

## THE EVOLUTION OF THE INDIAN QUESTION IN NATAL – 1860 -1897

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More than two decades elapsed before white colonists in Natal began to question the consequences of Indian immigration. And even then colonial reaction and attitude to the growing Indian presence was not uniform. Occupational differences and the existence of three distinct regions within Natal – coastal, midlands and northern – tended to blur if not retard the coalescing of opinion on the subject. The fact that it ceased to be a polemical issue by the 1890s was a development which was neither sudden nor predictable but rather an evolutionary response to the pervasion of the Indian population around the Colony.

### **ONE - 1850s**

Cries for labour and capital dominated the fledgling white community during the 1850s. With sugar emerging as the crop most likely to form the cornerstone of Natal's prosperity, the need for a reliable labour force preoccupied the minds of many pioneer sugar planters from the outset. As early as 1852 a few coastal planters petitioned the Colonial Administration to introduce indentured Indian labour [1]. Despite a very large indigenous population in excess of 100,000, the Native Affairs Commission of 1852-53 found that an abundance of land located within the African reserves meant that the needs of a subsistence economy did not require Africans to seek regular employment from colonial farmers. As Theophilus Shepstone put it, 'it was not reasonable to expect that a nation of warriors and hunters should at once become steady labourers' [2]. Thus, indentured labour came to be seen as the panacea of the labour problem. But there was never unanimity amongst the fewer than 50 coastal planters on this and at best indentured labour was viewed as a last resort.

Yet it was an idea which gained traction thanks largely to two individuals – James Renault Saunders, a Victoria County planter who hailed from Mauritius and George Robinson, editor of the *Natal Mercury*. Saunders' experience of indentured labour in the canefields of Mauritius distinguished him from other sugar pioneers. In Robinson he found an eager ally. From 1855 the *Mercury* actively promoted the need for Natal to embrace a dispensation of indentured Indian labour. When Sir George Grey, British High Commissioner in Southern Africa visited the District of Natal, as it then was, in 1855, the proponents of indentured labour implored him to lobby on their behalf for the introduction of such labour in Natal. In expressing himself in favour of such a dispensation, Grey nonetheless warned that 'numbers of coolie families would remain as settlers after their terms expired' [3]. His reference to the long range social consequences of labourers becoming settlers went unremarked in the colonial press. The thinking on the subject, as Governor John Scott expressed it, was that the example of diligent application by indentured Indians might gradually persuade Africans to enter the service of white farmers on a more regular basis [4]. Writing to the Secretary of State for Colonies, Lord Lytton, in 1859, Scott referred to the indentured immigration scheme as 'an experiment' which he envisaged as being on a small scale [5]. As Mabel Palmer has pointed out, 'only the smallest fraction of the population in Natal seems to have realised that continuous immigration was certain to lead to the establishment of a permanent Indian community.....So greedy for cheap labour were the planters that the Government and the Press were blind to the inevitable results of the immigration policy' [6]. By 1859 with capital having become more available, the need for reliable labour had reached a critical level. The tone of an editorial in the *Mercury* at that time exemplified that: 'We want coolie labour; it is essential to the successful progress of our colonial enterprise' [7]. Three Bills on indentured labour were introduced into the Natal Legislative Council on 31 May 1859. Within three weeks they were promulgated as Laws 13, 14 and 15. Only Law 14, which stated that Indian labourers would be introduced 'at the public expense,' provoked a modicum of debate outside the Council Chamber. The *Natal Star* asserted that the introduction of Indian labour was 'to propitiate the sugar-growing interest,' [8] but the *Mercury* claimed that the

success of the coastal enterprise was for ‘the general good of all’ [9]. Yet within the Chamber Law 14 was dispensed with in a single day despite having 43 clauses and three schedules.

SOURCES:

[1] RF Osborn, *Valiant Harvest: the founding of the South African sugar industry 1848 – 1926*, (Durban, 1964), p. 204.

[2] *Natal Witness*, 23 March 1855.

[3] *Natal Mercury*, 9 November 1855.

[4] GH, Despatch No. 71. 6 August 1857, CO 179/46.

[5] GH, 1212, Despatch No. 51, 28 June 1859.

[6] Mabel Palmer, *The History of Indians in Natal*, (Cape Town, 1957), p. 26.

[7] *Natal Mercury*, 5 May 1859.

[8] *Natal Star*, 3 March 1860.

[9] *Natal Mercury*, 28 July 1859.

## TWO - 1860s

The first indentured Indians arrived in November 1860. The description of the women and children amongst them as being ‘dead stock’ because planters wanted strong men to tackle the dense coastal bush [1] aptly summed up the colonial view of the immigrants. They were seen purely as units of labour.

To his credit, the new editor of the *Mercury*, John Robinson, did try to adduce the view that a ‘trusteeship’ should be exercised by employers towards their contracted labourers. He felt that there should be a balance between the economic benefit derived from indentured labour and social responsibility for their welfare. He also sounded a warning: ‘Coolie enterprise is, to a certain extent, a revolution in the structure of colonial society’ [2]. However, Robinson’s concerns were ignored and lost in the economic surge that saw the sugar enterprise accelerate in growth with the number of mills in production doubling from 27 in 1860 to 56 in 1863. In 1864 sugar exports reached a record £94,372, up from £19,415 in 1861 [3]. The only debate around Indian labour was its cost – some £19 to £21 per labourer – a price planters termed ‘oppressive and excessive.’ [The cost to planters in British Guiana was only £15 per head] [4]. Some relief for employers of indentured labour came in the form of Law 20 of 1863 which institutionalised the principle of state aid for indentured immigration. Planters would make five annual payments of £2 and ten shillings per labourer to the Government. The difference in the cost of importation – some four pounds would come from the taxpayer [5].

In 1863 the first signs of the social revolution of which Robinson had warned, appeared briefly. A very small number of the first batch of indentured Indians succeeded in gaining an early release from their five year contracts by making a £5 commutation payment to their employers as was permitted under Law 14 of 1859. Where they should live as free settlers and how they should occupy themselves was the subject of fleeting public debate in the *Mercury*. Robinson suggested residential segregation in the vicinity of the present day Greyville racecourse from where he rather presciently suggested the Indians could supply white colonists ‘with vegetables and dairy stuff...at far cheaper rates than we now enjoy,’ [6]. James Saunders, a fellow member of the Natal Legislative Council, deplored the idea of ‘helping coolies to acquire land’ and argued that they should be kept economically dependent on white colonists by having to offer their services to small farmers around Durban [7]. Other critics cringed at the prospect of what they termed an ‘Indian location’ which would become a ‘sink of all sorts of abomination’ [8]. The idea of the Indian as a settler was taboo.

