.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your despatches Nos. 49 and 88 of the 21st and 31st January respectively and to submit the report which I gather from Mr Read's letter of the 29th idem to Mr A. G. Anderson you are expecting from me.

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The Standard
Dec 15th - page 16.

2. I had not previously thought it necessary to address you on the subject but in view of this correspondence I feel bound to record my impressions of the East African Press in general and the action taken by the Standard in this case in particular.

The Standard
Dec 21st - page 17.

3. I have always strongly believed in the public usefulness of a well-conducted Press and have felt that it is one of the duties of Government to co-operate with the papers as far as possible in order to promote a good understanding between the official and non-official elements of the community. I must admit, however, that I have had to modify this view very considerably in

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THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

LEWIS HARCOURT, P.C., M.P.,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES,

DOWNING STREET, LONDON, S.W.

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so far as this Protectorate is concerned.

4. None of the present journals, and I am led to believe that the same might be stated of those which have been published in the past, are edited, I will not say in an impartial spirit, for that would be perhaps too much to expect, but even with a reasonable accuracy and lack of prejudice. As for the Standard I am doubtful whether it represents the views of any considerable section of the community. As far as can be judged it is little more than the mouthpiece of the Proprietors and their family and as an organ of public opinion may be very largely disregarded. Any influence which it may possess is used to promote ill-feeling against the Government and racial antagonism between Europeans and natives, to ventilate the personal grievances of the Editor and his staff, and to advertise commercial enterprises, some of them none too reputable, in which the owners are interested. As an educative factor it is worse than useless and in the dissemination of news it displays a carelessness which, whether it be due to accident or design, renders its statements absolutely untrustworthy. Even in non-controversial matters this is specially noticeable. The dates of steamers and trains, the names of well-known residents, the movements of officials and private persons, and the composition of local committees and boards are constantly inaccurate. Not a number appears which is free

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from such mistakes, and, if this slovenliness is apparent when there is no special object to be gained by it, the perversions of fact which are published when some real or fancied advantage may be attained can readily be imagined.

5. For some time past the management of the paper has been fostering the idea of native unrest, for what useful purpose it is difficult to say, as the publication of such rumours would scarcely seem to further the best interests of the Protectorate. On December 14th appeared the article called Upcountry Unrest, to which reference is made in the issue of December 21st quoted by Mr A. G. Anderson in his letter of the 14th January to yourself. I attach a copy of this article, which was given the most prominent position in the paper. I think that it would be scarcely possible to find a more striking illustration of the Standard's editorial methods. The article purports to describe the incident in Sotik, which formed the subject of my despatch No. 897 of December 23rd, and the alleged panic amongst the settlers near Nakuru which is said to have resulted from it. You will observe that in spite of official information to the contrary it is stated that askaris and a European policeman were killed. The story that my railway carriage was sent up the line to rescue a well-known farmer is an absurd fabrication and nothing is known of the supposed

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supposed exodus of settlers from their farms. It is probable that the first news they had of it was from the columns of the East African Standard, a perusal of which might well have alarmed them.

6. I considered the publication of the article as a cruel and senseless proceeding calculated to cause much distress and apprehension to residents in outlying farms and when one of the members of the firm called upon me upon other business, I took an opportunity of informing him that the statements made must be withdrawn, adding that if he was unwilling to do so I should request the Editor of the other paper to publish an authoritative contradiction. As he declined to take this course I caused an official denial to be published in the "Leader".

7. I would invite your attention to a further paragraph which appeared in the very next issue of the Standard, the same which contains the account of the interview with myself referred to by Mr Anderson. It is headed 15 ASKARIS KILLED and contains another absolutely baseless falsehood, as the Editor could readily have ascertained by reference to the Secretariat.

8. I think that you will agree with me that the history of the foregoing transaction shows that the East African Standard so far from giving useful assistance to Government is determined at any sacrifice of truth to publish anything

anything calculated to damage and embarrass the Administration irrespective even of the harm which it incidentally does to the Protectorate as a whole.

9. I regret that it has been necessary to dwell upon this matter at such length. It may be thought that I have attributed undue importance to the utterances of an obscure and insignificant journal. It must however be remembered that the Editor claims all the rights and privileges which have been won for the Fourth Estate by the great names of journalism, even though his practice and principles are so strikingly at variance with the best traditions of the profession. He talks loftily of the Press and the People and arrogates to his publication the position held by the best English papers. He presumes to quote the alleged opinions of past Governors. I am unaware of the views of my predecessors in regard to the Standard, but if they are as stated by Mr Anderson I fear I must emphatically dissent from them.

10. In conclusion I can only regret that the "Leader" affords no solution of the problem. A really respectable paper is one of the crying needs of the Protectorate.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your humble, obedient servant,

H. G. B. B. B.

GOVERNOR,