

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL

INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

PROGRESS REPORT

1. GENERAL:

The Advanced Training in Social Research project, the main present activity of the Institute for Social Research, began operations on 1st March 1954 when the six Research Scholars reported to commence their training with Professor Edmund de S. Brummer, (Columbia University), Professor Charles Nixon, (University of California), and the staff of the University of Natal. This report is therefore concerned primarily with the first month of operations.

By way of general introduction it may be said that despite a number of unavoidable initial difficulties the new venture has got under way satisfactorily and a substantial amount of work has been done. The ability, keen interest, co-operative attitude and friendly efficiency of Professors Brummer and Nixon is specially noteworthy. The Research Scholars, most of whom are new to the Natal environment, have also settled down well, and they have all displayed considerable initiative, enthusiasm and energy. So far as the University of Natal is concerned the leadership and support of the Principal, and the co-operation of the University staff has been most important in making possible what has been achieved.

2. ORGANIZATION AND PROCEDURE:

Our main preoccupation has been to make full use of the academic talents of our visiting Professors from the United States and to employ the Research Scholars in worth-while and productive work. By adopting this emphasis we believe that we have best fulfilled our obligations to the Carnegie Corporation, the National Council for Social Research and the University of Natal. It is impossible at this early stage to visualise the final shape of the new Institute for Social Research, our internal organization has been flexible and ad hoc, our procedure pragmatic, and it will be some time before we shall have had sufficient practical experience to justify the adoption of any formal constitution. Nevertheless, our organization and procedure, outlined below, have thus far proved satisfactory and we anticipate no serious administrative complications or difficulties in developing a co-operative social research centre within the University. The Dean of the Faculty of Social Science has readily given valuable assistance over various administrative matters and the Heads of the Departments most directly concerned, as well as the Heads of other Departments, have assured the Principal and the Secretary/Organizer of their readiness to assist in guiding the development of the Institute.

(a) The Name: Institute for Social Research:

It was felt, at the meeting on the 22nd February 1954, to welcome Professors Brunner and Nixon, that a distinctive name should be adopted for the new Natal social research venture. After discussion, when various alternatives were considered, it was agreed that the name 'Institute for Social Research' would appropriately describe the real, if still informal, association of members of the University interested in the prosecution of disciplined social studies. It was also agreed that the Institute should stimulate, support and, wherever possible, co-ordinate research undertakings by members of staff and senior students. The consensus of opinion was that, from time to time, there would be added to the Advanced Training in Social Research project and the research undertakings of the Research Scholars, a number of other

research projects supported by the University itself, and outside bodies.

(b) Organisational Structure:

- (i) General Social Research Committee: This Committee, comprising all members of the University staff concerned with social research, notably the Advanced Training in Social Research project, exercises a general supervisory function. It is concerned with major policy decisions, the general control of the Research Scholars, applications for research funds and university assistance of a general nature. It has no set time for meeting but has been convened whenever circumstances have required its meeting. It may be mentioned, however, that the last meeting of the General Committee was on 22nd February 1954 and it is intended to hold ordinary meetings at least once per Term and to call special meetings when necessary.
- (ii) Social Research Executive Committee: At the General Meeting of 22nd February 1954 a small working Committee, described as the Project Formulation Committee, was appointed to work with Professors Brunner and Nixon, and the Secretary/Organiser, in selecting suitable research projects for the training programme.

The Project Formulation Committee, presently composed of the Principal, with Professors Brunner and Nixon as consultants, Professors H.R. Burrows (Economics), L. Kuper (Sociology), J.D. Krige (Social Anthropology) A. Lloyd (Education) F. Pratt-Yule (Psychology), with Dr. R. Albino (Psychology) as deputy, and the Secretary/Organiser, has held three meetings to discuss manageable and worth-while research projects. The Principal, when present, or the Secretary/Organiser has acted as Chairman, and it is proposed that this procedure should be maintained in the interests of continuity.

