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Dr. W. J. LEYDS
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GRANVILLE

BRITISH WORKMEN

OR

CHINESE SLAVES.

THE LABOUR PROBLEM
IN THE TRANSVAAL.

LONDON :

THE NEW REFORM CLUB,

10, ADELPHI TERRACE, W.C.

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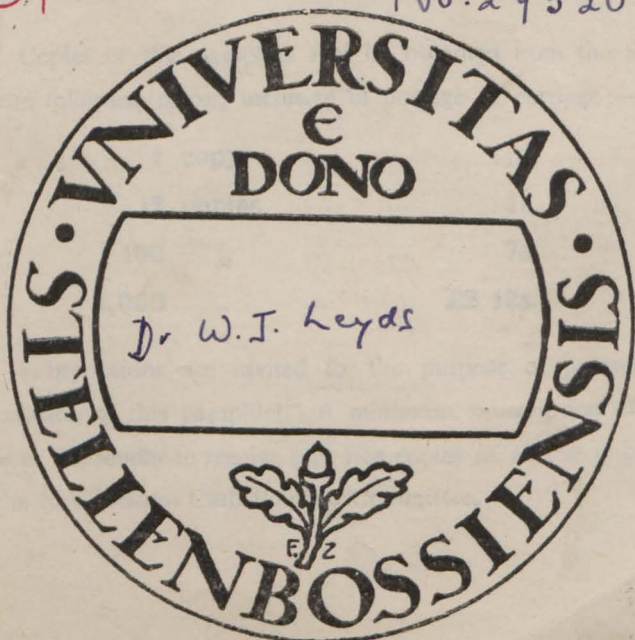
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BRITISH WORKMEN OR CHINESE SLAVES.

The Labour Problem in the Transvaal.

It is not two years since the end of the Transvaal War—the war which we were told was undertaken to secure “equal rights for all white men,” and to release the natives from the slavery in which they were held by the Boers. We have made many discoveries in these two years. We have discovered that the rights of white men can be equalised by levelling down as well as levelling up. Instead of the franchise being granted to the Uitlanders, it has been taken away from the Burgers. For the old Volksraad, elected by a portion of the population, we have substituted a Legislative Council under Lord Milner, not elected at all, but nominated by a Government which is absolutely irresponsible to the inhabitants of the country. At the present moment the Legislative Council is considering a draft Ordinance, published by the Government at its request, the object of which is to secure the introduction into the country of hundreds of thousands of indentured Chinese labourers, under conditions which are those of slavery. The new Colony is in the throes of a great agitation, rivalling in violence and intensity that which preceded and produced the war. This is the situation which has wrung from Major Seely, M.P., a Conservative Member of Parliament, the following protest in a letter to the *Times* :—

“ But if the most tangible and visible result of all the labours and sorrows of that prolonged struggle is to be the importation of Chinese labourers, whose presence is so distasteful to the inhabitants of the Transvaal that they must needs be forced to work, with every circumstance of ignominy, in strict seclusion, and under conditions making them no better than slaves, it will seem that our labours have been in vain, and that it had been almost better had there been no war.”

The labour problem in connection with the gold mines of the Witwatersrand is not a new one.

It existed in an acute form many years before the war. It was presented to the Boer Government in much the same form in which it is presented to the present Government. The elements of the problem were the same. On the one hand, under both Governments, we find the mine-owners combining to enforce a general reduction of

the wages paid to the native labourers. On the other hand, and at the same time, we find them appealing to the Government for assistance by compelling and "inducing" the natives to work at reduced wages. Lord Milner has shown considerable sympathy with the demands of the mine-owners, but the Home Government has hitherto acted as a restraining force. Hence, at the present time, we find the mine owners as discontented with British as they were with Boer rule.

For the history of the labour problem under the Boer Government we have happily an official record of the greatest value. The mine-owners cannot dispute the evidence which they themselves gave before the Commission appointed by the Volksraad in 1897, at the instance of the Chamber of Mines, to enquire into the conditions of the Mining industry. The question of labour supply occupied the chief place in the evidence which was brought before it.

In a letter to the Commission, the Chamber of Mines traced the history of the labour difficulty. According to this statement, and it is the mine owners themselves who make it, a scarcity of native labour was first experienced in 1890. In that year we see them playing their now familiar game. On the one hand, "by the combined action of the industry, under direction of the Chamber, the rate of wages was reduced to 4s. 6d. from 4s. per month." On the other hand, they were appealing to the Government "to render assistance by inducing the natives of the thickly populated native districts to come to the fields."

For the ten years preceding the war the Chamber of Mines was constantly agitating for legislation which would secure cheaper labour and fuller control over it. It urged:—

1. That the Government itself should assist in organising the supplies.
2. That stringent pass laws should be enforced so that the natives might be prevented from moving about as they liked.
3. That "the hut tax should be increased as an incentive to the natives to work."
4. That "permission should be granted to the mining companies to establish locations."

