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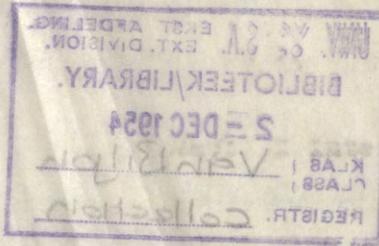
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NATURELLE EKONOMIESE KOMMISSIE

Minutes of oral evidence
before the Native Economic
Commission Volume 6: 1930
Umtata, Engcobo, Cofinvaba

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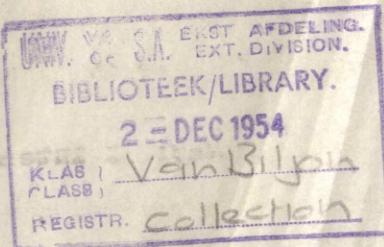
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NATIVE ECONOMIC COMMISSION

UMTATA 12th NOVEMBER 1930 9.30 a.m.

FORTYSEVENTH PUBLIC SITTING

PRESENT:

Dr. J. E. Holloway (Chairman)
Major W. R. Anderson, Mr. A. M. Mostert
Dr. H. G. M. Fourie, Dr. A. W. Roberts
Mr. F. A. W. Lucas Senator P.W. Le Roux van Niekerk
Mr. C. Faye (Secretary)

The examination of the Delegates of the Pondoland and Transkei General Council, consisting of Messrs. Bam, Sakwe, Xakekile, Qosho, Moshesh, Blandu, Qamata and Rev. Mjali, was continued.

(Mr. Qamata): I intend speaking on Item 13 of the agenda paper. The question dealt with there is that of inter-racial relations and coöperation. In my opinion, things that are likely to create good feeling are efforts made in connection with what is done in the big cities, when arrangements are made to bring Europeans and Natives together as in the joint Councils and to establish societies like the Rotarians, which shew good spirit, and also the efforts made by the Churches. I would speak highly of the efforts of the Anglican Church, and I say that things like that tend to create good feeling.

Another important matter which we Natives feel in our hearts is this, the lack of respect shewn to a Native no matter who cultured that Native may be - I refer to the lack of respect which is found when one is walking about in the streets, and I particularly refer to that lack of respect among the European youths. Even a young European child will do a thing to a Native that a child will not do

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to an European grownup. The white people, on their part, should pay due respect to the Natives who deserve it and that, I think, would tend to maintain good relations. There are a number of other obstacles and, in this connection, I should now like to be allowed to read to you some observations which I have put down.

Africa is large enough for both white and black, and the uttering of such slogans as "Making South Africa a white man's country" is devoid of meaning, and when uttered by responsible men of high standing in the State, cannot fail to engender a deep feeling of unrest, distrust and hate.

For very many years past, the Native has through bitter experience learned to realise the fact that the white man has come to stay in Africa, and with such understanding the Native has opened his heart, without malice or prejudice, to receive the white man; and not only that, he has taken his religion, education, laws and civilization; and further, and greater, he has submitted to the white man's rule and superiority.

It is much to be regretted that in all walks of life, the white man, consciously or unconsciously, is losing the dignity of his superior culture and religion, and by word of mouth, actions and legislation, is beginning to adopt the rule of "Might is right", "Self first and others last".

That competition must be very keen cannot be denied in a country of mixed peoples, and it is hoped that nobody can quarrel with that, but trying to oust one another, the weaker must go to the wall. A spirit of brotherhood which does not discriminate between black or white, Jew or Gentile, is one of the highest teachings of the holy scripture, and, with such a spirit in Africa, the Native problem would

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be justly and satisfactorily solved, but without that there cannot be any peace between black and white living in the same country as we do.

The outward spirit of antagonism on the part of either party perpetuates and encourages the racial problems in this country.

Some of the obstacles which contribute but surely undermine inter-racial good feelings, are repressive legislation; and the erroneous idea and the commonest mistake shares by not a few is to assume that Native nature and reactions are peculiar and that Natives do not respond to certain situations as do Europeans. The example of certain white people who believe or make believe in order to attain certain selfish objects, denies the Native right to full facilities for education and asserts that Natives are monstrously stupid.