In addition to its major function, however, the Project Formulation Committee has found itself acting in a Dagbestuur or executive capacity and, at its last meeting, on 31st March 1954, it was agreed that the interests of the Institute for Social Research would best be served if the Project Formulation Committee was now to be constituted an Executive Committee, acting for the General Committee, to implement general research policy; to control more intimately the Research Scholars; to select or approve, and budget for suitable research projects for the Research Scholars; and, wherever possible, to co-ordinate or integrate other social research activities of the University. The Executive Committee would thus become a Board of Management and be empowered (1) to make specific policy decisions related to the conduct of research projects of the Institute (2) to ask for funds (3) to accept or decline to accept any research project as an Institute project.

- (iii) Executive and Administrative Arrangements: The executive head of the Institute is the Principal who acts through the Secretary/Organiser. The latter is, inter alia, primarily responsible for day-to-day administration of the Institute, correspondence, liaison with the overseas consultants, employment and welfare of the Research Scholars, the organization of seminars, meetings, exploratory investigations, the assembly of relevant documents; relations and negotiations with relevant external agencies.

It may be said here that both the Principal and the Secretary/Organiser have played a full part in the academic proceedings as well as the policy discussions and administrative activities of the Institute. It is often impossible to separate the academic and administrative aspects of a venture of this kind and it would be pointless, as well as undesirable, to attempt to do so within

the University of Natal Institute for Social Research, especially at its present stage of development.

- (iv) Accounting and Auditing Arrangements: The University Accountant is responsible for the accounting and auditing of Institute funds.
- (v) Formal Relations with Faculties and Departments: It is proposed that academic policies linked with the Advanced Training in Social Research Project should be handled by the Faculty of Social Science i.e. that the Faculty will provide for the normal academic regulation of applications and work for higher degrees, for the conditions under which credits will be given in respect of training received by the Research Scholars and others, for the establishment of interdisciplinary subjects such as Methodology of the Social Sciences, Social Psychology, and for the institution of interdisciplinary seminars.
- (vi) Representation on the Board of the Faculty of Social Science: The Dean of the Faculty of Social Science has proposed that the Institute should be represented on the Board of the Faculty of Social Science and suggests that the Secretary/Organizer should be the representative.

3. ADVANCED TRAINING IN SOCIAL RESEARCH:

(a) Introductory Seminars:

At the meeting of the General Social Research Committee on the 22nd February 1954 it was proposed that three afternoons should be devoted to exploratory sessions which would permit Professors Brunner and Nixon to explain the organisation of Social Research in American Universities and to illustrate interdisciplinary projects in the United States. These meetings were held on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 3rd, 4th and 5th March and were attended by the Principal, members of Staff, the Research Scholars and senior students. It was agreed that the further seminars of the Institute would be held on Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons.

(b) The Basic Methodological Seminars:

In order to ensure that the Research Scholars, and others concerned with the training scheme, are adequately prepared for co-operative research Professors Brunner and Nixon have conducted a series of seminars on methods and techniques in the social sciences. These seminars, held on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 2.30 p.m., have covered the following topics:

- 8 March: Backgrounds and Philosophy of Social Research
- 10 March: Preparing for a Study
- 12 March: Project Design
- 15 March: Project Design
- 17 March: (Discussion of Local Project)
- 22 March: Methods and Techniques of Research
- 24 March: Sampling (with Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders)
- 26 March: Theory and Practice in Social Research (with Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders)
- 29 March: Constructing Schedules and Questionnaire
- 31 March: Measurement and Scaling

Each seminar has been attended by the Research Scholars, the Secretary/Organiser, members of staff from the Departments of Economics, Education, Psychology, Social Anthropology, Native Administration and Psychology, and certain senior students, all of whom have participated in the proceedings at each meeting. The papers have been substantial in content and the long research experience of Professor Brunner has enabled him to supply numerous concrete examples of the practical application of various methods and techniques, and to sound warnings based on errors and omissions in past undertakings. Professor Nixon's thorough grasp of methodology has been no less striking.

For those previously unacquainted with the methodology of the social sciences the seminars have been specially valuable, but the basic seminars have also served to refresh the memories of all concerned with social research, and to provide an opportunity for critical discussion of the relative advantages and disadvantages of the various methods and techniques. Professors Brunner and Nixon have welcomed comment and criticism, based on their own knowledge and experience, from members of the University of Natal staff and the Research Scholars, and the discussions have been rigorous and stimulating.

