

(28)

Urban 14, 17, 4

PHYSICAL EDUCATION :
COMMUNAL AND LEISURE TIME ACTIVITIES .

The urban African, the Indian and the Coloured are to-day an integral part of our industrialised civilisation which without their labour could not be sustained. In most spheres of social life these Non-European people have been inexorably moulded on the lines of Western European civilisation. Their religion except in the case of the Indians is now largely Protestant, sectarian, Christian. Their economic life is bound up with the system prevailing in the U.S.A. and other western countries, in other words they are paid wages in mines, sugar mills, factories, private homes, by private employers and know no other system. Their schools teach them what European children are taught. Their social structure is based on monogamy and the arrangement of one house for one family. They work regular hours, wear European clothes, use money as a medium of exchange, and go to the cinema to indulge in their dreams. In all these ways European civilisation and the urgent necessities of the modern world have weaned them harshly from their own past.

Until quite recently little attention was paid in towns, locations and compounds to that large portion of a man's time when he is not working. It was understood that children need to play, but children will play at any time and in any, usually the most dangerous, places. But for grown-ups when work has been provided, and churches and schools, and food and clothes there was no need to take thought for anything more. In this connection Dean Inge once wrote a profound observation. He said "the soul is dyed the colour of its leisure thoughts". The soul of man is conditioned by his work, and his bodily and mental condition, but its whole complexion may be altered by his leisure thoughts. A man may have a good job, a happy home, good health and many friends, but if in his leisure moments his thoughts run continually on his grievances real or imagined, all these other advantages lose their attraction. His work is done grudgingly, his home seems mean, his health runs to seed, and his friends no longer satisfy. This is not a characteristic of the Non-European people of South Africa only, it is a characteristic of most urban communities. It has now become a matter of State concern that people's leisure time is profitably filled with interesting or enjoyable or educational occupations. No one realised this more quickly than our late enemies the Nazis of Germany who turned to their own purposes this great need. It was very soon found that not only was recreation needed but that it must be social. The poet, the mountaineer, the yachtsman might find his pleasures in solitude, but the ordinary man likes to feel that he is part of a group. So the wanderers and hikers of Germany became part of the Hitlerjugend, the casual holiday makers were organised in the Strength through Joy movement, and a great campaign of physical education, fitness, games, and festivals was organised with the Olympic games serving as a convenient starting point and focus. In England Mr. Billy Butlin has pioneered a commercial answer to this demand for Recreation. In his holiday camps in various parts of England soon to be extended to the South of France, people are brought together to have a good time. Physical fitness classes start off the morning, to be followed by riding, swimming, games, concerts, films, community singing and whatever else the ingenious director of the camp can think of. Cultural activities are not forgotten and the Carl Rosa Opera Company had a great success in its visits to the Butlin camps. There is no compulsion on anyone to join in these activities and if people prefer to holiday alone they are left alone. It is found

however/...

however, that community recreation satisfies a huge demand and the movement seems likely to grow.

It is not only at holiday time that this conception of community recreation is being worked out. One of the most remarkable social experiments which was being carried out before the war, and has since begun to expand enormously, is the Community Centre. There are many different types of Community Centre, many different ways of running them, they serve various classes of people and even their objectives differ considerably, but one thing they have in common, an emphasis on the man as a social animal. This emphasis was hardly necessary in olden times, as it was often painfully obvious on such occasions as the Saturnalia, the Gladiatorial Games, the great annual fairs of Europe, the Carnivals, and the Holy Days of the Church. Every village and town had its corporate life, its hierarchy, its social structure and its feasts and tabernacles. The maypole, the village church, the tavern and the pilgrimage, were all institutions. To-day none of them are left in their old glory, and in this young country whose white peoples' social roots are in Europe and the majority of whom now live in towns, there is less community consciousness than in most. In the case of the African people the problem is similar in that they are an urbanised peasantry who have lost to a great extent the social life of the kraal and have not yet discovered a substitute in the location or township. The Coloured Community has the misfortune to have inherited very little of a community sense as they lack most of the ingredients of such a community, viz. homogeneity, single habitat, independence and a common religion. The Indian community is even less fortunate in that it suffers from a split in allegiance and in consequence can hardly be called a South African community. So far nothing corresponding to the Health Centre at Peckham, the Community Centre in the Schoolhouse as practised in America, the Peoples' College of Cambridgeshire, the Youth Centres, the Village Institutes or the Summer School has been tried among the Non-European people, although a start has been made in Alexandra Township on a small scale, and the National War Memorial Health Foundation has planstfor an early start for three of such centres.