Bad though the state of affairs was before the Riotous Assemblies Act became law, since its enactment, relations between black and white are in jeopardy.

To express oneself freely is a safety valve which lets out much matter of poison, and having done so, it is easy to listen to commonsense and explanations for real or fancied grievances. It would be for the benefit of all to co-operate in denouncing injustice and comment on the good.

Natives a menace! To what is a Native a menace? In this country, when the Europeans were a handful, they proved beyond doubt their superior strength in arms, their culture in bearing no illfeeling for what they had suffered, their glorious dispelling of heathenism by their education and religion. The Natives are not responsible for the political difficulties that must arise, they are not of their creation,

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but are the combined consequence of the presence of the two races, and therefore noone should be made to suffer more than the other.

Another aspect now finding support is the constant wooing of the women voters, carried on with no other object than to embarrass inter-racial feeling; it is called "The saving of South Africa from black dominance", which is a direct poisoning of the fair sex". "Keep the nigger in his place", is another. With such anti-racial slogans, it is no wonder that the Native views with suspicion every move, some of which may be for his own good.

Some people think that woman will solve the Native problem; everybody appreciates that, but it should not be forgotten at the same time that the fair sex were created for beauty, peace and purity, three virtues which justly women should be left free to exercise ~~quietly~~ towards Natives.

Good inter-racial relations will bring much that will solve all racial problems in this country and everybody, black and white, should strive for that ideal, for what we sow today, our children will reap tomorrow, and if we consciously sow bad seed, they will unconsciously reap the bitter fruits of hate, but if we follow the dictates of Christian religion, we shall be able to say "N

"Now move we on to meet the coming day,
Bright with its promise of more splendid life;
Woman and man together with one aim -
The equal good of all humanity."

I need not comment on that. I have covered a lot of ground and what I have said is what I consider the Native thinks of inter-racial relations.

(Mr. Moshesh): I am not going to say much on these matters appearing in your Agenda, There are just a few points which I wish to raise in connection with East Griqualand. In going through East Griqualand, I am sure

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you noticed that there was a great shortage of water, even in the towns. And dams had to be made in order to meet the needs of the towns. Well, we have the same experience in the reserves, there is a great shortage of water, and we are suffering as a result of that, and we are losing many lives every year. I am not just speaking my own opinion, but I am also expressing the opinion of the late Dr. Jacketti, as well/^{as} of our present District Surgeon, while Dr. Bower has also pointed out that the causes of death in the reserves are bad water from the holes which we have.

For about six months in the year, when it begins to rain, we get fresh water from these holes which we have there, but for the rest of the time, particularly during the winter, that water becomes stagnant and our people suffer. So it means that half of the year we get good water and half of the year the water is very bad.

I wish to ask the Commission most earnestly to bring that before the Government. We need sufficient water, water that can be kept and in that way we shall save a lot of lives.

Now I pass on to the shortage of land. I am sure that in your travels through the district you saw how congested the locations and the reserves were and in what large numbers the kraals were and how close together. The reserves are in the same way as the locations in the towns and it must be quite clear that we require more land, more arable land, and where possible also more land for commonage. In going through the district you must have noticed that you found large numbers of cattle in one spot, and that may have given you the impression that the people of the district were very rich in cattle, which is not the case.

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These cattle are brought together to this one spot simply because they cannot go elsewhere, and let me say, sir, that the cattle are eating one another every year. The kraals being so close together, they all have one commonage and these cattle are driven there every morning so as to go on the grass. Looking at them, you must have thought "Well, these Natives must be very rich in cattle", but if you were to turn round again and see where these cattle went to to feed, you would see that they have no other place than that one, and when those cattle go home, you will find that they are divided up into little lots of twos, threes and sixes, and that they are kraaled by different people.

So it comes down to this, that in reality these people are very poor in cattle. They are there in large numbers when they are altogether, but they are very few in the pre ownership of any individual.