Humanitarian concerns for indentured Indians were simply not part of the colonial mindset. Efforts by the Coolie Immigration Agent, as he was then called, Henriques Shepstone, to seek redress for repressive treatment being meted out to Indian labourers on some estates came to nought. As long as Natal’s economy was progressing, the presence of Indian labourers was gauged merely in terms of material value. ‘Coolie immigration is deemed more essential to our prosperity than ever,’ stated a *Mercury* editorial in 1865 [9]. The economic downturn which followed the ending of the American Civil War rapidly reversed that opinion. With plunging world sugar prices, bankruptcy plagued sugar planters. Indentured labour suddenly became a liability and many asked to be relieved of their contracts. No fresh

imports of labour were made after 1866 until July 1874.

Although hardship, hunger, crime and violence afflicted many of the more than 5,000 Indians who were then residing in Natal, white colonial interest in the lot of Indians was very low key as the decade of the 1860s ran its course.

[1] *Natal Mercury*, 6 December 1860.

[2] *Natal Mercury*, 21 March 1861.

[3] RF Osborn, *Valiant Harvest*, p. 66; p.68.

[4] *Natal Mercury*, 31 October 1861 and 20 February 1863.

[5] *Natal Parliamentary Papers*, 241, Select Committee Report No. 15, 1863.

[6] *Natal Mercury*, 27 November 1863.

[7] *Natal Mercury*, 15 December 1863.

[8] *Natal Mercury*, 26 February 1864.

[9] *Natal Mercury*, 19 January 1865.

### THREE - 1870s

By 1870 what had been seen purely in terms of a labour dispensation had quietly evolved into a socio-economic reality which steadily commanded attention as the decade progressed. With only a small number of Indians still under indentured contract, the majority were working independently as hawkers, fishermen, tailors, laundrymen, cooks, artisans, tradesman, mechanics and market gardeners. Moreover, they were no longer confined to the coastal areas but were dispersing across the Colony. The white colonial view that Indians would remain a source of cheap, settled labour after the expiry of their contracts was exposed as naïve.

The initial response of colonists, however, was not in recognition of the contribution of the Indian settlers to the economy but rather one of disdain at their presence. A *Mercury* editorial of 14 March 1871 reflects that aptly: 'We have little nests of coolies scattered about everywhere, without surveillance, without regulation, without oversight of any kind. In town, cottages are being rented and occupied by coolie families to the frequent inconvenience and annoyance of neighbours. Neither as regards cleanliness nor morality are these places defensible.' The Durban Town Council toyed with the idea of setting up a separate area for Indians. But no such development took place.

Again, to its credit, early on in the evolution of the Indian Question, as it came to be known, the *Mercury* attempted to distinguish between classes of Indians and to advocate greater tolerance towards those 'more enlightened and intelligent individuals from whose more refined habits and conformable disposition no danger need be feared' [1]. But such thinking was not only ahead of its time but never found broad acceptance amongst white colonists. Instead, as the economy recovered from its setback the focus on Indians was purely on their worth as labourers in the fields of the white man. Arguments in the Legislative Council revolved around the cost of importing indentured labour and who should bear it. The thinking surrounding the Coolie Commission of 1872 is particularly reflective of the terms in which Indians were regarded. Despite reports of maltreatment and abuse by 228 Indians who returned home aboard the *Red Riding Hood* in 1871, and the 'severe rebuke' Natal received from the British authorities for that [2], as an exercise the Commission was meant to be seen as a probe the outcome of which would be to sanction the renewal of the indentured system. Lip service was paid to the humanitarian aspects of the Report. It was a case of let's move on and get indentured labour back on the land, as an editorial in the *Witness* exemplified: 'The Governor is now placed in a position to write to the Secretary of State and say that whatever regulations the Imperial Government may think it necessary should be made... Let us hope the conditions to be required will not be found oppressive' [3].

The re-introduction of indentured labour in July 1874 after an eight year hiatus was to prove a watershed in the evolution of the Indian Question. The 278% increase in the size of the Indian population between 1876 and 1886 transformed and moulded colonial perceptions of the Indian presence in a radical way. The primary cause of that change was the arrival of what were termed 'passenger' Indian immigrants. These were non-indentured Indians who paid their own passage to immigrate to Natal. In terms of imperial norms, all subjects were free to travel anywhere within the British Empire.[At the height of anti-

Indian feelings in the mid-1890s, one colonial legislator drew attention to an anomaly in this regard when he cited Basutoland and Zululand as two British territories which excluded Indians]. And in terms of a dictum laid down in March 1875 the rights and privileges accorded to ‘any other class of Her Majesty’s subjects resident in the colonies’ were to be granted to indentured labourers who had completed their contracts [4].

Prominent amongst the ‘passenger’ Indians were what the colonials called ‘Arabs.’ These were moslem businessmen usually from Bombay or Gujerati on India’s west coast. As early as 1875 one such ‘Arab,’ Aboobaker Amod, advertised his business, which was located in West Street, Durban, in the *Natal Almanac & Yearly Register*. Durban valuation rolls for 1879 -1880 showed that his extensive property portfolio had 26 tenants [5]. In time it was this class of Indian immigrant and the threat it posed to small white colonial traders that constituted the core of anti-Indian hostility.

By the second half of the 1870s white attitudes towards Indians generally were still largely positive. Calls from upcountry and midlands farmers for indentured labour were growing. In the Pietermaritzburg area alone there were 71 different employers of Indian labour by 1881 [6]. The *Mercury* termed the need for and spread of Indian labour ‘a colonial movement’ which was uniting midland and coastal planter [7]. The enterprise of free Indians had also become an indispensable part of colonial life. Without Indian cultivation ‘maize would be at a famine price and vegetables would be strangers to our table,’ noted the Inanda Planters’ report of March 1878, adding that some Indians were even employing African labour ‘to a considerable extent’ [8]. Likewise, Indians held a virtual monopoly on the supply of fresh fish in Durban. [9]. When the Durban daily market opened in 1876 the *Mercury* hailed the occasion as the beginning of a ‘new commercial epoch’ which would see Indians as ‘the principal vendors’ [10]. As Sir Garnet Wolseley, Natal’s Administrator in 1875, remarked, ‘without them the commerce of Natal would languish and its revenue would be seriously reduced’ [11].