The first things that strike the onlooker in Community Centres are the social nature of the place and the fact that entertainment and games very soon lose their priority in the programmes. What begins as fun and games moves on, usually the request of members, to more serious pursuits, play-reading, choral groups, lectures, brains trusts, art classes, handicrafts, and adult education generally. Among the Africans, Coloureds and Indians it is almost certain that any Centre started as a Club with dances, parties, billiards and other indoor games would very soon find its members asking for or organising for themselves a training in the very things which their social background has so far failed to provide. It would not be surprising to find among Africans that they wanted to become literate and learn English or Afrikaans, to learn shoe-repairing, to study music, to practise weaving, or bookbinding or carpentry. Hence any community centre for Africans would necessarily be differently planned in many respects to that of a similar centre in Europe. The following points would have to be borne in mind:

The poverty of the members which would make it necessary for equipment to be of the simplest in order that maintenance would not be a crippling burden.

The ignorance of the members and their need of help especially in the financial ordering of their affairs.

The prevalent lack of a spirit of service and ability

to/....

to work together without splits caused by personalities. This problem which can be expected in the circumstances in which the African people find themselves is the crucial problem in the consideration of community centres. It is something that can only be solved by time, outstanding African leaders, and the practical experiences of the community centre. But it must be realised that when voluntary help is not abundant and easily available when a call for it is made, the expenses of the establishment very soon mount up.

The importance of considering recreation in its wider sense to include those occupations which are indulged in not just for fun, such as billiards or dancing, but for their value in the struggle for life, viz. night schools, hobbies, lectures, physical training and crafts.

The necessity for good planning of the building which houses the community centre and the provision of popular and attractive games facilities and entertainment, e.g. swimming bath and jive bands.

The realisation by the staff at all times of the purpose of a community centre which is not a charitable or welfare institution, or a social club, or a dance hall, but a small community of individuals building and enjoying their social life, and learning the art of living together.

Owing to the high cost of the buildings and equipment it will be impracticable to expect voluntary bodies to undertake community centre work unless the Y.M.C.A. in its postwar plans is able in selected places to carry on the work which it shared with Toc H during the war. The only other non-Governmental body which plans this sort of social experiment, in this case with the accent on health, is the National War Memorial Health Foundation. It is not likely that Government will undertake the work and it is not desirable that it should do so. The vital point of a community centre is its local, selfsupporting, and selfgoverning nature. In the circumstances only Municipalities can effectively finance, staff and maintain non-European Community Centres. How this is done is a matter to be decided by each Municipality but it is legitimate to suggest that no better use could be made of beerhall profits than their allocation for this purpose. It is also legitimate to expect that the Union Government implement the report on Adult Education to the extent of subsidising Municipalities who undertake this responsibility. Sooner or later every large location or native township should have a Community Centre in which provision should be made for the following :

For the whole family:

- Free medical examination.
- Swimming bath; hot and cold baths.
- Cinema and concert hall.
- Communal restaurant and milk bar.
- Library.
- First Aid classes.
- Night school

For the women:

- Sewing, housecraft and mothercraft.
- Creche and nursery for children.

For/....

For the children:

Games room.
Gymnasium.

For the boys and girls

Dance floor.
Wireless and gramophone room
Hobbies room (woodwork, needlework etc.)
Games (volleyball, badminton)
Concert parties.

For the men

Handcrafts room.
Lecture and discussion room.
Billiard tables.
Gymnasium.

In addition to the indoor games and recreation it is desirable to have some form of outdoor sport such as tennis and surroundings which provide rest and relaxation.

In some centres where it is not possible to have a complete family Community Centre it might be necessary to have a less ambitious centre, e.g. where domestic servants only are to be catered for there would be no need for many of the amenities mentioned above. Again some Centres might concentrate on Youth, others on slum areas, others on very mixed populations. Hence the importance of local responsibility for local needs.

STAFF

The question of staff for Community Centres and similar institutions is a serious one for two reasons -

- (a) the growing number of Centres;
- (b) the lack of facilities for training.

The following Community Centres or similar institutions are known to the writer as well as their present secretaries or organisers.

Donaldson Orlando Community Centre	Mr. S. Ntombela
Bantu Men's Social Centre	Mr. Mdaniso
Bantu Sports Club United	Mr. Dan Twala
African Cultural & Domestic Workers Club	Mr. A.P. Mopeli
Alexandra Family Welfare Centre	Miss V. Junod (European)
Cape Coloured Memorial Social Club	Mr. van Veegt

It is understood that there are similar institutions in Bloemfontein and Durban and probably others. In addition the National War Memorial Centres at Edenvale and the Ciskei will be inaugurated within a measurable time. At present the training for these officials is provided by the Jan Hofmeyr School of Social Studies or not at all. The Y.M.C.A. during the last year has been giving a refresher course for selected individuals who learnt the job on war service. The only two comparable European Institutions are -

- (a) the Youth Social Centre in Johannesburg, run by the Municipal Social Welfare Department; and
- (b) the Fordsburg Community Health Centre, run by the University of the Witwatersrand.