In all these respects the Boer Government failed to satisfy the requirements of the mine owners. In December, 1895, the Jameson Raid took place, and in the following year the Government made an effort to assist the industry by means of three Acts: the Liquor Law, the Gold Law, and the Pass Law. These Acts imposed very stringent regulations upon the natives with regard to the purchase of liquor, the possession of gold, the breaking of contracts, and movement in proclaimed goldfields. The mine owners, however, complained of laxity of administration and narrowness of scope. In 1897 the Volksraad appointed the Commission to inquire into these grievances, and in the evidence which individual mine owners laid before the Commission, we have abundant evidence as to the nature of the control which they wished to obtain over the labour supply.

FORCED LABOUR.

Mr. James Hay stated:—"I think we are all agreed that the natives are too highly paid in this country." In reply to Mr. De Beer, who asked him, "Do you think it would be desirable to get forced labour?" he answered, "Yes."

Mr. George Albu, Chairman of the Association of Mines, questioned by Mr. Smit, gave the following evidence:—

(By Mr. Smit)—Do you intend to cheapen Kaffir labour? How do you propose to affect that?—By simply telling the boys that their wages are reduced. The *maximum* at present is 2s. 3d. a shift, and we can reduce that to 1s. 6d., that is for skilled labour. For ordinary, 1s. or less for the shift.

Suppose the Kaffirs retire back to their kraals? Now, in case that happened, and that you were without black labour, would you be in favour of asking the Government to enforce labour?—Certainly. A Kaffir cannot live on nothing.

You would make it compulsory?—Yes. I would make it compulsory, and without using force a tax could be levied.

REDUCED WAGES.

Mr. E. J. Way, Manager of the George Goch Mine, examined by Mr. Brakhan, said:—

(By Mr. Brakhan)—You have informed us that the mine managers have advised the Boards to reduce the Kaffir wages by one-third. Has that advice come from all the managers along the reef?—In the first place, the 'Council of the Mine Managers' Association unanimously decided that it was an opportune time that the reduction should take place. It was then brought before the Chamber of Mines, Association of Mines, and the Rand Native Supply Association, and a meeting was held and a committee formed. At the same time the mine managers had a general meeting, at which it was unanimously decided that the time was opportune that the reduction should take place, and that the reduction should be 33 per cent.

COMPLETE CONTROL.

Mr. Sidney J. Jennings, General Manager of the Crown Reef Gold Mining Co., said:—

"We have here a most excellent law, in my opinion—namely, the Pass Law—which, if properly carried out and efficiently administered, will enable us to get complete control over our Kaffir labourers."

Mr. Charles Goldman, Chairman of twelve Mining Companies, said :—

“ Thus, if the dignity of labour were impressed upon them by the enforcement of this law (a tax of £2 10s.), we are likely to get a larger supply.”

Mr. Amandus Brakhan, Manager of Ad. Goerz & Co., Ltd., said :—

“ Such taxes, I think, must be imposed on the native living in the Republic as will virtually compel him to work, not alone for a short period, which is generally now the case, but for the best part of the year.”

DISSATISFACTION WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

Thus we find the mine owners conducting a continuous agitation to get the Boer Government to “ compel ” the Kaffir “ to recognise the dignity of labour,” and to force him to work in the mines at reduced pay. The comment of Sir William Harcourt, in a letter to the editor of the *Times* (February 6th, 1903), is sufficient :—“ Taxing the poor in order to compel them to labour at work which they dislike, at a rate of wages far below the market price, is, I believe, an economical doctrine purely of South African origin.”

The Commission reported that they “ cannot recommend any measure which would be equivalent to forced labour, neither can they recommend the imposition of a higher tax upon the Kaffirs.” They further reported against “ the desirability of establishing locations for Kaffirs close to the mines.” They recommended a more efficient administration of the Pass Law and the creation of a Native Labour Department to supervise the administration of this and other laws relating to native labour.

HIGHER DIVIDENDS.

The desire to obtain control of the labour supply was one of the most powerful incentives to the capitalists, who guided and financed the agitation against the Boer Government, which produced the Jameson Raid, and which culminated in the war of 1899. Enormous estimates were made of the increase in dividends which would result from a reduction of Kaffir wages. The profits of the mines for 1898 totalled £4,847,505 paid in dividends. Under “ good government,” Mr. J. H. Hammond, the Consulting Engineer of the Consolidated Goldfields, has told us these would be increased by £2,413,268 per annum.

In “ The Transvaal from Within,” Mr. J. P. Fitzpatrick, a member of the Eckstein firm, writing before the war, said :—

“ If decent protection and facilities were given, the wage could be reduced to £1 15s. per month from £3 3s. 6d.

The Government has it in its power to give the mines labour at this price, but, as a matter of fact, there is no desire to see the lower grade mines working. A reduction of £1 a month—that is, to £2 3s. 6d.—would mean an annual saving of £650,000.”

AFTER THE WAR.

It is not necessary to recapitulate here the history of the war and the events immediately leading up to it.

