

Rev. Williams

~~20503~~NATIVE ECONOMIC COMMISSIONUMFUNDESWENI 6th NOVEMBER 1930 3.15 p.m.FORTYTHIRD PUBLIC SITTING

PRESENT:

Dr. J. E. Holloway, Chairman,
 Major W. R? Anderson, Mr. A. M. Mostert,
 Dr. H.C.M. Fourie, Dr. A. W. Roberts,
 Mr. F.A.W. Lucas, K.C. Senator P.W. leRoux van Niekerk.
 Mr.C. Faye, Secretary.

REV. STANLEY-HOOD WILLIAMS called and examined:-

(Rev. Williams) Before giving evidence, I would like to say that I have not come before this Commission through any feeling that I ought to give evidence or that I am qualified to give evidence; but I was asked to give evidence before the Commission, and that is why I am before you.

There are a few points that I am particularly interested in and in connection with which I have given notice I would like to speak about.

CHAIRMAN: Would you tell the Commission how long you have been here?- In this place?

All your experience of the Natives?- I have been in Native work now for from between eleven and twelve years. I have been 26 years in the country. This is my seventh year here.

Was your other experience in the territories too?- Yes, in the Transkei proper and in the Tsolo district and between Butterworth and Queenstown.

Will you carry on now, please?- In connection with this first section - factors leading to detribalisation, I want to say that I think the greatest of all factors leading to the detribalisation of Natives has been the economic one. It has been stated - I think General Smuts,

2008-2009

Rev. Williams

in the course of his lectures at Oxford, stated very strongly that the influence of the Church had been very pronounced in effecting detribalisation. But that has certainly not been my experience as a missionary. The influence of the Church is not a detribalising one. The missionaries have worked and are still working in very close harmony with the chiefs, and I do not see really how the Church has been a detribalising factor. What has lead to this has been the economic pressure, leading men to go out from the Native territories to work, and then many of them settling in the town locations. Some of them desert their families and others take their families to settle there. I do not know whether you wish to ask me any questions on this point.

I think, perhaps, if you run through the points first of all, it will be easier?- Then, with regard to the advantages or disadvantages of tribal conditions, I want to suggest there are two very real advantages of tribal conditions; the first political, and the second economic. Now, this is an advantage, not to the Native necessarily, but to the State. I think there is a distinct political advantage under tribal conditions, in this particular way: where these people live under tribal conditions and the power of the chief is strong, it tends to keep out the agitator; but wherever the influence of the chief becomes weakened, you have the agitator coming in with an open course and there is no counteracting influence. So that I think, on that political side, there is a tremendous advantage to the State in tribal conditions. The chief is a paid servant of the Government, and where his authority is upheld, he can use that wisely and well in the interests of the people and along the lines of Government requirements. Of course, the

Commission is aware that deep down in Native life there is a socialistic factor - almost a communistic element - and under tribal conditions there were no poor people; there were no orphans, no young children - no young fatherless child or motherless child - no unit of the tribe could suffer or starve. If my father or mother died, well, my uncle or my greatuncle or some distant relation took me up and care for me; and if my crop has failed and I have no food, some other member of the tribe will give me mealies and I have even a right to go to the chief and tell him I am starving and he will ngoma me a beast. It is a practice that the Commission is doubtless thoroughly familiar with. A beast may be loaned; a cow with a calf may be loaned, and this cow and calf be taken by the man and remain with him, perhaps for a period of year, and then the owner may wish to retake possession, and if there were three or four head of increase, one of these would be left with the person and the rest taken by the owner - known as the custom of ngoma. There are disadvantages, certainly, with tribal conditions, I think mainly in the way of limiting individual development. The natural conservatism of Native life is perhaps more pronouncedly seen under tribal conditions. The unit of the tribe not wishing to go against the public opinion of the tribe.

I do not propose to offer any evidence on Native customs. I am prepared to answer any questions to the best of my ability, if any should be put.

I do not wish to say anything under land or landless Native population, or Native migration.

With regard to Native agriculture, I would like to suggest that there is room, in addition to the training that is now undertaken by the Bunga - agricultural training. The Commission is doubtless aware of the training

Rev. Williams

that the Bunga undertakes for Native demonstrators, but in addition to that training, I think there is tremendous scope for a simplified form of training in the practical branches of agriculture for peasant proprietors. The Bunga is training today agricultural demonstrators, which are quite a useful factor in our communal life today, but I think that a simplified course of, say, one year, in the practical side of farming - teaching proper methods of ploughing and cultivation - leaving out the theory altogether, so that a peasant may come back and make better use of his small holding, would be an advantage.

