

1925

E. AFRICA

NYASALAND PROT

35893

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FROM  
COLONIAL OFFICE

Date  
5th August 1925.

88

FOR CIRCULATION

NATIVE LABOUR IN NYASALAND

Mr.  
Mr.  
Mr. *[Signature]*  
Asst. U.S. of S.

Memo dated 15/6/25 prepared by Joint E. Board and submitted at Meeting at C.O. 31st Jul

Page U.S. of S.  
Part U.S. of S.  
Secretary of State

Previous Paper

MINUTES

*Rec. B.O. 35899/25  
de V. 58507/24 Nupt.*

*You agreed to the line  
& action (?) I have  
indicated on 35892 + 35891  
see also 35890*

*I am [ ] have never yet heard  
of a Colonial employer who admitted the  
existence of a surplus of labour. They  
and to complain of shortage in blankets  
when the population is 1100 to the  
square mile - and wages 10 a day.*

*W. G. [Signature]*

Subsequent Paper

MEMORANDUM

ON

NATIVE LABOUR IN NYASALAND

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Native labour conditions in Nyasaland may be described as fair. Although it is stated in the Report of the Parliamentary Commission that there is a surplus of labour this is not quite correct. During the dry season there is a surplus but this is due to the fact that during the wet season there is usually a shortage. A planter gets ample labour in the dry season and prepares a certain acreage of ground for planting. In the rains there is a shortage and often acreage has had to be abandoned or there is not sufficient labour to cultivate thoroughly and hence less, either by abandoning ground opened up, or by insufficient cultivation leading to poor yields per acre. In other words the scarcity of labour during the rains makes a surplus during the dry season.

This position has led to planters settling labourers on their land under an arrangement that they will work two months during the planting season. The natives are paid for their work and are usually not charged rent. By this means the difficulty is met to some extent but those who have not sufficient land to settle labourers on are usually short in the rainy season.

At present up-country labourers are mostly recruited privately either by the planter personally or by sending up approved native recruiters. It has been found in the past that professional labour recruiters and labour bureaux are not usually a success as the native always likes to know definitely, before he leaves his home, the person he is going to work with. He does not like to be sent wherever the recruiter or the Bureau pleases.

Owing to the position in Nyasaland, where the whole country outside the actual alienated lands is considered to be one large native reserve, there is not the same difficulty

is found in Kenya. Native workers are recruited, not only on the estates, but on the surrounding Crown lands and they usually apply for work voluntarily. Workers are recruited from a distance only and the free movement of labour is hampered owing to the want of railway communications.

Native labour difficulties become acute when development goes too fast. It has been found in Nyasaland that with normal development the increase of the native labour supply is also progressive and roughly keeps pace with development.

It may be noted that a large part of the exodus of labour from Nyasaland to South Africa (some 30,000) is largely due to the increasing civilization of the natives and not to want of work for them in Nyasaland. Many natives go to South Africa attracted by the different life there, in fact to see the world and get greater scope and variety for their energies.

Recruiting by the Government for private work is not likely to be approved. A private labour bureau has not been a success in Nyasaland chiefly for reasons given above. I am of opinion, however, that if Government established a proper Department of Native Affairs the responsible official should have definite instructions to keep in close touch with unofficial bodies directly representing employers of labour so that he could, on his part, be informed as to the amount of labour required by private employers, and, on the other hand, he could give private employers information regarding districts where labourers are seeking work and where employers are likely to get their requirements. He could also use moral suasion to encourage natives, who are not otherwise employed, to seek work informing them where it can be obtained and he would, of course, see that the terms and conditions were fair and reasonable and carried out in full.

The dual policy has been in operation for some years in Nyasaland but it is hampered for want of communications by which

the produce of outlying districts can be easily marketed. Better communications would help both the labour position and the production of economic crops by the natives.

Regarding the free movement of labour between the Territories, this is a very difficult matter. On the border there is no reason why natives should not voluntarily and of their own free-will pass from one territory to the other, but the people of Nyasaland would object to any arrangement whereby employers of labour in one territory were allowed to directly recruit labour in another except under very special circumstances. Objection has also been taken, for example, to the Rand, or Rhodesian Mines, or Labour Agents from Portuguese Territory, being allowed to send Labour Agents into Nyasaland to recruit labourers for the mines or farms in South Africa but, on the other hand, natives who voluntarily elect to leave the country and who have made provision for their families during their absence are free to go as they please.

So far as Nyasaland is concerned therefore we would object to any modification of the present situation whereby definite recruiting for places outside the Protectorate is prohibited (except under exceptional circumstances).

On the other hand, there is no interference with the natives who voluntarily leave the country to seek work elsewhere provided they make provision for their families.

Regarding internal labour questions, we think these can best be dealt with by frequent conferences between the official responsible for Native Affairs and associations of employers of labour.

Considering the developments which are taking place we are of opinion that there is no surplus of labour in Nyasaland and that the extension of communication would improve the labour position and quicken development which at present is largely restricted by the shortage of labour during the planting

planting season. The increased preference on Tobacco will lead to further extensions of acreage and important developments are taking place in the Tea area so that it is certain that there will be no lack of work for all the natives who wish to work in their own country.

(Sgt) R. S. HYNDE.  
15.6.25.