That is due to the great lack of land and I am sure that that is one of the most urgent matters for the Government to see to. I remember, some years ago, we went down to Cape Town on this very point and I believe that you would be able to get that evidence through our chief, shewing the points that we put forward to get more land.

DR. ROBERTS: You went to the Select Committee did you not? - Yes, I think so. There it was shewn that we had the wedge in between us, the Europeans breaking up the country. If the Natives were not loyal and true to themselves and to the Government, there would be a lot of trouble.

SENATOR VAN NIEKERK: What wedge do you mean? - There is a lot of land from Matatiele to the Nek occupied by Europeans and, on both sides, you have Natives - Matatiele

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on the one side and Mount Fletcher on the other.

It is not a large wedge? - No, it is just a narrow strip. I forget the average width, but it is not over six miles.

CHAIRMAN: Is not that the strip which it is proposed to put into the released areas? - No.

Is that a different strip? - Yes.

SENATOR VAN NIEKERK: Do you want that strip to be put into the released area? - Yes, we do. It is very badly situated, cutting up one Native area from another, and if you want to carry on your segregation policy, it would be impossible to have that sort of thing. I do not say I am in favour of segregation, but if you wish to carry it on, that strip could certainly not remain as it is. Then, coming to this other strip, which is on the north western side of the town, the European farmers have for years and years been trying to improve that land. It is as barren as a rock, in fact it is a rock and you cannot get anything to grow there. The European farmers have found it impossible and now they want to get rid of it, and that is why they are throwing it into the released areas. Now, if you hand that over to the Natives, you will say that you are giving the Natives land, but what use can it be to the Natives when their superiors could not do anything with it. The Natives cannot do anything with it either. You will say to the Natives, "You have got land there, but you are not cultivating it", but I want you to remember that even the Europeans could not produce anything on it, not even feed their cattle. The grass is sour, so it is useless altogether. I wish you to bear that in mind. Bringing that into the released areas is giving us nothing. It is just barren rock and then we shall be told that we have been

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given another area.

DR. ROBERTS: Was that put before Mr. Scully?— That was before my time and I could not tell you. Then again, I come to the Bunga and the works of the Bunga in this district. I was quite surprised when I was in Matatiele to hear a Native there say that the Bunga was a fraud which had promised the Natives certain things which had not been carried out. I was disgusted and ashamed that such an utterance should come from Matatiele. Anyhow, that will prove to you what that man was and what he is. The Bunga, in many ways, has greatly improved the reserves. We had no roads leading into our locations before, we had no bridges to save our lives from the rivers and we had nothing to improve our stock. We had no way and no means of improving our ground. Our mode of ploughing was simply one of scraping the ground. We simply got along somehow, but since the Bunga has come along, we have got schools such as those at Tsolo and elsewhere, to teach the young Natives the way to work the ground and the way to improve their stock, the way to look after their cattle, their sheep and their goats and to make themselves generally useful in the laying out of roads and giving them work in all sorts of ways. I am sorry to say that the Government is rather backward in doing these things for us now and I shall tell you what I mean. In such work as railway construction, etc., in the district, the Natives are thrown out and the work is given to Europeans to do, yet we are called upon to pay our taxes so that we shall bring in revenue to the Government which, in return, is doing nothing at all for us.

The Bunga, in my opinion, is doing very great work for us and is helping us to progress. I am very proud

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of our Bunga and the way in which it has tackled ~~in~~ these things. This hall in which we are sitting now is a very large hall and very beautiful, but I am rather inclined now to look down upon it in comparison with what we have got now. Yet, I am proud of it because it is in this building that we have been brought along to the stage where we are now. I think you have all been taken along to see our grand new building, which has been erected by the Bunga, and that building will shew you that the Native is fast advancing, that it can put money at its own disposal, and that it can work with it if properly handled. I am sure that, if the Government were to come and take tips or rather take advice from the authorities of the Bunga, they would be able to do more than they are doing today, they would be able to do the same kind of work which the Bunga is doing and they would do it in exactly the same way as the Bunga is doing and they would get their revenue in the same way as the Bunga is getting its revenue.