Nonetheless, in tracing the evolution of white colonial Natal’s Indian Question the late 1870s provide evidence of the first real signs of discord and disapprobation. The term ‘coolieism’ was used to express disapproval of the inroads Indians were making into the hitherto exclusively white settler preserve of commerce. ‘The coolie trades people are getting too big for their shoes,’ stated a report in the *Mercury* [12]. Alcohol abuse, complaints of ‘vice, uncleanness and disorder’ [13] and the outcry from white storekeepers who found themselves unable to compete with Indian traders began to constitute a focal point of confrontation.

[1] *Natal Mercury*, 14 March 1871.

[2] *Natal Mercury*, 17 September 1872.

[3] *Natal Witness*, 17 September 1872.

[4] Secretary of State to the Governor General of India, 24 March 1875, cited in Report of the Protector of Indian Immigrants. 1877, p. 5.

[5] S Bhana, ‘Indian trade and trader,’ in Bill Guest and John M Sellers (eds.), *Enterprise and Exploitation in a Victorian Colony*, (Pietermaritzburg, 1985), p. 240.

[6] Government Notice No. 422, 1881.

[7] *Natal Mercury*, 30 August 1879 and 30 January 1880.

[8] *Natal Mercury*, 4 March 1878.

[9] Report of the Protector of Indian Immigrants, 1877, p.6.

[10] *Natal Mercury*, 8 January 1876.

[11] RA Huttenback, *Gandhi in South Africa: British Imperialism and the Indian Question 1860 – 1914*, (London, 1971), p. 33.

[12] *Natal Mercury*, 12 May 1877.

[13] *Natal Mercury*, 4 March 1878.

#### **FOUR - to 1885**

On 24 July 1884 the Natal Legislative Council unanimously endorsed a motion to appoint a commission of enquiry [the Wragg Commission, as it came to be known] to report on Indian immigration laws and regulations with a view to devising means of bringing the Indian population under more effective

control. Almost 25 years after the arrival of the first Indians the small, usually far from cohesive white community mustered sufficient unanimity in the political sphere to confront the consequences of a labour dispensation which it embarked upon as ‘an experiment,’ as Governor Scott described it in 1859. Having thwarted an invasion of the Colony by Zulus, white colonial society found itself facing the threat of domination in the form of colonisation by Indian immigrants. Besides the boatloads of ‘passenger’ Indians disembarking in Durban, every year several thousand indentured labourers concluded their five year contracts and became settlers. In 1883, for example, not a single Indian out of 4,548 who completed their five year contracts re-indentured for a second five year contract [1]. The rapid growth in numbers of free Indians and their steadily pervasive presence throughout Natal fuelled opposition which, in time, evolved into abhorrence amongst some sections of white colonial society. There was really only one reason why Indians elected not to re-indenture or to return to India and it was economics. They found they could earn more money as entrepreneurs or by hiring their labour to the Durban Corporation, the Harbour Board, the railways and later the coal mines of Northern Natal. As a sparsely populated, developing colony Natal offered boundless opportunities, unlike India where mere survival was a challenge. The perverse reality was that the more Indians availed themselves of the fruits Natal offered to settlers, the less they were accepted by the ruling white settler class. The inroads of ‘coolieism’ into white society provoked increasing resentment.

The Indian Question or the ‘coolie curse’ as it was then called, manifested itself in many ways – social integration, cultural differences, crime, commercial competition, noise, political concerns, squalor, pollution of streams, exploitation of fish stocks, vagrancy, property ownership, *dukawallahs*. Lumped together it amounted to one thing: Indians were not welcome as settlers. As if something which had been pent-up was suddenly released, from the beginning of the 1880s, letters to the press, reports and editorials critical of Indians were markedly prominent compared to any previous time. As a *Mercury* editorial remarked: ‘That it will become more and more a burning question here cannot be doubted. No controversies are so embittered as those which deal with race dominancy’ [2].

Much of the municipal history of the time concerns efforts of white colonial society to impose its will and standards on the emerging class of settlers whose presence it resented. Sanitation and town planning bylaws served as the means to discriminate against Indians and to segregate them from whites. Across the Colony, whether in Umzinto or Tongaat, Durban or Pietermaritzburg, Marburg or Weenen, the same complaints emanated either about the ‘insanitary habits’ of Indians and the condition of their dwellings or the commercial competition of Indian storekeepers and the itinerant traders known as *dukkahwallahs*. However, there were colonists like Harry Escombe who initially defended the competition Indian traders provided. Speaking in the Legislative Council in 1884 he contended that Indian competition was to the benefit of society because it meant a reduction in the cost of goods. By turning previously unproductive pieces of land into profitable areas, Indians had become ‘a useful and exemplary section of the community’ [3]. Certainly the less affluent section of the white settler class had no quibble with Escombe’s statement. They were loyal customers of Indian traders. In 1885 it was disclosed that in Durban 22 white families were actually tenants of Indian landlords [4].

In 1882 the *Times of Natal* had expressed alarm at the proliferation of Indian shops around the Colony and called on the Legislative Council ‘to improve the laws so as to prevent the increase of coolie occupation of the soil and industrial competition against the white population’ [5]. By 1885 the scale and depth of resentment towards Indians as a group was well-illustrated by the demands listed in a petition presented to the Legislative Council by the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce. They included ending public funding of indentured labour, the repatriation of unemployed and contract-expired Indians, the levying of special taxes on free Indians and their dwellings, residential segregation and banning Indians from trading in liquor [6].

The concomitant of growing white resentment was a blurring of focus as to who it was amongst the Asiatic settlers they regarded as the most threatening. By 1887 the Wragg Commission had noted that ‘Arab’ traders who knew the ways and habits of Indians and selected their stock accordingly, were not only driving small white storekeepers out of business but were doing the same to ex-indentured Indians. The business acumen of ‘Arab’ traders was well-illustrated by statistics on shop licences in

Durban in 1885. Forty of the 66 business licences were ‘Arab’-owned [7]. A similar trend manifested itself in the Durban property market: by 1884 four ‘Arabs’ owned 40 properties valued at 16,000 pounds whereas 78 ex-indentured Indians owned 96 properties valued only at £17,605 [8].