When the mines were started once more on the Rand, one of the first advantages of British rule experienced by the natives was a reduction of their wages by one-half. The report of the Transvaal Mines Department for the six months ending December 31st, 1901, called special attention to “the great reduction in the scale of native wages, the average monthly wage paid by the gold mines during the period covered by this report being 26s. 4d. per head, against 47s. 1d. in 1898.”

The result which was to be expected followed. The natives were unwilling to undertake the arduous and often unhealthy labour in the mines now that the only inducement which makes any man work, be he black or white—the wages he earns for his day’s work—were reduced by 50 per cent. The same result which attended similar efforts under Boer rule was now manifest under British rule. There was a marked scarcity of native labour at the price offered. Urgent appeals were directed to Lord Milner and the Government to remedy this state of matters by providing inducements of another nature. In August, 1902, a deputation from certain societies of claim owners and others at Barberton waited upon Lord Milner to urge that, while “compulsion” was not to be thought of, “impulsion” by Government was absolutely necessary. Lord Milner, smiling, said he thought the distinction somewhat “fine.” Nevertheless, within a few days, an ordinance was promulgated providing for an annual capitation tax of £2 for every male adult native, with an additional £2 for every wife over one that natives may have.

THE TRAIL OF THE TRADE UNION SERPENT.

Meantime the Stock Exchange prices of mining shares in the “Kaffir Market” were dropping rapidly and steadily. There was a very strong suspicion that the magnates were deliberately depressing industry in order to alarm the shareholders, frighten the Government, and secure the full measure of control which they desired. They were disappointed with the results of the change of Government. They were disappointed at the reluctance of the new Government to comply with their demands. The Capitation Tax of £2 proved entirely inadequate to force into the market a sufficient supply of labour at the wage offered. Meantime, a development occurred which began to cause the magnates grave anxiety. “The trail of the

serpent, the formation of labour unions," made its appearance. It began to be perceived that, not only were the Kaffirs capable of holding out against a serious reduction in their wages, but that white labour was "too political." Mr. Rudd wrote:—

"Could we replace 200,000 native workers by 100,000 unskilled whites, they would simply hold the Government of the country in the hollow of their hands, and, without any disparagement to the British labourer, I prefer to see the more intellectual section of the community at the helm."

In June, 1902, a meeting of working miners resolved to form a labour union, and deputations were sent round the mines. In October, a public meeting, held in Johannesburg to form a "political association," was reported by the *Daily Telegraph* to have been captured by the labour party, who objected to the constitution of the proposed provisional committee as "too capitalistic."

THE DEMAND FOR ASIATIC LABOUR.

Early in 1902 we began to hear a great deal about the urgent necessity of importing Asiatic labour into the Transvaal in order to save the country from ruin. A powerful agitation has been organised, and the utmost pressure has been brought to bear both upon the Government of the Transvaal and the white inhabitants. In itself the gold mining industry is the most powerful interest in the colony. In mere magnitude it overshadows everything else. It provides employment to a large proportion of the population; it monopolises vast sources of wealth; and it has the command of almost unlimited supplies of money. The mining magnates and shareholders themselves are a foreign element. It is not only that many of them are aliens and foreigners; even those who are British subjects are mere sojourners in the land. They come to the Rand for what they can get out of it. Further, the shareholders, from whom they have obtained the capital necessary to work the mines, are chiefly resident in Europe. The large number of small mining shareholders in this country had an important influence on the attitude of the country to the war. They were captivated by the glowing prospects which were held out to them, in the best prospectus style, of hugely increased dividends as the result of a change in Government. The mining magnates and the shareholders are thus a foreign element in South Africa—a land of absentee landlords. Their interests are not necessarily those of the inhabitants of the Colony. The average British subject in the Transvaal views the mining industry from the point of view of a wage-earner, and he views the political problems of the country from the point of view of one who has to live under its Government and whose daily life is affected for good or for bad by its action. The mine owner and shareholder, on the contrary, view the mining industry simply from the point of view of capital, and they have no personal interest in the government of the Colony save as it affects their dividends.

THE POWER OF THE MINING MAGNATES.

For this reason the mine owners have viewed with alarm the growth in the Transvaal of the democratic spirit which is natural to every British colony. At present they are masters of the situation. The present Government is wholly in their hands. The country was delivered into their hands by the huge nucleus of debt which we have saddled upon the country. The two new colonies start with a debt of £65,000,000.

The development loan of £35,000,000, for various public works, is a charge upon the common fund of the Transvaal and Orange River Colonies. In Mr. Chamberlain's words: "In the last resort that loan is secured upon the whole of the assets and revenues of the Transvaal Colony—on its gold, coal, iron, copper." Furthermore, the contribution of the Transvaal to the cost of the war was fixed at £30,000,000, payable in three annual instalments of £10,000,000, each to be provided by a loan "secured solely upon the assets and resources of the Transvaal Colony." This debt is entirely unproductive. There is no asset to show for it. It was regarded as the great achievement of Mr. Chamberlain's South African tour that he secured the underwriting of the first instalment of £10,000,000 by the mine owners.