I do not propose to say anything with regard to administration or afforestation.

With regard to Paragraph 6; under (6), mortality amongst adults and children, I wish to urge very very strongly that the time has come when there should be compulsory registration of Native births and deaths. Doubtless it has already been brought to the notice of the Commission that there is this tremendous contrast between our attitude towards stock and our attitude towards these human beings. If a beast dies for any cause - if it is slaughtered - a blood slide must be presented; but a hundred people may die, and there is no necessity for their death to be registered. Just as we require the registration of births and deaths of Europeans, I think the Government ought to insist upon the registration of Native births and deaths.

I wish to say, also, under the next heading with regard to Native stock: I know that some of the members of the Commission are practical farmers and may think that I am out of my province in saying anything on this point -----

CHAIRMAN: Not at all? - But I feel very

Rev. Williams

strongly that the policy that is being adopted with regard to the improvement of Native stock is not perhaps the wisest. The Native councils are introducing into the territories shorthorn cattle and they are urging the people to improve their Native herds by the introduction of shorthorn bulls. The Commission is doubtless aware that there is a very deepseated prejudice in the mind of the Native against any "emof" beast, as they call it; any beast with any strain in it at all they call "emof". I think that we have too often jumped to the conclusion that it was prejudice and prejudice only, but I have come to the conclusion that it is a reasoned objection and not a prejudice. One only has to live in the territories and to see the condition of this improved stock in our winters to realise why the Native will not touch them at any price. Becuase, while the Native stock are fat, these poor things are just bags of bones and they starve and die when Native cattle flourish. Therefore, I want to make a suggestion, not that I think it is an original suggestion, - I would like to emphasize it - that more could be done by the introduction of improved Afrikander cattle into the Native territories. There are strains of Afrikander cattle that are doing quite well with the milk pail and, if selected Afrikander bulls were brought into the territories and scrub bulls were destroyed, in the course of a few years an uniform grade of cattle would be found right through the territories which would then form a sound foundation for any further development or improvement in the cattle. There would be no objection on the part of the Native to the Afrikander bull; he would welcome it, and you would be doing, I think, a very great service to the Native people if that were attempted.

Rev. Williams

SENATOR VAN NIEKERK: They might supply the trek oxen for the whole of the country in time?— Yes, if there are any trek oxen to be supplied. I do not say anything about irrigation, because we do not deal with irrigation on any scale in these territories. We have a fairly regular rainfall.

Then, I think, the only other point that I would offer evidence at all on, would be the question of education. I want to urge very, very strongly that, in this part of the Native territory, which was the last to come under European rule and which is, consequently, backward in the scale of development, there is tremendous need for larger educational facilities. We want more schools. We are feeling very strongly the limiting of development that has taken place. This applies to our training schools as well as to our day schools; I may say that, incidentally, we had been promised in the training school an additional member of the Staff for the coming year, interested by the development of the place; but, within a week or two, this promise had to be withdrawn on account of the ultimatum that had been issued by the Native Affairs Department, that no development of any kind should be undertaken during this next year: no new school and no additional appointment in any existing school. This hits us very severely in this undeveloped area, where there is so much need for further development.

With regard to the question of education, may I say that there can be no question as to the value of Native education, then there can be to the value of European education; education cannot be bad for a black man if it is good for a white man. If education is good for any member of the State, it is good for all. May I suggest, also, that there cannot be any principle, any real difference between European and Native education. It does seem to be

Rev. Williams

presented in that way sometimes, as though for Natives there is a special kind of education that is right and necessary, but while book learning is a correct thing for Europeans, it is intrinsically wrong for Natives and that it ought to be more on the lines of manual training. Well, to my mind, education is education whether it is an European child or a Native child. There are certain underlying principles and those principles must be applied equally to a black child as to a white child.

With regard to occupational training, I say that we realise increasingly the need of this vocational or occupational training, and attempts are being made in this direction and that, in view of the fact that segregation, in some form or other, seems to be the policy of the country, it surely is the duty of the Government to see that these people who are so segregated are able to get such training as will enable them to earn a livelihood in their own areas. I think that covers, roughly, sir, what I want to say.

