

of my Executive Council, a Proclamation, which will be published immediately, appointing the dates of the 20th-28th February for the nomination of the secondary electors; the polling, if any is necessary, would take place not later than seven days after the nominations. The Governors will appoint the exact days for holding the nominations and polls in the various Districts. The elections will be held, as you are aware, on the same principle as under the Turkish Constitution, and the secondary electors who are chosen by these nominations will meet for the election of the twelve members of the Legislative Council. These further elections will be held in the month of March.

I have requested your attendance here to-day because I thought it courteous and proper to inform you of this step and of the reasons for it. It is my earnest desire that all sections of the population should participate in these elections. If it were the case that the Government was not anxious to promote the well-being of the people, the Government would not urge this. If it were true, as is sometimes alleged, that it is desired to undermine the interests of the people, we should rather welcome their abstention from the polls. But as I am convinced that it will be proved by the work of the Legislative Council that the Government desires to promote to the fullest extent the physical conditions allow the well-being of the whole country, and every section in it, I am eager that all sections of the population should be represented in the Council in order to share in that work. Moreover, criticism in the Council and suggestions from all the different points of view would be useful to us in helping us to fulfil our duty in providing good government for the people.

I would add this final word: The method of non-participation in elections has been adopted in many countries at various times. I remember myself cases—the abstention of the Greek population in Cyprus, of the native population in Jamaica, and of large numbers of extremists in India, yet this step has never had any effect in any one of these cases—it has always been a failure. The Government always goes on, and must go on; the only effect is that those who do not participate lose their share of influence over the course of legislation and administration. Experience goes to show that it is inside the Legislature and not outside it, that is the best sphere in which to promote the interests of the population.

The Members of the Congress then retired to discuss the matter before replying to his Excellency. Upon their return—

HAFIZ BEY TOUKAN said: Your Excellency, the Fifth Arab Congress, representing all sections of the Arab population of Palestine, has decided to reject the Constitution that was issued in London, about which the Arab population of Palestine was not asked for an expression of an opinion, and the Arab nation has found it injurious to its interests, and has unanimously decided to reject and boycott the elections. We therefore do not think it necessary to enter into any detailed discussion on the subjects mentioned by your Excellency.

SIR HERBERT SAMUEL: I should like to add to what has been said, that if you, and those you represent, abstain from the elections now you must not complain afterwards if legislation is passed without consulting you and those whom you represent.

An opportunity for consultation is offered to you now; if it is not taken, the responsibility for the facts of non-consultation in the future will rest with yourselves and not with the Government.

It is my duty to add one further word. It may be that abstention from the elections will not be so unanimous as you consider likely, and it is well, as I do not want to come into conflict with you, to explain what the situation would be in that respect. The Government cannot compel, and does not seek to compel, persons to vote. You claim the right to abstain from voting. You have that right; but, on the other hand, you must not seek to interfere with the actions of others whose view of patriotism and of their duty to their country will lead them to accept the opportunity to share in its government. You may seek to induce a man to act as you wish by convincing his reason, but not by threatening him and seeking to make him afraid. That is contrary to the law, and I am sure that you will agree that it should be contrary to the law, for it is the negation of all constitutionalism. If it is attempted, the whole force of the Government must be used to prevent it and to protect those who are injured or threatened. Those who desire to participate in the elections will receive the most active protection should it be necessary. However, I am convinced that you are only anxious to conduct your movement within the limits of the law as hitherto, and I hope that we shall all be spared any difficulties on that head.

I thank you for your attendance.

W.L. Mackenzie King Papers

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