By the mid-1880s Natal’s Indian dilemma had become something of a paradox: white resentment at the Indian presence was reaching new levels of intensity while the need for Indian labour was reaching new levels of necessity. Remarks from a correspondent who signed himself ‘True Natalian’ reflected the bind that many white colonists felt. In a letter published in the *Mercury* he asked what Natal had fought the war of 1879 for if, as a Colony, instead of being invaded by Zulus it was being taken over by Asiatics [9].

[1] Report of the Protector of Indian Immigrants, 1883, *Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1883, P. FF47.

[2] *Natal Mercury*, 9 January 1883.

[3] *Debates of the Legislative Council of the Colony of Natal*, Vol. VII, 1884, p. 328-329.

[4] *Natal Mercury*, 8 April 1885.

[5] *Times of Natal*, 13 April 1882.

[6] *Natal Mercury*, 15 July 1885.

[7] Wragg Commission Report in YS Meer, *Documents of Indentured Labour, Natal 1851 – 1917*, (Durban 1980), p. 363.

[8] Maureen Swan, *Gandhi – The South African Experience*, (Johannesburg, 1985), p. 4.

[9] 6 December 1882.

#### **FIVE - to 1889**

Three years elapsed between the passage of the motion endorsing a commission of enquiry into the Indian Question and the publication of the Commission’s Report. Consequently, as a subject the Indian Question took something of a backseat during this time (1884 -1887). A severe economic downturn, an unpopular Governor (Havelock) and the annexation of Zululand tended to push the Indian Question aside as a polemical issue.

However, the snap election called by Governor Havelock did produce a new anti-Indian element in the legislature in the form of Cecil Yonge who hailed from Pietermaritzburg. He made it clear that he regarded his election as a mandate to tackle ‘the Coolie Question’ [1]. He at once introduced a Bill in the Legislative Council which proposed the rescinding of the annual £10,000 payment towards indentured labour from the public purse and the repatriation of Indians upon the completion of their contracts. But at its second reading Yonge withdrew his Bill. With the Wragg Commission’s Report still being awaited it was considered inappropriate to pursue his proposed legislation. Nonetheless, the *Mercury* endorsed Yonge’s intentions: ‘It is not difficult to foresee that the coolie “colonist” is doomed...The real objective of which Mr Yonge and others have at heart is to save the country from occupation by Asiatic settlers...There can be little doubt as to the popular verdict’ [2].

The release of the Wragg Commission’s Report in September 1887 proved a disappointment. As the *Mercury* opined, much of it was ‘ancient history’ in that it regurgitated the obvious [3]. It did, however, recommend that the use of public revenue for indentured immigration should cease. That, however, hardly addressed the issue of the ongoing arrival of ‘passenger’ immigrants and ‘Arabs.’ Thus, as an exercise all the Wragg Commission achieved was to crystallise the nature and extent of the Indian Question. Its recommendations were ignored by the Colonial Executive. That, in turn, enabled John Robinson to assert that until Natal had a responsible government dispensation it would not be able to deal decisively with the Indian Question. The reality, however, was that Indian immigration could not be limited to labour only. Imperial policy did not permit discrimination amongst immigrants. Labourers were free to become settlers.

The formation of the Working Men’s Association, known later as the Labour League, during the latter half of the 1880s constituted the first organised white opposition to the Indian Question. It made its mark in the media by what the *Mercury* labelled as ‘violent denunciations’ hurled at the Indian community [4]. When a by-election came up in Durban Borough the Working Men put up a candidate whose key plank in his manifesto was the ending of state subsidisation of indentured labour. That stand forced the political

establishment to take notice. Henry Binns, chairman of the Indian Immigration Trust Board conceded that the subsidy could be removed as duties paid on rice and other commodities would compensate for it [5]. The by-election succeeded in fanning the Indian question into a ‘burning issue,’ as the *Mercury* put it with a distinct rift emerging between the sugar planters and small white business interests and workers [6]. Election day saw the Working Men’s candidate, JF King, winning by a very narrow margin. Nonetheless, it gave impetus to the Working Men’s campaign. They continued to hold weekly meetings and extended their interests to the collieries in Northern Natal out of concern for the loss of white jobs to Indians. A major conference of the Colony’s tea, sugar and coffee planters together with the Durban Chamber of Commerce was held on 13 July 1888. Its unanimous resolve in favour of the continuation of indentured labour served to underline the dilemma Natal faced. In political terms it showed that two camps had arisen amongst colonists: racial hardliners who saw continued Indian immigration as inimical to the idea of a white Natal and pragmatists whose economic and business interests required the ongoing importation of indentured labour. (Calls for indentured labour from all parts of the Colony at the time remained high). Yet both camps opposed the idea of settler status for the Indian. Four years after calling for a commission of enquiry into the Indian Question no progress had been made in dealing with it. As Cecil Yonge complained, the attitude of the Natal Government seemed to have become one of ‘let slide and trust to Providence’ [7]. It was a vexed situation in which colonists had become hostages of their own making.

Their reactions were characterised by bouts of insecurity and paranoia triggered by any news which intensified their perception of the Indian Question. The arrival of the Indian-owned ship, the *Taif*, in December 1889 with 374 non-indentured ‘Arabs’ on board produced howls of outrage. News about the ‘careless sanitation habits’ of Indians, the spread of venereal disease among them, the fact that by 1889 they held 124 business licences in Durban – double the number held in 1885, the proliferation of Indian-owned shanty houses all served to alarm and to harden the colonial mindset towards Indians [8]. Fuelling this mindset was the ongoing arrival of boatloads of Indian immigrants: 3,369 in 1889, 4,408 in 1890 [9].

Unable to arrest the tide of Indian immigration they resorted to devising greater legal restrictions on Indian settlers. Law 21 of 1888 required all Indians in Durban and Pietermaritzburg who were not under indenture to register on the basis that they belonged to an ‘uncivilised race’ [10]. Ostensibly the aim of the law was to place free Indians in the same category as Africans in an attempt to control crime. But its real purpose was to discriminate against Indians as settlers and to deny them the same rights to which they were entitled as British subjects. Law 20 of 1890 prohibited the sale, barter or supply of liquor to Indians. Consumption of liquor by Indians was restricted to licensed premises only. This was later further tightened in 1896 to state that such consumption had to be in glasses only and not in bottles [11]. Even the environment seemed to be under attack by the ‘coolie curse.’ The *Mercury* complained of ‘the wholesale destruction of young fish by Indian fishermen, citing the Umgeni lagoon, and claimed the ‘ruthless Indian is fast sweeping its waters clean’ [12].

