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MINISTRY PAPER NO. 9

Mission to Africa

Members of this Honourable Council will recall that last year the Government decided that a Mission should go to a number of African countries to have discussions concerning the possibilities of settlement of Jamaicans in these countries. Reference is made to Ministry Paper No. 1 which was laid on the Table of the Council on the 17th March, 1961.

2. The Mission, consisting of 9 persons, left Jamaica on the 4th of April, 1961, and returned on the 3rd of June. The 9 persons included two advisers appointed by the Government, and 7 representatives from various groups. They were :-

Dr. L. C. Leslie, former Mayor of Spanish Town - Adviser
Dr. Leslie also acted as leader of the Mission.

Mr. Victor Reid, Author and Journalist - Adviser

Dr. M. B. Douglas of the Afro-Caribbean League

Mr. Cecil George Gordon of the Ethiopian World Federation Inc.

Mr. Z Munro Scarlett of the Afro-West Indian Welfare League

Mr. Westmore Blackwood of the Universal Negro Improvement Association

Messrs. Filmore Alveranga, Douglas Mack and Mortimo Planno of the Ras Tafari Movement

Mr. E. H. Lake, Minister for Social Services in Antigua, accompanied the Mission at his Government's expense.

3. The Mission has submitted two reports, one signed by a majority of the members and the other signed by the three Ras Tafari members of the Mission. Copies of both reports are attached.

4. The Mission visited the following States and had the opportunity of meeting the political Heads of these States:

Ethiopia, Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone.

In addition, they met Ministers of the various Governments and senior Government officials. The Mission was received with friendliness and understanding in all countries visited and prominent members of the Governments in these countries stated that provided proper arrangements could be made, there would undoubtedly be opportunities for West Indians who desired to migrate to these countries.

5. The Government has considered the reports. Whilst the reports indicate that West Indian migrants will be welcomed in Africa the agreement of the countries concerned is an agreement in principle only. The organised movement of persons from one part of the world to another and the opening up of large undeveloped tracts of land for the settlement of these persons is a complex matter with major financial and organisational implications. In the light of this fact the Government has decided that the first task to be undertaken is the setting up of a local expert working party to undertake an immediate appraisal of all the factors which will be involved.

6. The Working Party will be able to draw on the valuable experience of other similar undertakings which have involved studies of how pioneer settlements can be developed. The Working Party will be drawn from the following persons:

/Two.....

Two representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands,
of which one shall be the Commissioner of Lands;

A Sociologist to be named by the University College of the
West Indies;

Mr. H. Gordon of the Jamaica Social Welfare Commission;

A representative of the Ministry of Labour;

Mr. D. T. Girvan, Chairman of the Jamaica Social Welfare Commission;

An officer of the Ministry of Finance;

Mr. O. J. Thorbourne of the Central Planning Unit - Secretary.

7. As soon as the Working Party has reported, the Government will consider what further action should be taken and whether a small expert mission should be despatched to the countries recommended for further on-the-spot investigations, bearing in mind that many Heads of African States have indicated that they are willing to give consideration to the entry of Jamaicans and other West Indians provided that the practical and technical problems are properly examined. It is also proposed to seek assistance from international and other organisations for the services of one or more experts with experience in colonisation schemes who can be made available as Consultants to the Working Party.

MD.427/214/01

Office of the Premier
21st July, 1961.