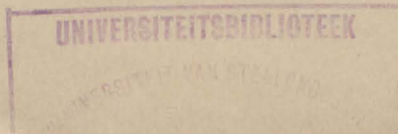
It was a hollow and a barren victory. The mine owners could well afford to find the money at 4 per cent., guaranteed to them by this country, for a loan which placed in their hands a powerful instrument for bringing pressure to bear upon the British Government. The interest on this loan is an obligation which must be met every year. The public revenue of the Transvaal depends upon the prosperity of one industry, and this is the very industry which the mining magnates control. They can depress the industry at their pleasure, and if the Transvaal revenue fails to meet the enormous burden of the interest upon this loan the Government is bankrupt.

The loan was to have been issued in January, 1904, but it has just been announced that the Government has agreed to postpone the issue of the first instalment.

THE FINANCIER IN POLITICS.

Under the present system the mine owners are the power behind the throne. We can find abundant evidence in the legislation already passed, in the dynamite tax which has created a new monopoly, in the diamond ordinance, and in the draft ordinance amending the gold law, which shut out all but the great capitalist houses from sharing in the natural wealth of the country, and in the obvious desire on the part of Lord Milner to consent to the introduction of Chinese labour in face of the openly expressed hostility of the people of the Colony. In tendering his resignation of the post of Commissioner of Mines, on November 23rd, 1903, Mr. Wybergh wrote:—

"I have always put in the forefront, second only to the maintenance of the British supremacy, the necessity for



freeing the country from the undue predominance in politics of the interests of the financial, and particularly the non-resident financial, element.

"I cannot but feel that my expectations have been disappointed. It appears to me that instead of the political influence with the Government exercised by the financial interests having declined, as I have hoped it would do, this influence has rather increased, though no doubt it is exercised in a different manner to that formerly in vogue: it seems indeed to me that the result of the policy of the Government—a policy undoubtedly conceived in perfect good faith—has been that in practice the country is governed in a manner which conduces more to the interests of the powerful financial houses, representing foreign or non-resident shareholders, than to the interests of the local population. In short, I am convinced that, though animated by the best possible intentions, the Government has to a large extent lost touch with the people."

A WHITE SOUTH AFRICA.

The mine owners rightly recognised that a large influx of white labour into the Transvaal and the establishment of representative self-governing institutions would mean the death knell of the enormous political influence which they exercised. A self-governing Colony would be a power beyond their control. An elected government would not be frightened by a depression of the mining industry engineered to diminish the public revenue. That would be too dangerous a game to play with a body which had the mines under their noses, as it were. A colonial Government might be apt to think more of the interests of the country than of the yearnings of the foreign shareholders for increased dividends. They might regard the mines as a national asset, and if they saw obvious mismanagement and an attempt to exercise political pressure by depressing the industry, they might even venture to conceive the possibility of interfering with the management. Self-government would mean that the white labour employed in the mines would have a powerful and even a predominating voice in controlling the policy of the country, and this is not a possibility to be contemplated with equanimity by the men who, in the Memorandum which they presented to Mr. Chamberlain at Johannesburg, referred to "that trail of the serpent, the formation of labour unions." Labour in parliament would be an even more powerful force than labour in unions. It is not matter for surprise that they should be anxious to man their mines with labour which would not be able to secure any political influence. The ideal of "a White South Africa" does not appeal to them. It was not for this that they intrigued against the Boer Government. It was not for this that they financed the Raid. It was not for this that they brought about the war.

THE WHITE DANGER.

A very damaging document is the letter from Mr. Percy Tarbutt which Mr. Creswell, lately manager of the Village Main Reef Mine, submitted to the Labour Commission appointed by Lord Milner. Mr. Tarbutt is a director of probably more South African Mining Companies than any other man. His experience of South Africa dates from 1887 when he went out as engineer to the Consolidated Gold Fields, founded by Mr. Cecil Rhodes and Mr. Rudd. He is now himself a director of that company, and intimately associated with firms such as Wernher, Beit, Eckstein; and Neumann. The letter which Mr. Creswell read to the Commission was written from St. Swithin's Lane, in July, 1903:—

“DEAR MR. CRESWELL,—With reference to your trial of white labour for surface work on the mines, I have consulted the Consolidated Gold Fields people, and one of the members of the board of the Village Main Reef has consulted Messrs. Wernher, Beit & Co., and the feeling seems to be one of fear that, having a large number of white men employed on the Rand in the position of labourers, the same troubles will arise as are now prevalent in the Australian colonies, viz., that the combination of the labouring classes will become so strong as to be able to more or less dictate not only on the question of wages, but also on political questions by the power of their votes when a representative Government is established.

“Yours sincerely, PERCY TARBUTT.”