[1] *Natal Witness*, 23 August 1886.

[2] *Natal Mercury*, 26 November 1886.

[3] *Natal Mercury*, 27 September 1887.

[4] *Natal Mercury*, 4 May 1888.

[5] *Natal Mercury*, 19 May 1888.

[6] *Natal Mercury*, 22 May 1888.

[7] *Natal Mercury*, 26 November 1889.

[8] WPM Henderson, *Durban: Fifty Years’ Municipal History*, (Durban, 1904), p. 139. The *Natal Advertiser* claimed in an editorial on 8 October 1890 that ‘Sammy is rooted and grounded in the faith of filth.’

[9] Reports of the Protector of Indian Immigrants, 1889, 1890-1891, *Supplements to the Blue Books for the Colony of Natal*, p. A30; p. A.2.

[10] *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XL, No. 2326, 30 October 1888.

[11] Section 66 of Act 38 of 1896.

[12] *Natal Mercury*, 10 June 1890.

## SIX - to 1893

1890 was something of watershed year as far as agitation on the Indian Question was concerned. It was an election year which saw exhaustive discussion of the Indian Question within the context of Natal seeking a responsible government dispensation which would allow it to enjoy a degree of autonomy over its own affairs [The Cape gained responsible government in 1872]. Led by John Robinson, the pro-responsible or Forward Party as they were called, harped on relentlessly about how such a dispensation would enable Natal to deal decisively with the Indian Question. It saw Robinson currying favour with the Labour League and abandoning his hitherto moderate stance towards Indians. At a mass rally in Durban he referred to Indians as ‘pernicious on social, political, commercial, financial and especially on sanitary grounds’ [1]. In turn the *Mercury* claimed that the imperial government cared little for the social future of Natal [2]. Letters in the press grumbled about the ‘swarming and swamping process’ which was how Indian immigration was regarded. The *Witness* stated that it was ‘ridiculous’ that because a man happened to be born under a certain flag he was free to roam wherever he pleased and to ‘domicile himself wherever inclinations may dictate’ [3]. Ironically, the election turnout was poor – a 46% poll. The complaints about the Indian as a settler rumbled on. Durban’s mayor Benjamin Greenacre wanted Indians segregated to their own residential quarter. Similarly, Pietermaritzburg’s chief magistrate, Charles Barter, was highly critical of the condition of Indian dwellings and stated that the Indian ‘still wallows in his native stench and filth’ [4]. Meanwhile the colonial legislature tinkered with the laws relating to Indians by revising them and consolidating them administratively into what became Law 25 of 1891. Although dismissed as disappointing, Law 25 did depart from previous legislation on the subject in that it stipulated that no Indian could leave Natal until a full ten years of indentured service had been completed and that all Indians should return to India on completion of that service. Predictably, the India government objected to this provision and insisted that it be struck out before royal assent was granted.

Meanwhile by 1893 the size of the Indian population threatened to overtake that of the white colonials: 41,208 to 43,742 [5]. Across the Colony the presence and role of Indians continued to assert itself. As the Protector noted, ‘nearly all fishing, market gardening, hawking of fruit and vegetables’ was in the hands of Indians while they extended their cultivation of maize, tobacco and beans [6]. The negative side to this was expressed by Durban’s Superintendent of Police, RC Alexander. ‘Indians are becoming as prolific as rabbits and almost as destructive to the welfare of Europeans.’ He cited Indians as being responsible for 42% of the contraventions of Durban’s bylaws and 57% of the criminal offences dealt with by the Borough Police despite constituting only 24% of the population [7].

With Natal’s Constitutional Amendment Bill having been gazetted in April 1893 a further election was held to elect the government for the newly expanded Natal Legislative Assembly. Despite considerable attention focused on the Indian Question during the election campaign, apart from the usual denunciations of Indians as settlers, no concrete proposals were put forward by candidates. There was, however, voter sensitivity concerning the presence of 73 Indian voters on the roll in Durban County. One candidate challenged his opponents to resign if they won election as a result of Indian votes. Subsequently all six Durban County candidates signed a declaration to discourage Indian votes [8]. At the time there were only 365 Indians on the entire colonial voters’ roll which was slightly in excess of 10,000 registered voters [9]. Although these Indian voters clearly presented no threat to the prevailing political order, the reaction in the case of the Durban County white colonists reflected the extent to which rancour and insecurity beset them.

[1] *Natal Mercury*, 9 September 1890.

[2] *Natal Mercury*, 26 September 1890.

[3] *Natal Witness*, 17 July 1890.

[4] *Natal Mercury*, 7 August 1891; *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1891-92, p. B.57.

[5] *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1892-93, p. T.4.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. A.34.

[7] Mayor's Minute, *Natal Mercury*, 11 August 1893.

[8] *Natal Mercury*, 18 September 1893.

[9] *Natal Government Gazettes* 15 and 22 August 1893.

## SEVEN - 1894

The Robinson Ministry took office in October 1893. As Natal's first Prime Minister, Sir John lost no time in tackling the Indian Question. In the space of three years he succeeded in passing six major pieces of legislation affecting Indians. But for all his Ministry's legislative efforts to control, regulate and restrict, it failed in the one area in which there was unanimity of opinion amongst colonists, namely, to return labourers home at the end of their contracts and to curb Asiatic colonisation of Natal.

First up was a delegation to India to confer with the India Government regarding the returning of indentured labourers to India at the completion of their contracts. It came to nothing. In the words of Lord Elgin, Viceroy and Governor-General of India: 'I have little sympathy with the views that would prevent any subject of the Crown from settling in any Colony under the British flag' [1]. As the *Mercury* remarked, 'We fear the sum total of the agreement is simply that the coolie can please himself whether he stays or goes' [2].

The first of four pieces of legislation passed in the first year of the Robinson Ministry was Act 22 which extended the powers of municipal corporations in regulating sanitary conditions in Natal boroughs. The crux of this law was that it empowered town councils 'to abate all nuisances' such as: overcrowding of premises, carrying on trades producing noise and smells, keeping livestock in living apartments, depositing refuse in streets [3].