It is not known what qualifications are demanded of those in charge of these two centres.

If there is to be an expansion of the number of Community Centres the training available for European and Non-European will have to be extended simultaneously.. If the Adult Education report is implemented a number of organisers will have to be appointed and it will be found necessary for these to have more than the conventional teachers education.

It is not easy to suggest ways in which a staff might be trained and equipped for the running of Community Centres and for some time the practise of learning by doing will have to be followed. Sooner or later the Universities or the Technical Colleges should consider the introduction of a Diploma Course or a Summer School for the training, or a refresher course, for the further training of workers in this field. Some knowledge of Physical Education, Sociology, the history and method of running of the various kinds of Community Centres, the history and present position of the Workers Educational Movement, the Night School Movement and the Adult Education projects of many countries as well as South Africa should be a requirement of anyone attempting to run a Community Centre for Non-European people.

Physical Education in South Africa like the sunshine has always been taken for granted and South Africans like to think that they are as a nation bigger and stronger than any other. If the reports of scientific investigators are read, however, a very different picture emerges. The relevations about malnutrition and disease among all sections and all races in the Union show that a great task has to be undertaken before this country can be called fit and healthy. The larger question of food and health cannot be dealt with in this paper but something can be said of the value of physical education combined with other things.

The Medical Research Committee of the National Advisory Committee for Physical Education in the official publication "Manpower" reports as follows :-

Since the inception of the Special Service Battalion in 1933 members of my committee have conducted scientific studies to ascertain to what extent the favourable living conditions and other measures provided in educational camps of the kind thus introduced were able to exert a rehabilitative influence. This research work has borne rich fruit. A considerable volume of evidence is now on record (Monograph by the Committee "Training and Efficiency" 1941, published by the S.A. Institute for Medical Research) which leaves no doubt that South African human resources including the bulk of what in the past has been referred to as poor whites and poor blacks are as good as those found in any part of the world; that in some respects, e.g. with regard to physiological standards of physical efficiency and heat resistance, the Bantu population of this country is POTENTIALLY even superior to other racial groups in this country, as well as elsewhere; that such deterioration of S.A.'s manpower as has taken place in the past has been mainly due to environmental processes which have now been brought under scientific technical and administrative control; that such educational techniques as have been shown to be capable of transforming sub-standard youths into strong happy and efficient citizens have been perfected to such an extent as to render them applicable on a national scale and that the process of rehabilitation thus defined does certainly not require for its completion generations as had previously been thought.

If unemployed, undernourished, ill-educated youths can be rehabilitated by the P.T.B. which offers, according to Dr. van Eck in his address to the S.A. Conference for Physical

education , 9th Jan. 1946, "educational, religious and Character training; it teaches the young man the significance of leisure; it gives them physical remedial and disciplinary education, it enables them to partake of recreation; it places at their disposal an effective system of medical and dental services and it supplies them with good food, how much more economical it would be to provide these things before the young men become unemployed, undernourished and ill-educated. For the purpose of this Conference, how can some of these things be provided, viz. the correct use of leisure, the physical education and recreation. The present position, in a few words is this: boys and girls who go through school should have under the present system physical education and recreation provided by the Education authorities. For various reasons Non-Europeans do not receive much in this way. In addition the National Advisory Council of Physical Education was voted in 1938-1942 an annual sum of £50,000 for a national scheme of Physical Education. This figure has since been reduced to £45,000. This money is allocated as follows:

Dept. of Defence (P.F. A.C.F. School Cadets, P.T.B. & Youth Training Bttns. Defence Rifle Assns. and Burgher Commandos)	£15,000
S.A.R. & H.	5,000
Five Education Depts.	15,000
Local authorities and voluntary organisations ..	15,000

Of this small sum a very small amount, if any, is devoted to Non-European Physical Education.

The only other sources from which Recreation and Physical Education facilities can be provided are the local authority, mines and industries, and private organisations. As, however, the chief recreation facility required is land it is upon the Municipalities that the onus falls, as few industries or private organisations apart from the mines have land to use in this way. As an example of what is required by international standards, the International Olympic Committee in 1938, published a "statement regarding the proportion of public playing fields which should be provided for the populations of cities, towns and villages. For every 1,000 people there should be provided 5 acres of Public Playing Fields." Johannesburg which has a Non-European population of 442,000 has approximately 75 acres of playing fields and other Union towns have probably an even smaller proportion. The Johannesburg City Council has before it large plans for Recreation among its Non-European population, including stadiums, community centres, swimming baths, football fields, etc. A European Recreation Officer has been appointed and there are six Sports Organisers to assist him.. Many Municipalities are unable to contemplate the large capital outlay required to provide facilities such as these. They can, however, set aside land in new townships for Recreation purposes, land which can be used for recreation without heavy outlay in levelling, etc. So often in the past, land reserved for recreation is land unfit for other use and therefore usually so costly to prepare that it is valueless for sport purposes. Recreation among the Non-Europeans will have to be brought on to a more selfsupporting basis, i.e. gate money must be charged, and fences and seating accommodation provided. Every native township should have at least one capacious sports ground, with stands and enclosure, where soccer, rugby, tennis and perhaps boxing can be staged, and admission charges made. Such stadiums will be expensive and it may be necessary for the Government to assist through the National Advisory Council any local authority on a £ for £ basis.