We are very glad to pay to the Bunga what we have to pay to them and we do get a return for it. I am very sorry to say that we get so very very little from the Government. Instead of getting our due return from the Government, we are gradually being pushed back from all interests where money matters are concerned. We have our poor. What is being done for them, nothing. Nothing is being done for them. We have our old people; what is being done for them? Nothing. But we are paying. The Bunga, in my opinion, is the place from which the Government should take advice as to how to deal with the Natives and how to treat them in order to get the best possible return from them. If you go through our lands now, you find that we are ploughing them better now

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than we used to do in the past, before these demonstrators were sent out by the Bunga. We are making great progress. We have done away with our old '75s' and we are getting in steel ploughs, double-furrow ploughs and cultivators. Some Natives are now going in for tractors.

I do not intend to say very much about that. It is shewn that the Native is fast advancing as a result of what the Bunga is doing. The Bunga is getting him his seed. The Bunga is shewing how to pick out his seed and I have seen mealies brought forward by the Natives on the shows which compare very well indeed even with European grown mealies, in fact, in some instances, it was even better. That is the result of the work of the Bunga here among us.

Again, I say, I am sorry that the utterance about the Bunga being a fraud should have come from my district of Mstatiele.

I have also noticed that some Europeans say that the teaching of the Natives is wasting time. How can that be? The great statesmen say that if you wish Africa to move on, you cannot leave one half behind and let the other half go forward. The half that is being carried forward would be pulled back by the half that is left behind. That is quite clear, and if you do not educate the Natives, you cannot expect them to keep time with the Europeans, so the only and the best way is to try and educate the Native so as to have him on the same level with his European neighbours as far as his mind is concerned, and, if you do that, he will be greater help to the white man than he is now.

And again, I say, that if you are advocating segregation and if you get the white man away from among the

Natives, if you put the white man aside and the Native aside, how will the Natives be able to get on if they have no brains through want of education. How will they be able to get their goods? How will they be able to put up stores among themselves in the Native places? They will only come to the same thing in the end again, they will bring in an European to come and help them. Therefore, if you wish to segregate the white man from the Native, the only and the best remedy is to teach the Native as much as possible so that he will be of use to himself and so that he will be able to carry on with his own people.

There is a great change noticeable today as between the educated Natives and the red Native. The educated Native is pushing his friend along and the red blanket man is trying to get to the same level as his educated friend and, before long, you will have the whole of the reserves in a very much better state.

Of course, there are bad Natives who use their education in the wrong way, but there is no reason why the rest should be debarred from education through that. The same thing applies to the European right throughout the world - there are good and bad ones; there is no clean nation without its faults. That is all I have to say.

(Mr. Mlandu): I am going to speak on Item 8, Native labour, and I want to say that labour in South Africa is one of the greatest questions which at the present moment is causing great anxiety among the people, and probably no country has a more complex labour problem than the Union of South Africa with its mixture of races, each possessing different modes of life and different modes of living.

In the Union, the problem presents itself with a marked and a specially acute phase, owing to the fact that it exists nowhere else in Africa in the same degree as

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it does in the Union. The gold mines play a very important part in South African economy. They absorb a very great number of Natives as employees, as well as whites. They absorb 200,000 Natives and something like 20,000 whites. The Natives are, for the most part, engaged on contracts of six months or more, and they are drawn from the Native territories of the Union and elsewhere. According to the terms of contract, an agreement is made at a specified rate of wages as well as housing and feeding, which are undertaken by the mines.

The great majority of the miners are raw Natives who have had no general contact with civilization and are, therefore, incapable of looking after themselves. Therefore, under the Native Regulations Act of 1911, the Government has established a regular system of inspection under the Director of Native Labour, who has the power to hear and redress grievances, to supervise recruiting, the execution of contracts, the payment of wages and assess payment of claims in respect of accidents and injuries, as well as to ensure that proper housing, feeding and also medical attention are provided for the Natives.