The second salvo was Act 37 of 1894 terminated the annual state subsidy of 10,000 pounds for importing indentured labour. This had been controversial since its inception in 1859. But in promoting this legislation, Harry Escombe who was Attorney-General in the Robinson Ministry, served up a cocktail of mixed messages and disingenuousness. First he claimed that the removal of the subsidy would end 'every cause of strife or discord throughout the Colony with respect to Indian immigration'. He then suggested that the law would result in a reduction of the number of Indians entering Natal. No such trends occurred. In fact the Indian population grew by a further 7,762 in the following three years. At the same time Escombe claimed that the Government was 'alive to its duty towards those who... rely on a stream of Indian immigrants' [4].

The third part of the anti-Indian legislative volley was a proclamation issued in July 1894 by the Robinson Ministry confirming bylaws of the Pietermaritzburg Town Council related to Law 21 of 1888. In terms of this bylaw Indians not under indenture would be required to register with the Council and to wear badges of identification. This proclamation serves as a poignant indicator of the extent to which the colonial mind was opposed to accepting the Indian as a settler and as a fellow colonist. Fortunately, the enforcement of this measure proved ineffective.

The fourth piece of legislation not only ignited imperial controversy but resulted in an historic crossroads in the life and career of Mahatma Gandhi. What became Act 25 of 1894 cleaved to the very heart of the Indian Question – the political exclusion of Indians. If Indians were to settle in Natal, the white colonial minority was determined that terms and conditions would apply. For Robinson, as the most prominent white colonist, this legislation marked a 180 degree shift in his thinking over the years. Whereas in the 1870s he had been amenable to wealthy 'Arabs' like Aboobaker Amod having the vote, by 1882 he had modified his stance to one in which educational qualifications would be required for enfranchisement. In 1894 he proposed the outright exclusion of Asiatics from the franchise.

In April 1894, after having worked on a legal case in Pretoria for nearly a year, Gandhi was in Durban preparing to return to India, when he noticed a report in the *Mercury* concerning a Bill to disenfranchise Indians. The report proved a watershed in his life. At once he changed his plans and for the next 20 years remained in South Africa as a champion of the cause of Indians.

In seeking to amend Natal's franchise legislation the Robinson Ministry adopted a strategic approach. It did not seek to remove from the roll any Indian who was already registered as a voter. Instead, its main thrust was aimed at Indians who had yet to arrive in Natal. 'We only seek to protect ourselves from ... the risk of having the European electorate swamped,' said Robinson [5]. From 27 June until 11 July 1894 when the Bill was unanimously endorsed by the Colonial Assembly, Gandhi unleashed a campaign of opposition the likes of which had never been seen before in Natal's politics and would not occur again in its colonial period. First, in a telegram he demanded that the Bill be postponed so that more time for public debate could be gained. That was ignored. Then he presented a petition signed by 500 Indians asserting that India indeed possessed elective representative institutions. That was ignored. On 29 June he conveyed a personal letter to Robinson imploring him to re-think the Bill. That was ignored. On 1 July he met Governor Hely-Hutchinson to discuss the issue. On 3 July he presented the Governor with a further petition calling on the Queen not to authorise the franchise amendments. On 4 July Gandhi again wrote to Robinson and presented him with a questionnaire on the franchise issue. Finally, on 10 July Gandhi produced a petition signed by 8,889 Indians for presentation to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The petition refuted the view that Indians had never exercised the franchise and condemned the granting of self-government to Natal as having made Indians less free [6].

The petition did not reflect grass-roots political mobilization. As Maureen Swan has argued, 'it is reasonable to assume that most of the signatories did not know what they were signing' [7]. Nonetheless, Robinson seized upon it as proof of the danger posed by giving Indians access to the vote (at the time there were only 10,279 electors on the roll). Still Gandhi did not let up. On 11 July, in a letter published in the *Mercury* he claimed that the Bill and all it stood for was planting seeds of jealousy and animosity between whites and Indians. In its response the following day the *Mercury* stated that if Indians were as well educated and fully acquainted with the English language and institutions as Gandhi, 'the aspect of the question would be a totally different one; but, as it is, Indians of his stamp are numerically few.' There the exchanges ended for the moment.

On 22 August 1894 Gandhi inaugurated a permanent political organisation – the Natal Indian Congress. Its task was to protect Indian interests and to oppose discriminatory legislation. However, as various authors –Joy Brain, Maureen Swan and Goolam Vahed - point out, the NIC reflected mainly the interests of the Indian merchant trading elite [8]. Significantly Gandhi never questioned the fact that the franchise was a qualified one and not universal.

It has been suggested that white reaction to 'the Asiatic menace' was the result of a 'panicked state of mind which dwelt on the substance of things feared' and which was compounded by the inability to effect decisive legal changes [9]. Whilst it is true that oscillations in expression of anti-Indian sentiments did occur, what is beyond doubt is that by the 1890s those sentiments had coalesced to the point where the Indian Question was a standard concern. An editorial in the *Mercury* on 29 January 1895 exemplified that psychological state aptly: 'The evils attendant upon the immigration of coolies.....are too generally appreciated for contradiction.'

The second half of 1894 saw Natal's Indian Question elevated to imperial prominence. A pamphlet Gandhi had published, entitled *The Indian Franchise – An Appeal*, came into the hands of the *Times of India*. On 27 August 1894 this paper accused Natal of outrages against Indians, thus sparking an angry response from the *Mercury* which accused the *Times* of 'unblushing falsehoods' [10]. Whilst some of the accusations made by the *Times* were inaccurate, the questions it raised about the status of Indians in Natal were valid. Gandhi bounced back with an open letter to the Natal press and the Legislature in which he claimed that hatred was the basis of white opposition to Indians [11]. The *Mercury*'s response was candid and unapologetic. Conceding that strong prejudice existed towards Indians, it argued that this was the fault of Indians 'because of his actions and mode of life....the Indian....has done nothing to make himself more acceptable as a colonist' [12].

[1] GH 817, Elgin to Natal Governor Hely-Hutchinson, 17 September 1894.

[2] *Natal Mercury*, 16 November 1894.

[3] *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XLVI, No. 2688, 17 July 1894.

[4] *Debates of the Legislative Assembly of the Colony of Natal*, Vol. XXII, 1894, p. 163-164.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 577-578.

[6] Natal Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 172, 1896, Document 90.

[7] Maureen Swan, *Gandhi – The South African Experience*, (Johannesburg, 1985), p. 75.