Take again the evidence of a man who will not be accused of undue sympathy with those who have opposed the policy which led up to the war. In the leading article in which he announced his resignation of the editorship of the *Johannesburg Star*, Mr. Money-penny, who has for many years, up to December 3rd, 1903, controlled the policy of that influential journal, said:—

“To the policy of Chinese immigration, to which the Chamber of Mines has decided to devote its energies, the present editor of the *Star* remains resolutely opposed, and declines in any way to identify himself with such an experiment. To the ideal of a white South Africa, which, to whatever qualifications it may necessarily be subject, is something very different from the ideal of a Chinese South Africa, he resolutely clings, with perfect faith that whatever its enemies may do to-day that ideal will inevitably prevail. But as the financial houses which control the mining industry of the Transvaal have for the present enrolled themselves among its enemies, the present editor of the *Star* withdraws.”

THE YELLOW DANGER.

Having resolved that the mines must be worked by Asiatic labour the mine owners had to reckon with the white inhabitants of the Transvaal on the one hand, who dread the industrial competition of Chinese labour, and the Downing Street Government on the other, which again had to reckon with a British public who abhor slave or forced labour in any form. The Government represented by Lord Milner had hitherto proved compliant enough, and the High Commissioner has given frequent indications of his sympathy with the demand. But the home Government had to reckon with what Lord Milner has termed "the Exeter Hall view—that is, a sentimental and ignorant view of native questions" (on opening the Congress of Municipal bodies, May 18th, 1903). But the most formidable obstacle was the resistance offered by the white population of the colony itself and of South Africa as a whole. The opposition was a passionate resentment which may be compared to that with which the Cape Colonists in 1849 successfully resisted the landing of convicts on their shores. In Australia, in Canada, and in the Western States of America we see the same violent antipathy to the artificial introduction into the country of a lower standard of civilisation and living. The mine owners were prepared to ignore this opposition. With the advent of Chinese labour they hoped to rid themselves of this recalcitrant element which was always meddling in politics. But this was more than the Government could bring itself to do.

THE MINE OWNERS' AGITATION.

Before the mine owners could accomplish their design they must either overcome the Colonial opposition or they must persuade the Home Government that it had been overcome or could be ignored. They entered into the task with all their energy, with all their influence, and with all their vast resources. There is evidence of an organised campaign to coerce opinion in the Transvaal and to mislead opinion in this country. Early in 1903 a public meeting of 5,000 people in the largest hall in Johannesburg passed, with only two dissentients, a resolution protesting against the introduction of Chinese labour. A prominent magnate was heard to declare that before many months were over the people of Johannesburg would go down on their knees and beg for Chinese labour. The sinister significance of this prophecy, or threat, soon began to be perceived. The policy of the mine owners was to "freeze out" opposition to their policy. The obvious methods of coercion were combined with the subtler forms of economic pressure. On August 9th, at six different meetings of the Transvaal Miners' Association, a resolution was passed protesting against "the unfair and unmanly action of the management of the various mines in attempting to coerce the employees into signing for the importation of Asiatics." Petitions were got up and workmen coerced into signing them. Packed meetings were engineered to pass resolutions. Public meetings were broken up by roughs, hired at 15s. for the "night shift." Further, the one industry of the Colony

was artificially depressed, and trade was brought to a state of stagnation. Every instrument of intimidation within the power of a powerful combination of monopolists, the chief employer of labour, the men who controlled the whole industry of the Colony, was used unsparingly. The press was almost wholly in their hands. The news agencies and the correspondents of the principal newspapers lent themselves to the game. A censorship more strict than the military one was established. News of any event which militated against their object was either entirely suppressed or reached this country in a garbled form. The *Times* prepared the way for Chinese labour just as it prepared the way for the Jameson Raid. It was "in the know." Its carefully inspired paragraphs insidiously pushed forward the proposal and prepared the public mind for more definite proposals.

The resolution of protest against the coercion of employees to sign petitions, passed by the Transvaal Miners' Association, would not have been heard of in this country but for the fact that it was circulated by Mr. H. R. Fox-Bourne.

THE NATIVE LABOUR COMMISSION.

(1) MAJORITY REPORT.

The Report of the Labour Commission has been hailed by the *Times* with the comment:—"Thus the path is prepared officially for the introduction of Chinese labour." This Commission was appointed by Lord Milner to inquire into the question of the labour supply for all the industries of the Transvaal. Of the thirteen original members nine were openly committed to Asiatic labour at the start. Of the remaining four one resigned. Only two natives were examined, who both attributed the scarcity of labour to the bad treatment received in the mines, as did the two experienced magistrates from the Cape Colony. No white working-men were called. The report of the majority did not in so many words advocate the introduction of Asiatic labour, but, in set terms, it ruled out every alternative. Its findings were as follows:—

First, the demand for native labour for agriculture in the Transvaal is largely in excess of the present supply, and as the development of the country proceeds this demand will greatly increase.

Secondly, the demand for native labour in the Transvaal for the mining industry is in excess of the present supply by about 129,000 labourers, and, while no complete data as to the future requirements of the whole industry are obtainable, it is estimated that the mines on the Witwatersrand alone will require, within the next five years, an additional supply of 196,000 labourers.

Thirdly, the demand for native labour for other Transvaal industries, including railways, is greatly in excess of the present supply, and will increase concurrently with the advancement of mining and agriculture.