In regard to wages, I wish to say this. The average Native miner earns about 50/- to 60/- per month, to which might, perhaps, be added another 50% representing his food and lodging.

There is also a class of Natives who earn more through piece work, and it is this class which requires such a degree of skill as to perturb the white miners, and it is this same class which feels most acutely the barriers placed in the way of promotion as they are looked upon as assimilating the wants of the civilized man as regards food, clothes and housing. These needs it is impossible

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to satisfy on the ordinary Native wages, based on the needs of kraal life, where house, food and clothing cost very little.

On the question of machinery and its effect on the Native wage level, this, of course, without doubt has materially affected the Native labourer on the Rand, as the number of men required to work one machine is considerably lower than the number required to do the same amount of work by hand and this, therefore, displaces a great number of men from employment. I am particularly referring to the case of drill sharpeners.

In regard to general labour conditions, it is only the mining industry that has markedly caused great improvements for its labourers, and from what one gathers from reports of labourers and delegations to the mines on the Rand, there is an almost unanimous opinion of satisfactory conditions in housing, feeding, sanitation and general conditions of employees. In

In other industries, the lead given by the Rand is highly recommended.

One displeasing aspect in dealing with conditions of Native labour, is the antagonistic attitude of both the employers and the Government in discouraging all efforts of organizing the Native workers. It is difficult to understand this attitude and the inevitable conclusion that one can come to is the exploitation of the Native labourer.

It is with the farmer that one sees the real suffering of the Native labourer. I am putting farm wages here as against those paid on the mines and in other industries. The wages are far too low for anyone but a last-century Native in his most primitive state. Housing

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is so bad that it is a common occurrence to see families living in one house, and that a shanty, unmarried men and boys mixed up in one house. Feeding in many cases is inadequate and bad and it must have a direct effect in creating theft. The ration for a family is a mugfull of mealies to the head of the family and his wife, while the father has to provide the best he can for the little children who are not employed, although his wages are next to nothing. Those wages, on the average, are from 10/- to 20/- a month. The wages paid in urban areas compare favourably with those on the farms, those paid in urban areas being on an average from 15/- to 30/- a month in smaller towns, while in the large towns they range from 20/- to 40/-.

On the question of labour supply, I want to say that, in other industries, there is a supersundance of labour supply whereas, in industries like farming and gold mining, there is not enough. This particularly applies to farming and the reasons for this may be sought in the low wage that is paid. Though in most respects the conditions on the mines are far more satisfactory, the mines are not, in most cases, paying a living wage, especially to civilized Natives. On the farms the civilized Native and semi-civilized/seldom goes to seek work because of conditions there. If the conditions on the farms are caused by the inability of the owners to pay higher wages, the 1913 Land Act should be repealed so that the farmer shall be enabled partly to use his land in order to help him pay by giving the Native ploughing ground to make up for his wage. There is another suggestion - the Government should provide Native farm schools in order to attract all grades of Natives who look for work on the farms. The fact that some industries are over-supplied is due to

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employees having better facilities of education and social occupations.

In regard to recruiting, I want to say that this method of canvassing for labour is greatly hampered by the uniform contract which is becoming disliked by labourers and it has the disadvantage of keeping the labourers for a specified period, although perhaps they are not in a position to earn what they consider a fair wage. Sometimes this is due to their inability to do a certain kind of work - work which they are not able to do + Others want to go home and do their ploughing, but because their contract has not expired they cannot.

I have a few words to say on the question of miners phthisis and I hold that an insurance provision should be made for each miner, because many miners return home and are then attacked by this disease and die without compensation. I want to point out that, up to a little while ago, while ten million pounds had been distributed by way of miners phthisis compensation, the Natives had only got £600,000 out of this. I refer to the remarks made by Mr. McMensmin in the House of Parliament. Surely this is an injustice to the Native.