[8] Joy Brain, 'Natal's Indians 1860 – 1910,' in A Duminy and B Guest, (eds.), *Natal and Zululand from Earliest Times to 1910*, (Pietermaritzburg, 1989), p.262; Maureen Swan, *Gandhi – The South African Experience*, p. 38; A Desai and G Vahed, *Inside Indian Indenture: A South African Story 1860 – 1914*, (Cape Town, 2010), p. 372.

[9] MW Swanson, "'The Asiatic Menace:'" Creating segregation in Durban 1870 -1900,' *Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1983, p. 420.

[10] *Natal Mercury*, 14 November 1894.

[11] *Natal Mercury*, 7 January 1895.

[12] *Ibid.*

## **EIGHT - 1895 - 1896**

Nearly 18 months elapsed before the Colonial Office provided a clear answer to the Robinson Ministry on how it viewed the franchise law, Act 25 of 1894. Initially, Ripon, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, declined to recommend royal assent on the grounds that it was an affront to the people of India. But by the time he had left office in June 1895, he made no suggestions on the way forward. His successor, Joseph Chamberlain, was helpful but slow. This hiatus proved unhelpful in assuaging colonial tensions. Besides the colonial newspapers trading blows with the London *Times*, the issue of the franchise seized the colonial mind. Between October 1895 and the end of the year the fate of Act 25 was the main topic of debate and several public meetings were held across Natal. The silence of the Colonial Office on the matter proved damaging to the Robinson Ministry which was accused of keeping the Colony 'in the dark in regard to the turn of events' [1]. A 'mutinous air' prevailed towards the Colonial Office [2]. Adding to the tension was Gandhi and his NIC. They had sent out nearly 1,000 letters to friends of Indians in England in an attempt to create pressure on Chamberlain to decline the law. [3] However, late in November 1895 a dispatch arrived from Chamberlain asking that Natal prepare fresh legislation on the issue (meaning a more subtly worded version) so that royal assent was guaranteed [4].

While waiting to hear the outcome of the Franchise Act, the Robinson Ministry had not been idle. If its attempts to exclude Indians politically had been dealt a setback, it was not deterred in its efforts to make them feel unwelcome as colonists. Since the India Government had rejected the idea of Indians being compelled to return to India after serving ten years of indentured labour, the Robinson Ministry decided that the way around this was to discourage settlement by means of the imposition of a residential tax. And so Act 17 of 1895 became the fifth of the Ministry's measures against Indians. Those Indians who failed to re-indenture or who failed to return to India after two indenture contract terms would be required to pay an annual tax of £3. Escombe's statement left no doubt as to the stance and intention of the Natal Government: '...Indians are to come here appreciated as labourers but not welcomed as settlers and competitors' [5]. A petition signed by 16 Indians denouncing the legislation was submitted by the NIC. It claimed the ultimate goal of the Natal Government was 'the extinction of the Indian as a free man' [6]. Editorially the *Mercury* deprecated the NIC's claims arguing that Indians signed the indenture contract of their own free will. 'It is surely only fair that the Colony should be allowed to make the terms of the contract for Indian labour and have the power to enforce that contract' [7].

Although Chamberlain saw no reasons to disallow the Act, he did not act with alacrity in recommending its approval which was granted only in August 1896. As a high point in the Natal Government's crusade against Indians as colonists, it, nonetheless, proved ineffective because 'passenger' immigrants and 'Arabs' were excluded from its application. The *Witness* stated in an editorial that the Act was aimed at the wrong Indians. 'It is the Indian who comes as the voluntary immigrant who is the real terror and must be kept out of the country' [8].

In May 1896 the re-drafted and refined franchise legislation as per request of Chamberlain became Act 8 of 1896 and received the grudging approval of the Colonial Office in August. The distinction between the 1894 and 1896 legislation was that the latter addressed the matter of the disability of Indians not

having representative institutions in India. By seeking obtaining an order from the Governor-in-Council exempting them from the operation of the Act they could enjoy franchise rights. The Act was also aimed only at new Indian immigrants and not at the few whose names already appeared on the voters' roll [9]. Historically, it failed to deter Indian settlement as reflected by emigration figures from 1901 when Act 7 became applicable [10].

Colonial agitation against the influx of Indians flared anew from August 1896 and reached a climax in January 1897 when, after a controversial visit to India and a period of quarantine off Durban, Gandhi stepped ashore at Cato's Creek. It began when news that the Tongaat Sugar Company was bringing in eleven Indian artisans was greeted with outrage by white artisans in Durban. Press comment was critical with support for the Durban artisans coming even from the *Cape Argus* in Cape Town [11]. Although the Tongaat Sugar Company withdrew its requisition, the issue did not abate. Instead it triggered a chain reaction of anti-Indian meetings and outpourings that persisted for six months. In September a European Protection Association was formed in Pietermaritzburg. Its main aim was to boycott all Indian trade and business and expel Indians from Natal. In December a similar body called the Colonial Patriotic Union was launched in Durban. The Indian question became so inflamed that Escombe sent a telegram to Robinson, who was on leave in England, urging him to meet Chamberlain to discuss the possibility of Natal adopting similar legislation to that of New South Wales in Australia where a law excluding 'the coloured races' was awaiting Queen Victoria's assent.

The simmering anti-Indian hostility was further fuelled by news of Gandhi's alleged statements in India concerning conditions in Natal. Unfortunately the contents of Gandhi's pamphlet, called the Green Pamphlet, were distorted and exaggerated. That aside, Natal's name was rubbished by the Indian press which led to outrage in the Colony. Even though Gandhi attempted to correct the distortions which the *Times of India* had disseminated [12], in the colonial mind he was regarded as symbolic of the 'coolie curse.' Information in the Durban Mayor's Minute for 1896 added to the fear and fury that was gripping the white population. Indian property ownership in the Borough was up to 200 plots valued at £80,000 [13]. In October the power of the burgeoning free Indian community was demonstrated when 'Arabs' outbid everyone else at a property auction and bought for £9,000 a site immediately adjacent to the much esteemed Durban Club in Smith Street [14].

Between November 26, 1896 and January 13, 1897 four mass meetings on the Indian Question were held in Durban attended each time by some 2,000 colonists. At no other time in Natal's colonial history and certainly beyond that as far as the flag issue of the late 1920s and the republic issue of 1960 were concerned, did whites display such a degree of consensus and agitation. Well-attended meetings were also held in Pietermaritzburg and across Natal. With support for Natal's colonists coming from other parts of South Africa, the *Mercury* suggested that a conference of South African states be convened with a view to formulating united action on the Indian Question [15].

