CISKEIAN GENERAL COUNCIL

PROCEEDINGS

AT

SPECIAL SESSION

1945

PRICE 2/-
A special session of the Ciskeian General Council opened in the Courtroom of the Native Commissioner, King William’s Town, at 10 a.m. on MONDAY, JANUARY 8, 1945, under the presidency of Mr. J. Addison, Chief Native Commissioner, Cape.

The Chairman read prayers.

The Secretary, Mr. A. G. Walker, read the summons to session.

NATIVE COUNCILLORS IN ATTENDANCE.

Glen Grey: Mr. J. J. Yates.

Herschel: Mr. J. O. Cornell.

Keiskama Hoek: Mr. A. E. Jubb.

Tamacha (King William’s Town): Mr. W. M. Hartley.

East London: Mr. H. M. Nourse.

Middledrift: Mr. J. G. Pike.

Peddie: Mr. F. C. N. Hassard.

Victoria East: Mr. M. Smuts.

Hewu (Whittlesea): Mr. J. S. de Wet.

NATIVE COUNCILLORS IN ATTENDANCE.

Glen Grey: P. Mzazi.

Herschel: H. Phooko, J. S. Mphuthing.

Keiskama Hoek: W. Majola, S. J. Peteni.

Tamacha (King William’s Town): A. M. Jabavu, G. Maku.

East London: W. Mapela, C. Mbowane.

Middledrift: P. Quma, A. Ngoxweni.


Victoria East: W. Hela, G. Maneli.

Hewu (Whittlesea): C. Mnyengeza, V. Ndabati.

CHAIRMAN’S OPENING ADDRESS.

District Chairman and Councillors,—

It is my privilege to extend to you and to those visitors here to-day a welcome to this Special Session of the Ciskeian General Council.

In particular I wish to convey to our principal guests, Mr. D. L. Smit, Secretary for Native Affairs, and General Conroy and Messrs. Payn and van der Merwe—members of the Native Affairs Commission—our appreciation at their presence.

As you all know, by a resolution of the last Ciskeian General Council Session, this Special Session has been called in order to discuss the Government’s plans for the rehabilitation of Native Areas in the Union.

Mr. Smit will place those plans before you and as leaders of the African people in your various districts, I would urge Councillors to give this matter very deep consideration, bearing in mind that the very existence of future generations lies to-day in your hands.

Before I make way for Mr. Smit, I must tell you that this is the last occasion upon which he will address you in his official capacity. Mr. Smit retires on pension in March next and I know you will agree with me when I express the regret of this Council at losing a trusted friend, one who has devoted his time towards improving the lot of the African people and when we recall what has been done in this direction not only in rural but also in urban areas, we are able to say that his very earnest efforts have not gone unrewarded.

Mr. Smit (and justly so) has had the loyalty, respect and affection of all who have served under him and with his retirement not only the African people but the officers of his Department as well, will lose one who has been their sincere friend and helper. Mr. Smit will be succeeded by Mr. Gordon Mears who you will all remember as the Chief Native Commissioner here in 1941.

Mr. Smit is handing over the reins of administration to a trusted and capable successor whose efforts too, we may be sure, will be directed in the main towards the good work so ably performed by Mr. Smit.

ADDRESS BY SECRETARY FOR NATIVE AFFAIRS.

Mr. Chairman and Councillors, I greet you. I rejoice at the opportunity which has been given me of addressing you at this Special Session of your Council. I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the kind reference you made to my retirement. I shall speak to-morrow to the Councillors about this matter. Today I propose addressing you on the matter we have in hand. This is the last occasion on which I shall have the honour of speaking to you as Secretary for Native Affairs. As I look around this Council, I see many old friends, and looking at them I feel that this occasion is in the nature of a farewell to many cherished activities.
The members of the Native Affairs Commission and I were glad to accept the invitation you sent us through your Chairman to come and speak to you about the Government’s proposals for the rehabilitation of your land.

This Council of yours provides a real link between the Government and the people. It is the means by which we are brought together, and so it may well be called an instrument for the association of the Native people with the Government.

Before proceeding with the business that has brought us together, I wish to say that we remember with satisfaction that it was the people of the Ciskei who gave the lead in 1938 in accepting the limitation of stock in some of their locations. In the post-war schemes of which I will speak the Ciskei must also play a dominant part. For to those of us who belong to the Cape, the Ciskei has always been the window out of the great Native territories of the Transkei and Zululand. And you in the Ciskei are fortunate in having educational institutions of national importance in your midst. So we look to you to exercise from these centres of civilisation an ever-widening influence for good, and to take first place in shaping the progress of your people throughout South Africa.

I shall now address you on the Government’s proposals.

Many of the Native Reserves have become seriously eroded and denuded owing to overstocking and bad methods of farming, and the Government regards the matter with grave concern.

Development of the Anti-Erosion Campaign.

This deterioration of the land was brought to notice by the Native Economic Commission which examined conditions in the Reserves during the period of 1930-1932. Since then the Government has pressed forward with measures to heal the erosion and to prevent further damage. By 1937 the need for dealing with the problem on a wider basis was felt. In a White Paper presented to Parliament on land policy under the Native Trust and Land Act, the Department announced its scheme for the detailed survey of all the Native Reserves.

The survey was to be carried out by a specially selected Location Reclamation Committee in each province, which would report upon the conditions and recommend measures for the rehabilitation of each area surveyed. The Department’s subsequent work has been based upon these surveys. Over 80 areas were surveyed in this way and good work was done in many of them, until the outbreak of war, when shortage of staff and materials put a check upon the operations. Under war conditions it became necessary to concentrate upon maintenance and protection of works already constructed and to undertake new works only as reduced resources permitted.

Control of Grazing.

In 1939 the Livestock Control and Improvement Proclamation (No. 31 of 1939) was promulgated, which provides for the creation of livestock “Betterment Areas” within which stock are subject to beneficial control. Since that date the proclamation has been voluntarily accepted by 74 areas in the Ciskei where the movement began, 33 in the Transkei, 16 in the Transvaal, 25 in Natal and 2 in the Orange Free State.

These areas have been proclaimed as Betterment Areas, but, unfortunately, owing to the wartime shortage of staff and materials already mentioned, advantage could not be taken of the opportunities offered by the co-operation of the people, and so only the fringe of the work has been touched. All farms acquired by the South African Native Trust automatically became Betterment Areas.

Reasons for War-time Delays.

Criticism has been levelled at the Department for releasing so many officers for military service, but it was felt that when the country was at war it was our first duty to make every possible effort to defeat the enemy. No less than one-third of the total staff of the Department was released for service with the forces. Among the technical officers occupied on reclamation work the proportion on active service was over 50 per cent. A considerable strain was thus put upon those who remained behind. Moreover, fencing materials and machinery became unobtainable and as a result much development work was stopped.

Development work during the war period has not, however, ceased altogether. Reclamation of drift sands on the Zululand coast and veld reclamation at Thaba ‘Nchu have continued with gratifying results. Boring for water has progressed so well that 200 proved new boreholes now await pumping plants to bring them into service.

The planning of a new Village Settlement Scheme for housing the families of workers in permanent employment has been carried out.