To ensure that the utmost benefit is derived from these seminars the Research Scholars have taken it in turn to record the proceedings of each seminar. All papers, and the record of discussions, have been typed and it is proposed that, when the series of methodological seminars has been completed, the relevant documents will be edited, and supplemented by a bibliography based on the volumes brought to Natal by Professors Brunner and Nixon. They will then be placed on permanent record in a form which will enable them to be distributed.

(c) 'The Research Team':

The broad decisions and discussions of the Project Formulation Committee (see 2 b(ii) above, and 5 below) have been communicated to the Research Scholars and to the regular participants at the Seminars, and a number of important and fruitful activities have resulted from supplying this information.

At the outset the research team was informed (1) that the object of the first research project of the Institute was the interdisciplinary study of a 'microcosm' of South African society i.e. of the social structure, social processes and problems of the peoples living in and around Durban (African or Native, Coloured, European and Indian) and (2) that the first sub-project was the study of urban African life, with special reference to the process of urbanisation.

Equipped with this information the research team has devoted a considerable amount of time to preparatory and exploratory enquiries, investigations and studies. Notable activities are summarised below:

- (i) Visits of observation to Native Townships, Locations, Hostels, neighbouring Native Reserves.
- (ii) Meetings with officials of the Native Affairs and Municipal Native Administration Departments.
- (iii) Preparation of a research bibliography.
- (iv) Collection and study of documentary material bearing on the project
- (v) Preparation of theoretical models or plans for the research project.
- (vi) Preliminary discussions.

It must be emphasized that this work has been done concurrently with the reading and other work required for the Basic Methodological seminars, and it is pleasing to report that the Research Scholars have

played a prominent part in all the above activities. On their own initiative they have begun to study the Zulu language with Mr. Malcolm, Lecturer in Zulu, and they have also been active in preparing and presenting research designs, plans or models.

It is fitting here to acknowledge the interest and co-operation of the Manager (Mr. E.A.E. Havemann) and officials of the Durban Municipal Native Administration Department, and generally to refer to the co-operative attitude of other officials whom we have approached. It is equally important to acknowledge the direct assistance rendered to the Research Team by members of the University Staff. Individuals, like Miss V. Junod, who voluntarily prepared a Basic bibliography on Urban African life, have done much to facilitate exploratory work in the first sub-project.

5. THE MAIN RESEARCH PROJECT:

After a month of intensive exploration and discussion the Project Formulation Committee, at its meeting of 31st March 1954, agreed that the following procedure would best enable the University to fulfil its training and substantive research obligations.

- (a) That a small, compact urban African community (i.e. Baumannville) be selected for intensive interdisciplinary study in order to throw light on the structure, processes and problems of life among the Africans of Durban. It was agreed that the field-work should, if possible, be completed within a period of three months, (after the completion of detailed project design) so that the research team would derive maximum benefit from the presence of Professor Brunner. Professor Brunner leaves South Africa at the end of July 1954 but, if the field work is completed as intended, he should be present during the initial period of 'content analysis' i.e. the interpretation of the material collected by the field workers.

The work would then be written up and submitted for editing and possible publication.

- (b) After the completion of the above sub-project there will be a critical review of the work of the research team and of the results achieved before further decisions are taken, but it is envisaged at present that the team will proceed immediately upon the study of the remaining racial groups by means of small-scale 'case studies'. The Coloured peoples of Durban suggest themselves as suitable for the next sub-project. The presence of Professor Nixon until December 1954 will help to ensure continuity in advice and supervision.
- (c) It was also agreed that after the above case studies of particular racial groups we should consider the study of a 'mixed area' in Durban (e.g. Sydenham or Cato Manor) in order to throw light on relationships, tensions etc. between the various peoples when they live in close proximity.
- (d) It may also be recorded that there is general agreement, among all concerned with the above research projects, that all studies conducted by the Institute under the Main Research Project should be as theoretically rigorous as possible. Initially, enumerative, descriptive studies may be necessary, but our aim will be to construct sound conceptual frameworks which will permit the precise statement and scientific testing of selected hypotheses.
- (e) An outline of the general scheme for the first sub-project and a preliminary budget for this and other sub-projects is appended to this report. It is proposed to submit an application for assistance to N.C.S.R. after further discussion with Dr. Olckers.