CHAIRMAN: You referred to the public opinion of the tribe. In what way does that manifest itself?— In various ways. For instance, in a particular tribe certain methods of life — of agriculture if you like — are followed. Ploughing is done at one time, and reaping is done at one time; reaping has to be done at one time in order that stock shall come into the lands at one time. You see, a man cannot reap his land and let his cattle into it; and one man who wants to be progressive, say, may want to do winter ploughing; he may want to grow winter crops and the customs of the tribe might, in that way, be a hindrance to the particular development that he wishes to assume.

You referred to the need for a simplified

Rev. Williams

training of agricultural peasants; how would you propose to bring that about?— Well, we could do it here as a branch of our industrial development, just as we could have an agricultural course and take boys, say, for a year or two years, and just give them training in the practical side.

But to exercise any material influence over the whole mass of the Native people, there would have to be very large facilities of that nature?— Yes, granted; but the influence of such a course would not be confined to the men who take the course. Just as the demonstrator today exercises an influence over the location in which he works, these students going back to their own homes, their methods would be seen by those around them, and I think it would have a tremendous effect upon their neighbours, because, after all, more gets in their eye-gate than their ear-gate, and people seeing the effect of these better methods would follow them.

At present a very large number learn better methods from the farmers, yet they make no attempt to follow them when they get back to the reserves?— Yes, I am afraid that is, in a large measure, true, though there are examples on the other side of men who do go back to the territories and pursue these better methods.

Do you not think it would be possible to get the general Native from the location to adopt some of the methods of the white men without actually bringing them into an agricultural college?— Well, I admit that the effort is being made today through the demonstrator, but I think the process would be speeded up by having ---

SENATOR VAN NIEKERK: We have that course?—We have the normal course; we are training Native teachers and that course is already horribly overcrowded and there

Rev. Williams

are courses at different centres - what is known as a handyman's course - where a smattering of three or four trades is given in a short course. It seems to me, instead of giving that smattering of three or four, perhaps if one gave them a practical training in methods of agriculture, it would be of greater value.

MR. LUCAS: Have you noticed what you call peasant proprietors amongst the Natives? - Well, they are all peasant proprietors, in the sense that they do farm their peasant holdings; they are not proprietors in the sense that they have not freehold rights; we have no peasant proprietors in that sense.

Are they allowed to fence in their plots? - Yes, there are no restrictions upon their fencing in their particular plots.

MAJOR ANDERSON: Is that so throughout the reserves in the territories? - I think so.

MR. LUCAS: Are they fencing much? - Not very extensively; one sees here and there a group of lands being fenced, but it has not been done in this area to any large extent.

DR. FOURIE: Are the Natives against it? - I would not say they are against it, but simply that it has not come to them yet.

CHAIRMAN: With regard to afforestation. I notice quite a ^{large} number of Natives round about these parts do have little bits of wood round about their huts; is that owing to the influence of missionary teaching? - Well, at anyrate, under the influence of missionary example. Nearly all these wattles that you see around here, the seed has been collected from under these trees here. We place no bar upon that. They collect the seeds, scratch the ground round their

kraals, scatter these seeds, and they have plantations.

Does that apply farther west too, that the Natives do that?— So far as my experience goes, it is more pronounced here than in the West.

Have they the difficulty of shortage of fuel, and building timber — I mean in Western Pondoland?— Well, I cannot speak of Western Pondoland at all; I have no experience of that; but when I was speaking of the West, I was meaning the Transkei proper, the other side of Umtata. There the position is met by Government plantations, and they get wattles from these plantations.

But are not the Government plantations frequently rather far away from the huts of particular portions of the tribes?— Yes, that is so. There are large numbers of plantations scattered right through the territories. There are other points rather distant from any forest, but there are large numbers of plantations through the territories.

Have the Natives round about here enough timber for building and fuel?— Well, today their needs are very largely met by these little plantations that have grown up; but there is this big indigenous forest at Ntonti and these little patches of indigenous forest right through Eastern Pondoland. I would say there is no real shortage today of timber, either for fuel or building, amongst the Pondos.

How are they situated for thatching grass?— They seem to have no difficulty; they seem to have sufficient grass.

Where do they get it?— All through this area the thatching grass grows.

But is not the grass so short that they have no use out of it?— No. I could not tell you exactly how

they preserve it, but a lot of it grows round their lands, which are not grazed, you see, during the summer season, but my impression is that a great deal of the thatch grass is not liked by the cattle and, having plenty of other grass, they leave it. Certainly we have no difficulty in getting what thatch grass we want, and as far as I know, the Natives do not have difficulty in meeting their own requirements. There are two or three varieties of thatch grass that they use, as probably you know.

