

"TRANSVAAL TRACKERS".

Minutes of Conference held at 8 p.m. Thursday 27th July 1922,
at Boy Scout Headquarters.

Present: Reverends Higgs, Hill, Howard, Palmer, Parker, Winter,
and Woodfield, Messrs Achtenburg, Dickinson, and
Wilkinson, representing the various native and col-
oured organizations, and Messrs Hodgkinson (Chair)
Byrnes, Hart, Harris, Siddle, Weber and Symons (Secy)
representing the Boy Scout organization.

Apologies for non attendance were received from Messrs Fleischer,
Musgrove, Patterson, Read and Sydenham.

- 1: Secretary read notice convening meeting.
- 2: Secretary read the correspondence with Rev. Palmer which led
up to the holding of a Conference.
- 3: The Chairman, Assistant Commissioner E.H. Hodgkinson, after
welcoming the visitors, gave a resume of the incidents, inter-
views, discussions, conferences etc. which led up to the pro-
mulgation of rules governing the formation and control of
troops connected with Native and Coloured boys. He explained
that the Boy Scout Organization was entirely sympathetic; but
that it had had to battle against very strong opposition,
especially from people highly placed, also there were conflicting
interests which had to be carefully studied. A vast amount of
labour had been expended, and all Provinces had been consulted.
He quoted letters from the Chief Scout, Sir Robert Baden-Powell,
the (then) Union Chief Scout, Lord Buxton, and from representa-
tives of the various sections of the Native and Coloured
community, which letters were available for instant reference
if needed.

He drew attention to the 4th Scout Law, concerning
brotherhood, and whilst admitting the willingness of old
members of the Scout Organization to be brotherly to coloured
folk, did not consider that discussion was necessary to convince
everyone that the "boy" Scout, and the parent of the Boy
Scout would not - in South Africa - admit any willingness on
their part. An extremely strong prejudice existed, and it
would be useless to argue the point because it was palpable to
everyone who had studied the question. In the circumstances
the rules governing the Boy Scout Movement had to be modified
in regard to Native, Indian and Coloured troops. Coloured
representatives had agreed to the rules laid down, copies of
which were in the hands of those present to-night. Our primary
consideration was to uphold the existing organization, which
was unquestionably popular and successful; and not to do any-
thing which would tend to undo all the good work which had been
done. If we had an uniform closely approximating that worn
by the Boy Scouts, popular perception would not distinguish,
and the result would be that ridicule would be thrown upon the
Boy Scout Movement resulting probably in its total collapse,
as parents would insist upon their boys leaving even if the
boys themselves held out. He explained the treatment accorded
to coloured boys at the Jamboree in England by the South
African boys, which though entirely courteous, prohibited
close relationship.

The subject was now open to discussion.

Rev. Palmer: Mr. Palmer thanked the Chairman for the lucid
statement, and considered that the members of the Boy Scout
/organization

organization had every sympathy with his point of view. He thought it would be deplorable to put their boys in on equal terms and thereby wreck the Boy Scout Movement. He explained that a meeting was held the previous night at which the whole matter was discussed. He objected to the term "Trackers", and to the uniform as laid down in the rules. He wanted Khaki, especially as the native boys at Grace Dieu were already wearing clothes of that colour for the purpose of economy. It was felt at the meeting that if the conference could not agree upon the uniform then it would be necessary to start a separate movement, which would mean rivalry, with its attendant difficulties. It was felt that rivalry would be wrong, as it would tend to weaken both movements. It was desired therefore to come to some sort of arrangement which would mean affiliation with the Boy Scout movement. The speaker assured the meeting that the representatives of the native organization sympathised with the point of view expressed by the Chairman.

A discussion then ensued regarding khaki shirts and shorts; and the word "Scouts", as compared with "Trackers", "Pathfinders", "Peace Scouts" etc.

Mr. Woodfield quoted the second paragraph of Rule 2. "Membership", of H.Q. Policy, Organization and Rules and considered, without being too emphatic on the point that the Native and Coloured boys had all the rights mentioned therein.

Mr. Marris pointed out that we had an unparalleled prejudice in this country against native and coloured people, and if the matter was pressed there would be deplorable results. After all it was not the uniform, or the badge, that really mattered, but the training as Scouts. The whole of the Scout training was available and that was what really mattered.

The discussion included mention of Church membership; white folk not agreeing to native or coloured people being in the same church, and enjoying with them the same service and privileges. This was countered by the statement that full privileges are allowed; but that the coloured folk come at different times, or attend at a separate church.

Mr. Siddle was quite certain that we should lose practically all boys in the Country Towns if native and coloured boys wore similar uniforms.

Captain Byrnes was very emphatic in the opinion that it would do incalculable harm.

It was admitted that the hat was really the distinguishing feature of the uniform, and that if the proper pockets, and shoulder knots were omitted from the shirt, that article would cease to be distinctive.

Mr. Weber supported D/C Byrnes' point of view and emphasized that the whole of the Boy Scout training was available in the rules for "Trackers", and that was the important thing; not what the boy wears.

Mr. Higgs suggested that the rules should be gone through seriatim, and that was done, which resulted in the alterations and amendments indicated in the pages which are attached to these minutes.

A/C Weber opined that the alterations would not bind the Scout Council, and D/C Hart supported the opinion.

A/C Hodgkinson thought it would, as the Committee of Control had power to act.

/ There

There was some divergence of opinion on the point, and the Chairman pointed out that some of the visitors came from a distance and wanted to get back to their homes with the knowledge that the whole matter was settled.

The question of a Scout Officer running a Pathfinder Troop was discussed in regard to the uniform he should wear. Some thought that the officer should be permitted to wear Scout uniform, others that he must wear Pathfinder uniform. Decided to refer matter to Council for decision.

D/C Byrnes requested that the rules and amendments be distributed to all concerned. This was agreed to.

Rev. Palmer said that before separating he would like to propose a very hearty vote of thanks to the Chairman as we owe a great deal to his extremely tactful guidance and help.

(The proposition was greeted with applause)

The meeting closed at 10-30 p.m.

PATH FINDER

2000-2001

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.