Fourthly, there is no adequate supply of labour in Central or Southern Africa to meet the above requirements.

(2) MINORITY REPORT.

This report was signed by all the members of the Commission except two. These two, however, issued a Minority Report which directly traversed the conclusions of the majority. The relative significance of the two reports is admirably stated in one of the last leading articles which Mr. Money Penny wrote for the *Johannesburg Star* before his resignation of the editorship:—

The report of a minority of two members of a Commission, when it is in direct conflict with the report of a majority of ten, may not seem entitled to very much consideration, but when we analyse the circumstances, the matter begins to wear a different aspect. At the time of the appointment of the Commission, the community was already sharply divided into parties on the Chinese question, and certainly at that time a vast majority of the people of the Transvaal were on the anti-Chinese side. And yet within a week of the appointment of the Commission it was matter of common gossip among the quidnuncs that the anti-Chinese members were in a minority of two. . . . We would only point out that Mr. Quinn and Mr. Whiteside, though they are but two, represent a great deal more than half the white population of this Colony, and probably seven-eighths of the white population of South Africa, and then the two reports must be judged on their merits, and not according to the numbers of their respective signatories. (*Star*, Nov. 30th, 1903.)

The findings of the Minority Report are summed up as follows:—

- (1) That there is sufficient labour in Central and Southern Africa for present requirements, although efforts will be required to obtain it.
- (2) That the present so-called shortage in the Transvaal is largely due to temporary and preventable causes.
- (3) That understanding future requirements to mean such as, if satisfied, will benefit the country as a whole, we consider there is also sufficient labour in the territories, named above, for future requirements.
- (4) That in many ways the supply of native labour can be supplemented and superseded by white labour.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHAMBER OF MINES.

Messrs. Quinn and Whiteside, the signatories of the Minority Report, explain that they "cannot accept either the figures upon which the Majority Report is based, or the conclusions drawn therefrom" The following salient passages give their reasons for this divergence of opinion:—

9. The principal evidence laid before your Excellency's Commission under this head of requirements was that of

the Chamber of Mines, an institution whose function it is to watch over the interests of the shareholders in mining companies. It is composed of gentlemen who represent, and for the most part act under the instructions of the large financial houses, whose headquarters are in London, or other European centres. These financial houses control the mines, the majority of whose shares are held by persons whose direct interest in the welfare of this Colony and its inhabitants is confined to the value of their share-holding. It is, therefore, obvious that in carrying out their duties as guardians of the financial interests of people living outside this Colony the function of the Chamber is to see that the mines under their control pay the largest dividends possible to their absentee principals, and this without any regard to local feeling and opinion. We are far from suggesting on these grounds that the evidence of the Chamber should have no weight; on the contrary, it would have been most unfortunate if their views had not come before your Excellency's Commission, seeing that these views are the outcome of a policy concisely stated by Mr. Hennen Jennings (Commissioner of Mines, 13,956):—"White labour must come, it is absolutely inevitable; but I do not want to have it come."

To prove that "this is no solitary utterance," they attach to their report several documents containing declarations of prominent magnates, adding:—

11. In our opinion these documents demonstrate that the policy of the Chamber of Mines is directed to the perpetuation of the inferior race labour system by the importation of Asiatics, and is one of opposition to the growth of a large British working population.

LABOUR REQUIREMENTS AND THE SUPPLY.

The Minority Report contravenes "the contention that the grade of these mines is so low that it is only by the agency of cheap coloured labour that they can be profitably worked," quoting examples to prove that, in America, mines where "the natural conditions, apart from labour, are, if anything, less favourable for cheap production," have been worked at a profit without cheap coloured labour. As to the actual labour requirements of the mines the Chamber of Mines estimated that twenty coloured and two white labourers per stamp were necessary. Judging by "such unprejudiced evidence as is available," and they quote their authorities, Messrs. Quinn and Whiteside concluded:—

(a) That the real requirements of natives for the gold mining industry have been greatly exaggerated, and that a fair estimate of these at the present time would be about eleven per stamp.

55. (b) That the number of natives required can be very materially reduced by the employment of unskilled whites in certain departments, and that there is every probability of the number of coloured labourers required per stamp diminishing as time goes on, and white men are more and more used.

As against the present deficiency of 129,000 labourers estimated by the Majority Report, the Minority assert :—

56. The actual legitimate requirements of the gold mining industry of the Witwatersrand we cannot therefore put down at more than 75,000 natives at the present time, and there is every likelihood of this number serving to run a much larger number of stamps than are now erected.

And they maintain that in the native population of South and Central Africa “there is ample labour for present requirements.”

THE TEMPORARY SHORTAGE.

That there is a temporary shortage is not denied :—

62. At the same time we are prepared to admit that the quantity of labour offering itself in this, the principal market of South Africa, falls short of the demand, but we believe that this to a great extent, if not altogether, is the result of abnormal circumstances, some of which are direct consequences of the war ; while for others, such as the ill-advised reduction in wages carried out in 1900, the Chamber of Mines must be held directly responsible.