Did I understand you correctly to say that, even in the case of Natives slaughtering animals, they have to send up a blood slide?— Yes.

Is that general?— That is a regulation in this district.

Is it carried out?— Yes; if a man did not, he would be prosecuted.

DR. ROBERTS: Do you not think there is some truth in what General Smuts contended, ~~in~~ that the Church does break down the tribal system unconsciously, by putting a higher vision before the people?— Well, there doubtless is an element of truth in it, but what I feel is that there the Church was represented as the great detribalizing factor and that really it has not been; it is only in a secondary way that the Church has had any detribalizing effect.

Yes, but you will admit that there is some truth in it?— Yes, certainly.

Now, you urge that the ^{gain} ~~game~~ of tribal control is a political one. Could you not have the same political gain under the power of the chiefs?— I do not think so myself. After all, the influence of the Council is rather distant; the influence of the chief is immediate.

(Q) But still, even although it be remote it is broader in its

Rev. Williams

outlook - the work of the Council, and therefore must impress the whole of the people?- In that particular aspect, what has been borne in upon me is that, wherever the influence of the chief is strong, you are free from agitators.

But the Council non the less has also dealt with agitators, and dealt very firmly with them?- Well, we do not find any protection ourselves actually from the Council.

In the case of agitators?- No; I do not want to make my evidence too general; I am speaking only out of my particular experience.

DR. FOURIE: You mean the unity of tribal life is stronger, for instance, under a Council?- Well, you see even now we have tribal life under the Council, and I do not mean to suggest that the power of the chief need be weakened. So, even under the Council, they may have that controlling influence in the tribe, but that where there is that unity of the tribal life, where the needs of the chief are strong, noone can come in. About two or three years ago, we had a man come into this district from another district, who was a very clever and eloquent rogue and, in his propaganda, * he used the form of propaganda that is known amongst the Natives today; for instance, he used what is known as the Wellington propaganda, Though the magistrate of the district from which he came informed our magistrate that this man had done a great deal in that district to put down the Wellington movement. He was not an Ethiopian; he was supposed to be working under a church organization that had an European head in this country, but he used European propaganda amongst these people. He told them that he had come in to establish a new Native church to unite all the Native people in one Native church. He was not an I.C.U. agent, but he used

Rev. Williams

I.C.U. propaganda, and this man obtained a hold in a very short time - in fact, I was afraid that the work of our church in this district was going to be knocked to pieces. Now this man went down to the Great Place and he told the Chief Regent - you know, of course, in Eastern Pondoland the present chief is a minor and they have a man acting; this man told the Chief Regent that he had been told to do this work, to establish a Native church in Eastern Pondoland, and he slanged the European missionaries right and left, and the chief said "How dare you mis-quote these missionaries; my father brought them into this country", and he leathered him and gave him a certain number of days to clear out of Eastern Pondoland. He asked him who had given him permission to come into Eastern Pondoland; how he managed to cross the border, and he appointed certain men to see that, within a given time, that man was over the border of Pondoland.

DR. ROBERTS: And he was? - He was not.

The man came to the magistrate and told the magistrate what had taken place and said to him, "Need I go?", and the magistrate said "You need not go; the chief has no power to drive you out", and the man remained and did a tremendous amount of harm and collected a large sum of money in one way and another from the Native people. Well, of course, in the course of time he got into the clutches of the law and was imprisoned. He was then excluded from these areas. My contention is that, if the power of the chief had been what it ought to have been, that man would have been out of it and we would have been saved a good deal of inconvenience and so on.

Or if you had a wiser magistrate? - Well, I do not know. There was a lot to be said from the magistrate's point of view; the magistrate is governed

Rev. Williams

by regulations, you see. Of course, I think it would have been quite competent for the magistrate to have said "Well, if you are a wise man, I think you will get out".

Following on what you said about agriculture, would you have the teaching of agriculture in a broad helpful sense in the schools? - Well, one would like to see that in the schools, but one wonders what it would crowd out. The school syllabus is already overcrowded, and if you brought into the schools the teaching of agriculture, what would you drive out? - You can only get a certain amount in in the five hours.

You would not think of excluding such things as school gardens, basket making and things of that kind? - Well, with regard to the gardening, I would not like to see that excluded. With regard to basket making - weaving generally - I am inclined to think it is a waste of time, and I will say why if you wish it.