6. ADDITIONAL RESEARCH INTERESTS:

(a) The Ecological Survey of Durban. It has been proposed by Professor Kuper, Head of the Department of Sociology, that the Institute for Social Research should take under its wing the Ecological Survey of Durban, and that Dr. C.J. Jooste, Department of Sociology, should be appointed "Project Director" of the Ecological Survey. No decision has been taken on this matter because an N.C.S.R. grant has already been secured for the Ecological Survey and the University wishes to ensure that an arrangement of this kind would not be in any way objectionable to Dr. Olckers and the N.C.S.R. From the viewpoint of the Sociology Department it would be advantageous to have a more direct link with the overseas consultants and others connected with the Institute; for the Institute of Social Research it will provide valuable opportunities for close collaboration with co-workers in Durban. Apart from the mutual stimuli which will flow from this collaboration the close association of University research workers in Durban will help to prevent wasteful overlap between projects and to ensure the optimum utilisation of financial and human resources.

(b) Mr. L. Fourie: An Economic Study of Natives in Industrial Employment:

Mr. L. Fourie, Department of Economics, who is about to engage on an important study within the above field has expressed his willingness to work in close collaboration with those engaged on the main research project of the Institute.

7. A SOCIAL SCIENCE CONFERENCE. JULY 1954.

The 'Project Formulation Committee' of the Institute, under the Chairmanship of the Principal, has held preliminary discussions on the proposed conference of social scientists to be held at the University of Natal, for a period of one week, in July 1954. As a broad topic it has been suggested that 'Difficulties and Problems of Organisation and Procedure in Social Research' might provide scope for fruitful discussion. It is envisaged that leading social scientists representing several disciplines will be invited from the other Universities in South Africa and that they will enjoy the hospitality of the University of Natal during their stay. After Professors Brummer and Nixon have given introductory talks on Social Research in the United States and have suggested possible lines of development for South Africa, it is proposed that individuals like Professors Brummer, Pauw, Batson, Hobart Houghton, Monica Wilson, Dr. Clyde Mitchell (Director, Rhodes-Livingstone Institute) and Dr. Scully should present short papers which will help to guide discussion and enable all present to share their concrete experiences.

No final decisions were taken in regard to the Conference, the arrangements for which are to be discussed with Dr. P.J. Olckers, N.C.S.R.

8. MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS FOR REPORT:

(a) Withdrawal of Research Scholar: To the regret of the Institute one of the Research Scholars, Mr. Raymond Turner, has been obliged to withdraw from the Advanced Training in Social Research project. After participating in our initial work he was awarded an Elsie Ballot Scholarship for 3 years study at Cambridge University. His acceptance of this award has compelled him to leave us in order to make financial and other preparations for his stay in England. But while we regret Mr. Turner's departure it is encouraging to report that a number of enquiries have been made by prospective Research Scholars eager to participate in our Scheme.

(b) Secretary-Stenographer: The appointment and recent arrival of a highly-qualified and experienced Secretary-Stenographer is doing much to facilitate the work of the Institute which has hitherto had to rely on willing but necessarily irregular part-time assistance.

9. CONCLUSION:

.....It would be misleading to convey the impression that the new Institute

has been free from criticism or that there are not many difficulties still to be overcome. But most criticisms have been welcome in that they have been constructive, and none of the difficulties seem insuperable.

We are constantly mindful of our gratitude and sense of obligation to the National Council for Social Research, the Carnegie Corporation and all others outside the University who have enabled us to embark on this important experiment in social research training and on interdisciplinary research. Our experience thus far has strengthened our belief in the potential value of interdisciplinary training and research.

K. Kirkwood

1/4/54.

SECRETARY/ORGANISER

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