THE LAND IS THE PEOPLE'S.

The Minority Report is concluded with this declaration :—

75. And now, sir, before stating our conclusions, we desire emphatically to state that the mineral wealth of the Transvaal is the property of the people of the Transvaal, both white and coloured, and not of the foreign investor, who is entitled to nothing more than good interest upon the capital he invests. It should therefore be worked in the interests of the people of the Transvaal, and in our opinion this is best secured by regulating the development of the country by the combined supply of white and African labour. This doctrine, scouted by Mr. J. A. Hamilton, and styled by Mr. F. Hellmann “a pernicious one,” we take as the basis of our conclusions on the questions laid before your Commission.

A QUESTION OF WAGES AND OF TREATMENT.

The contention upon which the mine owners base their demand for Chinese labour is that the present labour supply is totally inadequate, and that the development of the country is being retarded. The present shortage was estimated by the Majority Report as 129,000 native labourers for the mining industry alone, and an additional 196,000 within the next five years. The Minority Report

proves that the figures are grossly exaggerated. In February, 1903, Mr. George Albu estimated the shortage at 50,000, and stated that if these could be supplied there would be a "blaze of prosperity" in the Rand. In the Memorandum presented by the mine owners to Mr. Chamberlain at Johannesburg in the previous month, it was stated that, "in order to return to the same conditions as obtained before the war, some 52,000 natives more are required." Since February, the supply has been increased by over 20,000. The monthly rate of increase is 3,000, and in the course of a few months the conditions required for Mr. Albu's "blaze of prosperity" will be completed. But this increase has had to be purchased by a partial abandonment of the policy of decreasing Kaffir wages, a course which is not satisfactory to the mine owners. The output of gold from the Rand mines, moreover, steadily advances. For the year 1903, the completed returns show an output of 2,963,749 ozs., valued at £12,589,247, showing a remarkable advance on 1902, when the output amounted to 1,704,410 ozs., valued at £7,269,888. In 1898, the last complete year before the war, the output amounted to 4,295,602 ozs., valued at £16,044,135; so that by 1903 the mines were already producing over three-quarters of their former output, while the rate was steadily growing.

The present shortage in the labour supply is temporary, and due to artificial and removable causes. It is due to the attempt to enforce serious reductions in wages, and it is due to the ill-treatment and bad feeding and accommodation which prevails in many of the Rand mines. Their rate of mortality is almost double that which prevails in other mines, and four times that which it is among natives working outside the mines. (See return by Sir Godfrey Lagden before the Commission.) In the De Beers mines it is 30 per 1,000 per annum, while on the Rand it is 70 per 1,000. At an election meeting at Capé Town Dr. Jameson made the significant statement: "The De Beers Company would never employ Chinamen. They had plenty of labour, white and black, because they treated their people well" (*Times*, November 5th, 1903). And Sir Lewis Mitchell, late chairman of De Beers, speaking at the annual meeting of the company, held at Kimberley, November 16th, 1903, said:—

"Some statistics have appeared showing the mortality in the Rand Mines. I find the difference was that the mortality in the Rand was 70 per 1,000, while ours was 30 per 1,000. We attach a great deal of importance to that. We believe the native question is not one entirely of wages. It is a question of treatment and of care. The natives are but men. They are men, not machines. If we study their interests, I feel sure when we want more labour we can always get it."

COLONIAL OPPOSITION.

The Report of the Labour Commission was immediately followed by the introduction of a resolution in the Legislative Council calling

upon the Government to introduce "a draft ordinance providing for the importation of indentured, unskilled coloured labour." The Legislative Council in no sense represents the people of the Transvaal. It is not an elected, but a nominated, body. It has no authority, and it is the mere creature of the Government which appointed it. It can but answer back with the voice that is given it. No stronger proof of its unrepresentative character can be given than its passing of this resolution by the majority of 22 to 4. The *Times* has made a singularly disingenuous attempt to represent this vote as an expression of the opinion of the Colony. In a leading article on January 1st, 1904, it commented:—

"There does not seem to be any reason to doubt our correspondent's judgment that the decision on this momentous subject fairly represents the opinion of the country as a whole."

And it added:—

"If the majority of the people have come round to the view that it is to their interest to bring it in, we certainly think there should be no interference by the Home Government."

Mr. Chamberlain himself provides the amplest refutation. Speaking at Johannesburg on January 17th, 1903, he said, according to the *Times* report:—

"The overwhelming popular opinion of the Colony was opposed to the importation of native labour. (Loud cheers.) The other great colonies regarded that step as retrograde and dangerous."