[1] *Natal Advertiser*, 8 October 1895.

[2] Maureen Swan, *Gandhi – The South African Experience*, p. 65.

[3] *Natal Advertiser*, 26 September 1895.

[4] GH 176, Chamberlain to Hely-Hutchinson, Natal No. 41, 26 November 1895.

[5] *Debates of the Legislative Assembly of the Colony of Natal*, Vol. XXIII, 1895, p. 66-67.

[6] Maureen Swan, *Gandhi – The South African Experience*, p. 64.

[7] *Natal Mercury*, 10 May 1895.

[8] *Natal Witness*, 19 January 1897.

[9] There were only 142 Indians out of 2,243 registered voters in Durban and 82 Indians out of 1,599 on the voters' roll in Pietermaritzburg in 1895. See: *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XLVII, No. 2751.

[10] E Bradlow, 'Indentured Indians in Natal and the £3 tax,' *SA Historical Journal*, 2, November 1970, p 42 -44.

[11] See: *Natal Mercury*, 18 August 1896.

[12] Maureen Swan, *Gandhi – The South African Experience*, p. 64.

[13] *Natal Mercury*, 5 August 1896.

[14] *Natal Mercury*, 27 October 1896.

[15] *Natal Mercury*, 1 December 1896.

## NINE 1897

The timing of Gandhi's return to Natal could not have been worse but after five months in India addressing meetings and writing articles he boarded a ship, the *Courland*, which arrived off Durban on December 18, 1896. To make matters worse, the Natal government slapped a three week quarantine on the *Courland* and another vessel from India, the *Naderi*, because they had sailed from Bombay which had been declared plague-infected [1]. The presence of the two ships anchored off Durban with 611 free Indian immigrants (including Gandhi) aboard simply provided a further rallying point for anti-Indian hostility.

On December 30, the *Advertiser* carried a prominent advertisement headed: 'Wanted: Every Man in Durban.' It announced the holding of a mass meeting to discuss the Indian immigration issue and to plan a demonstration at the Point when the two ships disembarked their passengers. On January 4, 1897 some 2,000 colonists turned up in pouring rain to a mass meeting in the Town Hall. Emotions ran high and alarm bells began jangling in both Government and press circles. A meeting with Escombe failed to smooth their intentions and on the evening of January 7 a second mass meeting was held in Durban. Again some 2,000 colonists attended and the mood was even more high spirited than before. All were adamant that the Point demonstration should go ahead. The Robinson Ministry found itself under huge pressure while Gandhi came in for a roasting for thinking that he could carry on 'with impunity' against the Colony [2]. Enthusiastic meetings were also held in Newcastle, Dundee, Verulam, Ladysmith and Pietermaritzburg. Telegrams of support were received by the Patriotic Union in Durban from around the Colony. Meanwhile from within the Natal Government urgent telegrams were being sent to the India Government. Robinson attempted to use the threat of plague to persuade the India Government to halt all immigration of free Indians to Natal – to no avail [3].

The demonstration at the Point went ahead on January 13. A crowd of some 2,000 colonists assembled peacefully at 1pm. After listening to speeches by Escombe, Harry Sparks and Dr McKenzie by 2.05pm the meeting was over and the crowd dispersed quietly. But later that afternoon when the two ships disembarked their passengers, Gandhi was the target of a hostile reception. Accounts vary as to exactly what happened to him, but he did receive something of a roughing up. In a further communication with the India Government Robinson attempted to cite the Gandhi incident as further underlining the need to halt the emigration of free Indians to Natal – again to no avail [4]. In his report to the Colonial Office, Natal Governor Hely-Hutchinson expressed grave concern at what might occur if the anti-Indian feeling did not dissipate. He doubted whether Escombe could repeat his calm handling of the January 13 Point demonstration should agitation be renewed [5].

The Point demonstration proved the climax of anti-Indian agitation. Although the Colonial Patriotic Union continued to hold meetings and to form new branches, as a political force it was ineffectual. But the political heat which the five months of agitation had generated did not disappear. With Escombe having succeeded Robinson as Prime Minister there was great pressure and expectation that legislative measures would be enacted by the Colonial Parliament to deal decisively with the Indian Question. Escombe did not disappoint. By June 1, 1897, four new pieces of legislation discriminating against Indians as settlers and thereby safeguarding white dominance were promulgated. In brief, they concerned a new immigration law which ratcheted up the criteria required to enter the Colony: prospective immigrants would have to satisfy a language proficiency schedule and be in possession of at least £25 in cash. The second legal volley amended the law concerning health risks and quarantine. The third and most controversial Act passed concerned the issuing of dealers' trading licences. Its purpose was, in Escombe's words, 'to get at the Asiatic trader' [6]. It empowered local municipalities to manage the process and denied the Indian trader any recourse to a higher authority in the event of his licence application be rejected. The fourth piece of legislation, the Uncovenanted Indians Protection Act required contract-expired or free Indians to carry a pass which would indemnify them from wrongful arrest and distinguish them from indentured Indians who had absconded from their employers. Escombe's claim that the idea of the pass was to spare Indian settlers 'from the indignity of arrest' was a canard because of the

personal questions to which applicants for the pass were subjected and the fact that white settlers were not required to carry passes.

By 1900 the population statistics pronounced a verdict on the pointed and determined legislative efforts to decrease and to discourage Indian immigration to Natal: 64,951 whites to 70,369 Indians. None of the anti-Indian legislation of the previous decade had succeeded in diminishing or deterring Indian immigration. As a topic of agitation the Indian Question faded away. Escombe 's Ministry was shortlived. By October 1897 he was out of power, the Harbour Question having superseded the Indian Question as a topic of prominence in the politics of Natal.

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 [1] Bombay was declared plague-infected on December 19 – the day *after* the arrival of the two ships. The quarantine was thus unnecessary and unreasonable.

[2] *Natal Mercury*, 9 January 1897; 6 & 8 January 1897.

[3] GH 1034, Robinson to Governor, Minute No. 3, 8 January 1897; GH 293, Telegram from the Viceroy of India to the Governor of Natal, 20 January 1897.

[4] GH 1034, Minute No. 4, 14 January 1897, Robinson to the Governor.

[5] GH 1282, Natal Secret Despatch, Hely-Hutchinson to Chamberlain, 15 January 1897.

[6] *Debates of the Legislative Assembly of the Colony of Natal*, Vol. XXV, 1897, p. 102.

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