Yes, most distinctly? - The reason is this, in my opinion what is seen in the Native day school is known by the pupil when he comes into the school. To give a case in point, if I am not wasting your time; I saw a class weaving one day, and I said to the teacher, "Do you know anything about this?". He said, "No, I do not know anything about it". I said "How do you teach it then?". He said, "The children know it". I said, "If you get a child in that does not know it?". "Well, the others show him", he said. I guarantee that if you go into any school in the Native territories and you see the handwork, especially the grass weaving in Sub-A, you will see the best weaving in the school, but as you go up, instead of seeing something better, you will probably see something not so good. You will find the highest point is at Sub-A, that is at the beginning of the school.

Rev. Williams.

With regard to Native education; instead of having small schools such as you have, teaching carpentry work and something of that kind, would it not be better to have large industrial schools, where they would take in, ~~xxx~~ say, three or four hundred - your apprentices have to pay boarding fees, and they would not pay more in the large school? - Well, sir, one quite realises that there are advantages in centralisation in that work as in every other work, but whether the advantages always outweigh the disadvantages, I would not like to say. One would realise that there is an advantage to a person in having this opportunity here at your door; you might have something better perhaps a hundred miles away, without their having the wherewithal to get that hundred miles.

You know that they have begun this handyman training in one of the institutions? - Well, in two at least.

Yes. Do you know if it is in any way successful? - I cannot say so, I do not know what its results are.

You spoke of the overcrowding in normal schools; would it not be better to limit the number? I think there are something like 17 schools just now turning out teachers, all of whom will not be employed, and they are getting education in a definite direction -- why not make them into high schools? - The Department has taken a step in that direction, In regard to one particular school, and I think there is a growing need for high school facilities.

Following on what you said, you are in favour of the value of education to anyone who wants it? - Certainly.

And higher education to those who are able to afford it and can profit by it? - Yes.

Rev. Williams

That would be of benefit?- Yes.

MR. LUCAS: Are pupils in your institution restricted to your denomination?- No, sir.

In the seven years you have been here, have you noticed any advance or retrogression among the Natives generally in the district?- From what point of view?

Economic?- Well, seven years is rather a short period to speak off. My impression is, in the eleven to twelve years I have been in the territories, there has been a slight going backward.

Can you indicate in what way?- One sees more signs of poverty in regard to dress and from what one gathers from the people, the condition of Native dress today, both their day dress and their bedding, is, I think scantier; people are finding it more difficult to supply themselves adequately with clothing and bedding.

To what do you attribute that?- I think, sir, that a very big factor has been the fact that, although the cost of living has grown, the Native's income has been stationary; that, I think, is one factor. I am inclined to think - I speak here with great hesitancy - that there is a decline in the yield of Native lands owing to the succession of mealie crops generation after generation.

CHAIRMAN: Is there no way of testing that for the future; for example, by getting figures of the yields of particular lands over a period of years?- It is possible, but I think it would be rather difficult to obtain. You see, a man has a land here (indicating); perhaps he had good yields last year and has plenty of mealies, he does not work this land very much until it is time to reap; and if he has had a bad harvest last year, he has got these mealies they have taken to his farm; the

Rev. Williams

crop that he reaps does not represent the crop that the land has produced.

SENATOR VAN NIEKERK: Are the demonstrators making any headway here?— Well, of course it is very hard to generalise, is it not? There are individuals who, perhaps, are not doing very much, but I think, speaking generally, the work of the demonstrator is bearing fruit.

It is slow, of course?— Yes, it is slow, very slow.

Do you think a fair complement of Natives go out to work?— What would you consider a fair complement, sir?

Well, I think that would be better for you to say; I do not mean necessarily loafers; say a man has perhaps big children and does not see why he should go out?— I think, speaking for this area, that there is a very large section of the population at work. One finds that the rawest of the raw go to the mines, and one is really terrified at times when one thinks of the possibilities for evil, when one sees these boys come back. One only has to talk to a respectable, educated, intelligent Native who has travelled in these Government buses or on the trains with these boys as they come back from the mines, to hear stories of the utter depravity of these fellows. The raw Pondo I have found to be very much of a Native gentleman; he shows the utmost respect to those whom he considers his superiors; but these fellows, as they come back from the mines, seem to have no respect for anybody; and I suppose that the Commission is aware that, during the last year, a number of men have been deported from the mining areas back to Pondoland as undesirables, and the influence of these men in the district is a very, very serious one.

The Commission adjourned at 4.5 p.m., to hear evidence at Flatstaff, on the 7th November 1930.