Six months later, in the House of Commons, as recently as July 27th, 1903, he reiterated his statement, and this time with special reference to the views of the Legislative Council, and coupled it with a pledge:—

"I am not professing that I am going to take the opinion of the Legislative Council as a final opinion in such a matter; but there are other means of attaining to a knowledge of the public opinion of the Transvaal upon the subject. I have attained to that knowledge; and I have told the House that, in my opinion, which I do not think anyone will contest at the present time, opinion is hostile. It is because I believe that at the present time the opinion of the Transvaal is hostile to the introduction of Asiatic labour that I make no movement whatever in its favour, and should not assent to it if it were proposed. And so long as the opinion of the Transvaal is hostile, the right hon. gentlemen may rest perfectly satisfied that I shall not assent to it; and I shall certainly not be a party to imposing it upon a hostile majority."

RUSHING IT THROUGH.

The evidence of the late Colonial Secretary completely brushes away the hypocritical contention of the *Times* that the vote of the Legislative Council "fairly represents the opinion of the country as a whole." Yet the Transvaal Government accepted the resolution of its creature. On January 6th it published a draft ordinance "to regulate the introduction into the Transvaal of unskilled non-European labourers." In due course the draft will be submitted to the Legislative Council, which, after going through the elaborate farce of discussion and amendment, will return it to the Government much as a shrewd lawyer, who is also trustee for an estate, will write a letter to himself as trustee and reply to it as solicitor. The Transvaal Government, as Lord Milner has given us abundant indications, is as definitely resolved upon Chinese labour as are the mine owners themselves. Hitherto it has been the influence of the Home Government which has restrained him. Will this influence still prevail? Will Mr. Chamberlain's official pledge be respected now that he is no longer a member of the administration?

THE DRAFT ORDINANCE.

According to the account of the draft ordinance given by the *Times* correspondent, the Chinese labourers introduced will be subjected to the most stringent and onerous conditions. They must live in what is virtually a penal settlement. For three or five years, according to the terms of the contracts, they will be imprisoned in a compound. They must only serve the "person introducing them," or another person to whom, when he has obtained a licence, the first person may lawfully assign his rights. Any person suspected of being "a person imported under the ordinance" may be arrested without a warrant, unless he can show a permit and passport. They will be absolutely excluded from any opportunity of bettering their lot. Their labour must be restricted to the exploitation of minerals. No labourer shall be allowed to trade, or acquire, lease, or hold land. At the end of the contracted time, they must be returned to the country of their origin. "It must be admitted," the *Times* remarks (January 7th, 1904), in the course of a leading article approving the draft, "that the lot of the Chinese labourer does not promise to be a very gay or happy one from our point of view." It is almost impossible to believe that the subject of this ordinance is human beings and not brute beasts. And yet it was drawn up by the representatives of the country which effected the emancipation of the slaves. It is impossible to contemplate such a labour code without a feeling of dismay and humiliation. Call the system by what name we will, it is virtual slavery. These are the conditions of servitude. "Muscular machinery" the *Times* mining correspondent calls these indentured labourers (*Times*, November 11th, 1903). The point of view of the mine-owning capitalist is crystallised in that phrase. He wants "muscular machines" and not free labourers.

Under a right condition of affairs, the prosperity of the owners should be accompanied by the prosperity of the workers. The great natural wealth of the Transvaal cannot be allowed to be monopolised by a few individuals. The people of the country have a right to share in it. If an alien population of serfs are imported to shovel out the gold in the fewest possible years, South Africa will be left in the end like a sucked orange.

THE ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY.

To these considerations must be added the deep-rooted hostility of all classes throughout South Africa to the introduction of the Chinese. The passing of the ordinance would mean that the whole fabric of social life would be shaken to its foundations. The ultimate federation of the various colonies would be indefinitely, and, perhaps, irretrievably, postponed. Cape Colony would have nothing to do with a yellow labour Transvaal. Both political parties, that led by Mr. Merriman and that led by Dr. Jameson, are equally positive in their protestations. At the present time (January) Dr. Jameson has actually drafted a Bill to secure the exclusion of the Chinese from Cape Colony. Mr. Seddon, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, and Mr. Deakin, the Prime Minister of the Australian Commonwealth, have both telegraphed to the Colonial Secretary at Pretoria strongly worded protests against the scheme.

Sir Henry Fowler once said, with a fine perception of our national responsibilities, that every Member of the House of Commons was "a Member for India." In the same sense every Member of the House of Commons is a Member for the Transvaal. The inhabitants of the Colony have no voice in their own government. The nominated Legislative Council represents no one but Lord Milner, who appointed it. Lord Milner himself is responsible not to the colonists but to the Home Government. The ultimate responsibility, then, for the good government of this new colony rests with the electors of the Parliament which sits at Westminster.

In the speech already quoted (July 27th, 1903) Mr. Chamberlain stated that he had informed Lord Milner:—

"That before I assented to any introduction of Asiatic labour, whether Chinese or Indian, I must have reasonable proof that it was a policy which the Transvaal, if a self-governing Colony, would approve."

That, we agree, is the vital test. There is only one way of applying it, and that is by consulting the people themselves. Let the decision of this "momentous question" be deferred until self-government is granted. If the advocates of the proposal are impatient of delay, let a referendum be taken. It has already been formally demanded by the opponents of the policy. It is a test of the sincerity of the mine owners' contention that public opinion is with them.