On the question of advances of wages to Natives and the effect of such advances - advances are usually given to Natives at the time of entering into a contract. These advances vary according to applications made in order to meet the demands and the necessities at their homes. These advances are subsequently deducted from the labourers monthly wages, together with the transportation and ration charges, until these are wiped off. This mode of contract rather works against the Native labourer in view of the fact that wages are at so low a level. The employees should have

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some sort of consideration. This is more apparent in the case of the Natal Labour Recruiting Corporation and the collieries, where, for instance, a Native joining signs a contract at a scale of:-

Adults, 18-45 yrs. 1/4d per day

Umfans, 15-18 " 10d or 1/- per day.

Under age, 6d per day.

They work 180 shifts, a month being made up of thirty working days, and they get an advance of, say, £2 cash, 6/- for food, 12/- for railway fares, making a total of £4.18.-. It must be borne in mind that an amount of 10/- is allowed as pocket money until the debt is wiped off.

This has the effect of keeping down the labourers' wages.

On the subject of domestic male and female servants, there are possibly no words strong enough in the vocabulary to condemn this system of employment. We, as a race, condemn most strongly that male servants should fill up the place of females in domestic work - work such as could be undertaken by women. There are so many evil results from such kind of employment, such as black peril and others. We have today legislation tending towards what the Native calls repression, and it is better that race relationship should be so preserved as to have both sections of the community living at peace.

(Rev. Mjali): Mr. Chairman, I do not desire to waste your time, and I shall, therefore, confine my remarks to sub-section 4 of section 1. It is a question of very deep concern to our Native people and I have to go into it fairly deeply. I shall, first of all, deal with the question of lobolo as it originally was and as it was seen by the Native in his primitive state and also as

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looked upon by the educated Native such as these Councillors here. I do not think that anyone here will deny that lobolo as it was originally introduced was a very good thing. And, in reading story books, we find that it did not concern the Natives only. History shews us that it concerned the Germans and the Norwegians as well. If there is anybody here of Jewish descent, he would understand me clearly when I refer to what the Bible says and when I say "My grandfather Abraham did it". It goes to shew that the origin of the thing was good, But the olden times have passed - the olden times with their old customs. The good faith of the past has, in many cases, changed. Things which were bright in the past have become defaced and so it is with the question of lobolo today.

As seen by the Native people, who are still close to their primitive living, lobolo is something beneficial. The Native, under lobolo, is able to acquire cattle paid as dowry for his daughter. No expenses are incurred in contracting the marriage. To that extent and in that way the system has been beneficial to the raw red Native. And the cattle that are passed over, are regarded as pen and ink. Today, things have changed, because the people are asking too much and the result is that these people are eating each other up. Although a thing may be good originally, in the course of time it becomes abused.

The custom today is not as pure as it originally was. And now I come to the question of lobolo from the point of view of a civilised people, and as far as they are concerned, it is absolutely useless. I do not think anyone can get up and deny that the system today has the effect of getting one into debt. The girl whom the father is giving in marriage and for whom lobolo is paid,

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has to be provided by her father with an expensive wedding outfit and the amount of this wedding outfit, the cost of it, is much more than the man receives in lobolo.

There is no economy in that and then quarrels start, and the result of it is that the social life among these Natives is spoilt. I would ask the Commission, in considering the question of lobolo, to look at it from various aspects. The introduction of Christianity has taught us that the beauty of a thing does not like in the payment of cattle. We do no longer say "My wife is of no value because I did not pay ten head of cattle for her", we enlightened people have gone beyond that. If there are such people who have that opinion, then they must be regarded as raw Natives. Love, now, is the deciding factor. Lobolo itself is not of much value.

In answering the question whether there is any economy in paying lobolo under the social system, so far as civilized people are concerned, there is not. To the enlightened people it has spoilt their social life, but as far as the primitive people are concerned, it is not so bad. I do not wish to waste your time and, for that reason, I shall not deal with any of the points already touched upon by the other Delegates.

(Mr. Bam): I shall reserve my remarks to the time when you are asking questions, because most of the points have been touched upon by other Delegates and I have no wish to travel over the same ground again, as this would only waste your time. I therefore ask your permission to reserve my remarks until later.

The Commission decided to call the Chief Magistrate for the purpose of eliciting certain information on the question of unsurveyed district.