To-day/.....

To-day in the larger urban areas the problem of delinquent youth is a pressing one. On the reef there has grown up what can only be called a life of gangsterdom for scores of African youths and men. There are daily reports of violence, robbery, assault and other crimes. It may be that these symptoms betray the lack of educational, social and economic facilities in past years. But the problem is here and now, and no amount of police reinforcements can prevent a steady stream of recruits joining the gangsters and hooligans. It was found in the army, to the surprise of many, that discipline of the Army type was not too irksome for the large majority of people. That regular exercise and food and hours built up physique in an amazing way and that the result on the mind and the character was often just as surprising. What the PTB has done for European youths might be done by another organisation for Non-European youths. Such a camp might be run jointly by the Departments of Defence, Social Welfare and Education. Those sent there would receive military discipline, physical education, schooling and training in a useful trade or occupation. An employment bureau would guarantee that every youth discharged honourably would be found a job as driver, clerk, police boy, etc. Magistrates would have the option to send first offenders to the camp voluntarily or to prison involuntarily. But a large proportion of the inmates would not be sent there by the Courts, they would come from broken homes, from the streets, the welfare societies and elsewhere. They would not leave until they were rebuilt in body and mind at least. There is a strong likelihood that this chance in life would be taken. The camp would be made attractive. Uniforms, a military band formed from the youths themselves, sports teams, music and good recreational facilities would prove a useful attraction. The cost would be repaid in a negative way, so many fewer burglaries, murders and assaults.

In all that has been said so far, one thing has been lacking, the outline of a national plan for Adult Education in the field of leisure time activity. This is due to the facts of the situation, viz. that the burden of providing recreational facilities has so far been laid not on a national body but on local authorities. It is not easy to envisage any master plan which would embrace the multifarious activities of City Council's, the mining industry, national organisations such as the Y.M.C.A., the National Advisory Council, etc. But one thing at least all have in common, the need to inform the public of the pressing importance of the work they are doing, which amounts to an attempt to capture the leisure time of the Non-European people for constructive and healthful purposes. The alternative must be made clear to the people of this country, that an embittered idle, uneducated, undernourished, unhappy people will cost all of us more than we can ever imagine in terms of money, social unrest and racial discord. This publicity and propaganda cannot be done by State and Municipal bodies. A national voluntary or semi-official body will have to be charged with the co-ordination of the information about work done in this field throughout the Union, and the steady organising of public opinion by means of lectures, films and publications and even Conferences. Under the Adult Education scheme it is proposed to set up in each centre Local Committees on Adult Education. In Johannesburg at the end of this month such a committee for Non-European work may be inaugurated. These committees will be charged with the responsibility of co-ordinating varied leisure time activities such as night schools, music and choirs, recreation, drama, arts and crafts, and all other leisure time

activities/....

activities, seem to be the obvious bodies to do this essential publicity. By stimulating interest in their own areas, and by exchanging information with each other, it might be possible eventually to rouse a nation-wide interest. If Government organisers have in the meantime been appointed their central organisation will be able to provide the necessary planning and direction. In this way voluntary and Government agencies would work together in doing a job which neither can do satisfactorily alone.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS.

- A. Municipalities to be responsible for the provision of Community Centres, one at least in each native township, coloured area or other well-defined population group.
- B. Universities or Technical Colleges to be approached to help in the training for these and similar institutions.
- C. Provision of land and fenced enclosures and stadiums for the Non-European population by Municipalities, aided by grants-in-aid from Union Government, through National Advisory Council on Physical Education.
- D. Establishment of camps for delinquent, homeless, unemployed and similarly handicapped African and Coloured Youth.
- E. Formation of Local Committees on Non-European Adult Education to co-ordinate information and enlighten public opinion.

J.G. YOUNG

ooooooooOooooooooo

Collection Number: AD1715

SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS (SAIRR), 1892-1974

PUBLISHER:

Collection Funder:- Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document forms part of the archive of the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), held at the Historical Papers Research Archive at The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.